

# Growing In Faith

One of the 5 things we are praying for and declaring in this church is that people come to faith and grow in faith.

Coming to faith and accepting Jesus is the first step but that journey does not stop there. There is more to experience in Jesus and for that to happen we have got to grow in the faith we have in Jesus. Heb 11:6 for without faith it is impossible to please God- those who come to God must believe he is God - so growing in faith must please God!

Jesus said go and make disciples of all nations. Many times we stop with making 'decisions' for Christ. I spoke about us children of God being the church, and for too long the church has had the 'gear', but not had the 'game'.

Has looked the part but not fulfilled the part of making disciples. We the church have been comfortable just getting by wanting an easy existence but not really fiercely engaging the enemy in battle.

Often we have depended on the faith of another or on the journey of another and have looked to others to clean up our mess. We rely on others praying for us, others interceding for us, others fasting for us, others watching out for us, protecting us and shielding us from challenging and negative things but none of these enable us to grow in faith.

Many Christians want to continue doing what they like to do and are not willing to listen to sound teaching or wisdom on biblical truths that can set them free.

Many times as pastors we get requests for prayer and intercession and when we try to encourage a Godly lifestyle of reading the word and prayer and getting engaged in being the church i.e. Actively involved in the body's functioning as every joint should function supporting one another, they don't want to know, why, because that involves sacrifice.

*Eph 4:16 He makes the whole body fit together and unites it through the support of every joint. As each and every part does its job, he makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.* Isn't it interesting that the bible says AS each and every part does its job he (Jesus) makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Wow!

So listen up now.... if parts of the body of Jesus are not doing their job it then stifles the growth of the body in love! We all are responsible to ensure that we are taking an active part in functioning in the body of Jesus Christ so that He can grow His body in unity and in love.

So in order to grow or mature in the faith we have got to do something.

**Learn To Clean Up Your Mess** - when we aspire to grow in faith we need to learn to clean up our own mess. As parents we teach our kids to deal with their mess because it is important for them to understand that life is not always cozy and comfy but there are challenges and issues they have to face and as church I think we need to teach people how to deal with the messes in life and stay on top of their game. How?

*Rom 12:1-2 Brothers and sisters, God has shown you his mercy. So I am asking you to offer up your bodies to him while you are still alive. Your bodies are a holy sacrifice that is pleasing to God.*

When you offer your bodies to God, you are worshiping him in the right way. 2 Don't live the way this world lives. Let your way of thinking be completely changed. Then you will be able to test what God wants for you. And you will agree that what he wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect.

Nothing more disheartening than to see a lot of energy thrown in to something with no results.

**You Need To Be True To Yourself** - know now. Not pretend. Until you bring your real self to the table nothing truly will grow. Fake seeds don't grow. God can work when we are true to self.

Scripture tells us that a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. What does this mean? *Psalm 51:17 says, "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."* The meaning of this is connected with the verse just before it. Verse 16 says, *"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings."* David is stating that there is nothing we can offer God to appease Him when we have sinned. More animal sacrifices were not what God was looking for. God desires true repentance.

Many people miss this truth. Rather than repent, they try to "clean up their act," give more, pray more, or busy themselves in other religious activity in the hopes that God will finally "get over" being mad at them. In Psalm 51, David is saying that God wants none of that. External religious activity cannot replace internal, heartfelt contrition (remorseful / penitent)(1 Samuel 16:7).

You cannot live on other people's encouragement because sadly it is short lived. Don't be dependent on Pastor's encouragement to determine your walk with God. If you have Facebook you will notice that everybody is fishing for 'likes', for compliments. Criticisms last a long time, encouragement is short lived.

You have got to learn to encourage yourself in the word and in prayer and refine your own game if not when challenges come and they will you will have no fight in you and no game in you to keep going. We have got to learn to listen to the truth because the truth sets us free.

We grow when we listen to the Holy Spirit convicting us of sin in our lives causing us to repent.

When you grow up you form your own convictions, own beliefs and are not reliant on the opinions of others. We need to stop borrowing someone else's faith and living on others faith. It is time for the church (you and me) to grow up.

Galatians 4:1-7 gives us a beautiful picture of growing up from being a child who is equal to a slave into maturity through Jesus Christ who was born of a woman under the law to redeem us who were under the law that we might receive adoption as sons. Therefore we are no longer slaves but sons and heirs of God.

**Need To Know Your Authority** - a person with authority has the ability to determine and author

his life or direct his life. Jesus said that He is the author and finisher of our faith. When you know the author you know his authority.

When Jesus sent out the 70 disciples he sent them with His authority to cast out demons and heal the sick (Luke 10). All authority has been given to us because it was given to Jesus.

If we stay a child in adult years we can do emotional damage. 1Cor 13:11 Paul says this, When I was a child, I talked like a child. I thought like a child. I had the understanding of a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

Being an adult is a process of taking on more responsibility and church it is time for us to take on more responsibility to take this gospel to those outside the kingdom. We need to grow in our faith in Jesus. Growth comes through stretch and pain and toil. We have to put away those childhood things, childhood thoughts, petty minded ideas and put on the character of Jesus and press forward.

Strength comes from struggle, the more you are tested the more refined you become, the more challenges you face the stronger you become. Imagine a church where people are not borrowing faith or borrowing praise but living in faith and growing in faith and spontaneous in praise.

When God positions you He sustains you. Anything you do under duress has no power. When you are secure as a believer you can choose to submit without worrying about recognition.

Lead out of conviction not out of obligation

Remove the burden of obligation and live from a place of conviction because conviction will drive you to go beyond every barrier and every hindrance that the enemy will throw at you. People who lead out of conviction stand the tests and the trials and are willing to go through the hard times because they know what they believe in and what they stand for.

**Don't Look To Man's Praise Or Be A Crowd Pleaser** - Who is your audience and who are you seeking approval from? If it is from man you will fail but if it is from God you will succeed.

John 12:42-43 - Many rulers believed in Jesus. However, they wouldn't admit it publicly because the Pharisees would have thrown them out of the synagogue (v43). They were more concerned about what people thought of them than about what God thought of them.

These are leaders who would not openly acknowledge their faith. They were more worried about what others would think. (Mark 12:14 - They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you tell the truth, without worrying about what people think) How many times as leaders do we try to please the crowd?.

Lead from a place of conviction and not pleasing people. *Luke 6:26 woe to you when all men speak well of you.* Winning the approval of others keeps you obligated to them, always seeking that approval to propel you.

In 1Thes 2:4 Paul is saying that when He speaks he does it not trying to please people but please God. V6 Paul says, *we did not seek glory from men...* Growing in faith, being an adult means you are

not seeking approval from people. Not subject to approvals and disapprovals but leading with conviction and confidence. With freedom comes consequences.

**The vision is what guides us, it is our motivational force.** Go to God for yourself and grow up. As adults we don't need permission to think and act. You and I can choose and act. Let's make it happen! Don't complain about what you permit because what you permit will control you.

Our attitude should be thus: I'm not in church because of a need but because of a revelation of who Jesus is.

Many want a reputation, and look for reputation (what others think of you - projected image) When you look after your character your reputation will take care of you.

*Be like Jesus - Phil 2:5-11*  
*5 Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*  
*6 Although he was in the form of God and equal with God, he did not take advantage of this equality.*

*7 Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant, by becoming like other humans, by having a human appearance.*

*8 He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cross.*

*9 This is why God has given him an exceptional honour— the name honoured above all other names—*

*10 so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will kneel*

*11 and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

When you humble your self before God He will exalt you.

Determine to grow in faith. Don't be satisfied where you are because there is always more. Jesus loves you. He has a great plan for your life. Only Jesus can go into your dark places and turn it around by lightening it up with his power. Only Jesus can save you from your sin and surround you with His love & his power. He died for you and He rose again from the dead for you.

**Will you trust Jesus?** Will you put your life in his hands?

**Prayer :** Lord Jesus, I acknowledge my sin, I know you died for me to set me free. I repent of all sin in my life and I ask you to forgive me. Be my Lord and Saviour.