

## **Christian Growth Week 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction**

The goal of this class:

Eph. 4:13-15 . . . until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

1 Pet. 2:2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, <sup>3</sup> now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

1 Jn. 2:12-14 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. <sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. <sup>14</sup> I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

### **What is the *context* of spiritual growth/maturity?**

Three stages of salvation:

*Justification*

*Glorification* (Rom. 8:30).

*Sanctification*

Phil. 1:6\* being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

“He who began a good work in you”

“Until the day of Christ Jesus”

“Will (continue to) perfect it” (see Phil. 2:13).

Rom. 5:1-5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>2</sup> through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.<sup>3</sup> Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;<sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope.<sup>5</sup> And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

5:1,2a refers to \_\_\_\_\_

5:2b refers to \_\_\_\_\_

5:3-5 refers to \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn. 3:1-3 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.<sup>2</sup> Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.<sup>3</sup> Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

3:1 refers to \_\_\_\_\_—the “great love that the Father *has bestowed* on us, that we should be called children of God.”

3:2 refers to \_\_\_\_\_—“it has not yet appeared what *we shall be . . .* when he appears, we shall be like him.”

3:3 refers to \_\_\_\_\_—“everyone who has this hope *purifies* himself, just as he is pure.”

Phil. 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.<sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind

and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

We can be *optimistic*...

We need to be *realistic*...

What is your tendency?

### **What does spiritual growth/maturity *look like*?**

John 15:1-12\*\* “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me.

<sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples.

<sup>9</sup>Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. <sup>12</sup>“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. (NASB)

Notice how multi-faceted this description is:

*The heart of spiritual growth is a personal love-trust relationship with Jesus.*

“Abide in Me and I in you . . . abide in my love” (Jn. 15:4,9).

“Apart from me you can do nothing . . . Ask . . .” (Jn. 15:5,7).

Phil. 3:8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ. (NASB)

This relationship produces changes in you that you and others recognize.

It involves:

Biblical Knowledge (Jn. 15:7 – “If My words abide in you”).

Obedience to God’s moral will. (Jn. 15:10 – “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love”).

A growing love for others in a Christian community (Jn. 15:12 – “Love one another, just as I have loved you”).

*The ultimate purpose and motive of this love relationship:* \_\_\_\_\_

(Jn. 15:8 – “by this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit”).

To glorify God is to:

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*Joy grows as our relationship with Christ grows.*

(Jn. 15:11 – “These things I have spoken to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full”).

## **What is the *foundation* for spiritual growth/maturity?**

The New Testament uses other metaphors to describe this union.

- Adopted

- Betrothed

A *permanent union* forged by the Holy Spirit the moment we entrust ourselves to Jesus.

Eph. 1:13,14\* In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,<sup>14</sup> who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.

This union is two-fold:

1:13 says that the Holy Spirit seals us in Christ.

New Testament passages explain that we are “in Christ.” Paul uses this term in this sense 126 times in his letters. The New Living Translation translates this phrase “united with Christ” to emphasize this personal union.

1:14 says that the Holy Spirit is given to us as God’s pledge.

**Conclusion:**

You are permanently in Christ, and Christ is permanently in you!

**Memory Verses**

Phil. 1:6\* - God will ultimately complete the good work of salvation that He began when we believed in Christ.

Jn. 15:1-12\*\* - Spiritual growth is the result of an ongoing love-trust relationship with Jesus.

Eph. 1:13,14\* - We are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit the moment we believe the gospel.

**Assignment**

Lovelace. *Renewal as a Way of Life*. “The God-Centered Life” Read and answer questions.