

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

Do you have long dry spells in which nothing seems to be going on between you and God?

Are you unable to generate love, care and concern for others?

Do you live a fundamentally self-centered, self-seeking life?

Do you still seek to manipulate and control others through tantrums, emotional blackmail?

Is it "all about you"?

Do anger, hatred and jealousy play an inordinately large role in the way you express your personality?

Do you put others down to make yourself look better?

Does your life reflect more of the works of the flesh than fruit of the Spirit?

Are you a mature Christian or still remain as a babe in Christ even though you have been saved for years?

Great Church members are Growing Church members

If we are to have a great Church it will require Growing Members

Will you be a Growing member?

Will you be a Growing Christian?

**INVITATION**

# GROWING CHURCH MEMBERS

**DATE: 6/13/2010 am**

**TEXT: II Peter 3:18, I Peter 2:1, 2**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Let me begin by asking you a question?

Rather – I want you, to ask yourself this question

What kind of Church would our Church be if every member were just like me?

Would our Church be a Great Church or would it be something else?

The reality is that our Church is what we are as members

No Church will ever be anything more than what its members are

What kind of members makes Great Churches?

That is the question we are seeking to answer

Last week we saw that Great Church members are Worshipping Church members

Today I want us to see that Great Church members are Growing Church members

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

Oftentimes Churches are more interested in Numerical Growth than they are Spiritual Growth

(Oftentimes, what is essential for real spiritual growth is sacrificed in order to obtain numerical growth)

You can have a large crowd but have a spiritually immature congregation

The measuring stick of a Great Church is never how many folks we have

The measuring stick of a great Church is the spiritual maturity of its members

There are many who can call themselves a child of God

Yet, they are absolutely content with who they are and what they are doing

Many view their salvation as nothing more than a passport to heaven and a fire escape from hell

They have gotten in - but have never gotten on

They are saved - but when it comes to Growing Spiritually there has been little or no Growth

If we are to have a Great Church it will demand that we be Growing Members

***1 Peter 2:2 – “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby”***

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

Are you closer to God today than you were this time last year?

Do you know more about God, His Word, His ways, His will than in the past?

If not, you are not Growing

Do you find yourself tolerating and condoning sinful activities in your life?

Do you find that you tend to be jealous of others, easily hold things in your heart against them?

That is sure sign that you are not Growing Spiritually

**III.** In an article by Brian Knowles he writes: *“When we find Christians who have been baptized for decades behaving as though they were “baby Christians” we are probably looking at cases of arrested spiritual development”*

If we find ourselves fighting the same old problems we fought when we were first saved, we may be suffering from

*“Arrested Spiritual Development”*

Here are some ways of testing for it:

Do you still have just as big a problem with your temper as when you were first saved?

Do you feel spiritually powerless?

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

May I warn you, that if you fail to “*put on the new man*”

You leave yourself wide open for all kind of unsavory things

### **Matthew 12:43-45**

In short, there can be a Godly Life

Spiritual Growth should always results in a Godly Life

The mark and characteristic of spiritual maturity is a life -

That Pleases God, Honors God, and Obeys God

Spiritual Growth will always result in a change in our life

As we grow we get closer to God

And as we get closer to God

We will become more Christ-like in our life

### **CONCLUSION**

Now in **closing** let me ask you about your Spiritual Growth

Have you been saved for years yet still are as newborn babes?

There is a way to know if you are Growing

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

**II Peter 3:18** – “*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen*”

Let’s pray and then I want us to think about Spiritual Growth and becoming Growing Church Members

~~~**OPENING PRAYER**~~~

First of all, think with me about a Life that is:

### **I. “GIVEN BY” CHRIST**

In **I Peter 2:2** the Bible speaks of “*newborn babes*”

The Word speaks of a new convert or someone who has recently been saved

When each of us was first saved, we were all “*newborn babes*”

The word “*newborn*” indicates that salvation is a birth

In **I Peter 1:23**, Peter speaks of this birth as –

*“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”*

When Peter spoke of being born again, He was saying that salvation is a second birth, a birth from above

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

- Our first birth is physical, but our second birth—being born again—is a spiritual birth
- In our first birth—our physical birth—we received life from our parents
- In our second birth—our spiritual birth—we received life from Christ

The newborn life has been given to us by Christ

This wonderful life we have in Christ is:

### **A. Offered by Grace**

The first thing that we must understand about this life is that we cannot earn or merit it

It is a life that is offered by grace and grace alone

The Bible says in **Titus 2:11**, that –

*“the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men”*

Likewise the Bible says in **Ephesians 2:8**

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”*

To say that salvation is by grace is to say that neither you nor I can do anything to save ourselves

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

This is jealousy and feelings of ill-will toward others

**Lastly**, we are to lay aside *“all evil speakings”*

John Gill describes these *“evil speakings”* as

*“backbitings, whisperings, detractions, hurting one another's characters by innuendos, false charges, and evil surmises”*

With the Absence of Sinful things there now can be:

### **B. The ‘Presence’ of ‘Spiritual’ Things**

The implication of what Peter says is that when the life is absence of sinful things it will be able to *“put on”* spiritual things

**Colossians 3:10** – *“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him:”*

We lay aside *“malice”* and *“wickedness”* and we *“put on”* Righteousness

We lay aside *“deceitfulness”*, we *“put on”* Truthfulness

We lay aside *“hypocrisy”*, we *“put on”* Genuineness

We lay aside *“envy”* and *“jealously”* we *“put on”* Gratefulness and Unselfishness and Forgiveness and Love for others

**A. The ‘Absence’ of ‘Sinful’ Things**

He speaks of 6 things that are to be laid aside

The words “*laying aside*” speak of casting away or putting off

The allusion is one of putting off clothes

Like we would take off a coat or a hat

There are certain things we are to get rid of in our life

**First**, we are to lay aside “*all malice*”

The word literally means *naughtiness* or *wickedness*

Anything in our life that is sinful is to be cast off

**Secondly**, we are to lay aside “*all guile*”

The word speaks of that which is deceitful

It is deceitfulness or fraud in both word and deed

**Thirdly**, we are to lay aside “*hypocrisies*”

We are to be real Christians

There is to be nothing about us that is not the genuine article

**Fourthly**, we are to lay aside all “*envies*”

→ We can’t buy salvation with our money

→ We can’t earn salvation by our works

→ We can’t be saved by being good

For even at our best, the Bible says that we –

**“*come short of the glory of God*” Romans 3:23**

**III.** Walter Knight said, “*When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day’s pay for his time; that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance; that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements; that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award—yet receives such a gift anyway—that is a good picture of God’s unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God.*”

**A Life that ‘Grace Offers’**

Furthermore, this life is:

**B. A Life that is ‘Received by Faith’**

This life in Christ is **Offered by Grace**

But is Obtain or **Received by Faith**

Again, the Bible says in **Ephesians 2:8**

**“*For by grace are ye saved through faith*”**

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

The Bible says in **John 3:36**

**“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life”**

We can't Earn Salvation but we can Accept it by faith

What does it mean to Accept Salvation by faith?

It is to believe that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again from the dead, and to personally accept what He did as your salvation

What Jesus did, He did for each of us

All that we have to do is to Accept what He did by Faith

It is like receiving a gift

If I offer to give you a new Bible, all you have to do to have it is to take it from me

Christ has purchased salvation for every man

All we have to do is receive it

When we do we become ***“newborn babes”***

We become God's children

But just like all babies that are born, we are to grow

**A LIFE THAT IS “GIVEN BY” CHRIST is a:**

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

The ultimate purpose of everything we do and everything we are is to glorify God

Even our spiritual growth is about bringing Him glory

The **‘Means’**, the **‘Manner’** and the **‘Motive’**

**A LIFE THAT IS:**

**“GIVEN BY” CHRIST**

**“GROWING IN” CHRIST**

Thirdly and lastly think with me about a Life that is:

### **III. “GODLY FOR” CHRIST**

Notice **I Peter 2:1**

***“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings”***

Then in **v.2** Peter tells us to grow spiritually

What Peter is calling for in **v.1** is connected to what he calls for in **v.2**

To say it another way, Spiritual Growth should always results in a Godly Life

In this Godly Life there is:

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

Let me go back to the matter of reading our Bible

These areas of Spiritual Growth are why we must get into God's Word

As we read God's Word we learn of God's commands

We learn what God wants us to be and what He wants us to do

As well, the Bible is a Jesus Book!

As we read God's Word we learn more and more about Jesus

### **The 'Means' of Spiritual Growth**

### **The 'Manner' of Spiritual Growth**

Thirdly, a quick word about:

### **C. The 'Motive' of Spiritual Growth**

Notice **II Peter 3:18** again, We read

***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."***

What is the motive of our spiritual growth?

It is so God will get glory out of our life

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

**A Life that is 'Offered by Grace'**

**And A New Life that is 'Received by Faith'**

That leads me to the second thing I want you to think about and that is a Life that is:

## **II. "GROWING IN" CHRIST**

There is nothing quite as exciting as when a baby comes into the world

It's an exciting time when the baby is born, but that is just the beginning

When a baby is born it immediately begins to grow

As the weeks pass, a baby will begin to gain weight, make sounds, cut teeth and etc.

He or she will begin to crawl, take steps, and then walk

As well, they will begin to say words like mama, daddy, grandma, and of course the most important word they will ever learn, Papa

**III.** Someone has said that we spend the first 18 months trying to get them to walk and talk, and then the next 18 years trying to get them to sit down and be quiet

Peter tells us ***"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby"***

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

Just as a new baby grows physically, we are to grow spiritually

A good example of Spiritual Growth is found in **I John 2:13**

*“I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father”*

John describes three levels of maturity

There are little children, young men, and fathers

These three levels describe a progression of spiritual growth in a Christian’s life

Let’s think about this Spiritual Growth for a moment

First, think with me of:

### **A. The ‘Means’ of Spiritual Growth**

**III.** I once came across seven rules for spiritual growth:

1. Daily Food – Take in the “*pure milk of the Word*” through study and meditation
2. Fresh Air – Pray often or you will faint. Prayer is the oxygen of the soul
3. Regular Exercise – Put into practice what you learn in God’s Word
4. Adequate Rest – Rely on God at all times in simple faith
5. Clean Surroundings – Avoid evil company and whatever will weaken you spiritually

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

*“the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”*

We are to be ever learning about Jesus

Getting to know more about Him, and personally becoming acquainted with Him

I think of the hymn “*More About Jesus*”

It was written by Eliza Edmunds Hewitt

She was an invalid for the greater part of her life

But out of her experience she developed an intimate relationship with God

Her hymn should be the desire and prayer of every Christian:

*“More about Jesus would I know, More of His grace to others show; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me”*

The Bible said of Moses in **Exodus 33:11**

*“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”*

Moses had a very intimate relationship with the Lord

As we grow spiritually we get closer and closer to the Lord

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

You may want to start in Genesis and read all the way through the Bible

It doesn't matter so much how you read the Bible

What does matter is, that you read it!

### **The 'Means' of Spiritual Growth**

Secondly, think with me about:

### **B. The 'Manner' of Spiritual Growth**

Notice with me **II Peter 3:18**

*“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”*

Peter speaks of two specific areas in which we are to grow:

**First**, we are *“grow in grace”*

In other words, to grow in grace is to grow in all areas of your spiritual life

Our Christian life involves such things as prayer, faith, service, the will of God, etc.

To grow in grace is to be Growing Spiritually in all these areas

The **Second** thing Peter tells us to grow in is

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

6. Loving Care – Be part of a church where you will benefit from a pastor's teaching and Christian fellowship
7. Periodic Checkups – Regularly examine your spiritual health

Our text speaks of one of these rules

Peter talks about desiring *“the sincere milk of the Word”*

Peter describes a Christian with a Spiritual Hunger

The word *“desire”* speaks of an Intense Craving

It speaks of someone being very Hungry

What is a Christian to have a Great Hunger for?

It's the Word of God

Peter calls it the “sincere” Word

The word *“sincere”* speaks of that which is undiluted

It is the pure Word of God

It's called “milk” continuing the image of a newborn

As a newborn is fed milk to satisfy their hunger and to enable them to grow

Christians are to have a hunger for the Word of God that they may grow spiritually

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

The Bible (the Word of God) is the food that a believer must have if they are to Grow

That's why I tell someone when they get saved to read their Bible everyday

If we neglect to read and spend time in God's Word we will not Grow Spiritually

The Bible is the spiritual food that is necessary for Spiritual Growth

**III.** According to a recent Gallup poll, about six in ten Americans (59%) say they read the Bible at least on occasion. That is another way of saying most Americans don't read their Bibles. Studies have found that the percentage of those who read their Bible at least once a week has fallen from 40% in 1990 to only 37% today. Only 16% of Americans read their Bible daily. One poll found an even more tragic facts about Bible reading and that is 35% of supposedly born-again Christians do not read their Bible at all.

There are no doubt some here today have not opened their Bibles this whole week

I am not going to scold you about how little you read your Bible

But I do want to say that if you are to Grow Spiritually

Then you must have a steady diet of the Bible

How often should a Christian read their Bible?

How often do you eat?

## *Growing Church Members – 1 Peter 2:1, 2*

Do you eat every other day or just a couple days a week?

No, you eat every day

We should read our Bible everyday of our life!

**III.** George Mueller said that he looked upon it as a lost day if he had not spent time reading his Bible

Job said in **Job 23:12**

***“I have esteemed the Words of His mouth more than my necessary food”***

Job knew that he needed food to sustain his physical life

He saw food as necessary

However, he realized that God's Word was even more important

How important?

He knew that it was essential to his spiritual health

Let me challenge each of you to do two things:

**First**, set aside a time each day to read your Bible

**Two**, develop a system for reading the Bible