

GROWTH PATH

STEP TWO





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INTRODUCTION:

BECOMING LIKE CHRIST

“Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.”

Colossians 3:10 (NLT)

LEARNING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Like anything that grows, there is a process that includes different stages of growth. Learning to be like Christ is no different; it's an ongoing journey of growth and transformation. The good news is that God is fully committed to helping us to become like Christ.

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

This spiritual journey can be grouped into four different stages. These four stages are:

1. _____ **Jesus.**
2. _____ **a relationship with Jesus.**
3. _____ **to Jesus.**
4. _____ **in Jesus.**

While all church attendees are in one of these four stages, there is one distinct key truth for each stage that causes us to move from one stage to the next. These key truths can be found in Revelation 12:11.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Revelation 12:11 (NKJV)

1. _____ **of God.**
2. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb...”
2. **God's** _____.
3. “and by the word of their testimony...”
4. _____ **sacrificially.**
5. “and they did not love their lives to the death.”

THE GOAL OF THIS CLASS

To _____ **to be like Jesus as we embrace the journey of growth and transformation.**

PART I:

STAGES OF GROWTH

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”

Philippians 1:6 (NLT)

I. STAGES OF GROWTH

“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed. As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn’t have deep roots, it died. Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” Mark 4:3-8 (NLT)

Then Jesus said to them, “If you can’t understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables? The farmer plants seed by taking God’s word to others. The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away. The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word. The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced. And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” Mark 4:13-20 (NLT)

In the parable recorded in Mark 4, Jesus tells us about four groups of people and how they reacted to the Word of God, based on the condition of their heart. We will explore these four groups and how we fit into each of these groups as we grow on our spiritual journey.

1. *EXPLORING JESUS*

A person exploring Jesus _____ talks to God and believes they have to do something to _____ salvation.

“The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away.” Mark 4:15 (NLT)

Those on the path of exploring God sometimes fail to begin a relationship with God because, when they hear the truth of Christ, their heart is too hard with pride and it never sinks in. They can’t understand because pride blinds them from receiving what they desperately need. Pride opens a door for our adversary. The enemy then comes and snatches the truth from their heart before it can produce any faith. The result is people remain far from God and can often become

religious, trying to earn God's acceptance. We all start here, but thankfully through prayer, the grace of God, and a humble heart, we can continue pass this stage in our journey.

2. BEGINNING A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

A person beginning a relationship with Jesus _____ talks to Jesus and believes the Bible is a _____ book.

“The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.” Mark 4:16-17 (NLT)

Those who are beginning a relationship with God sometimes fail to grow close to God because they do not have God's Word strongly rooted in their hearts. This group easily stumbles in their faith and can tend to waiver back and forth. Its normal to doubt from time to time, but the more you grow in the word of God, the more your roots will develop. This is when you go from being lead by feelings, to be lead by faith.

3. CLOSE TO JESUS

A person that is close to Jesus _____ talks to God and believes that _____ is a good thing to do from time to time.

“The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced.” Mark 4:18-19 (NLT)

Those who are close to God sometimes fail to become centered in God because they allow social status, the love of money and possessions to remain at the center of their heart. This group often struggles to live a fruitful life because of this. In this stage it's important to understand priorities. What's first in our life? Better yet, whose first? Who or what has our focus? Jesus is not just a part of our life, He is our life. We grow from loving the creator more than creation, the giver more the gift. We'll talk more about the key truths later to help you grow through each stage.

4. *CENTERED IN JESUS*

A person that is centered in Jesus _____ talks to God and believes that everything they have comes from God and they are here to _____ themselves away.

“And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” Mark 4:20 (NLT)

Those who are centered in Jesus have an open and receptive heart towards God’s word and live life with the heart of a giver. This group is fruitful in every area of life. Jesus becomes your all. He becomes your greatest ambition. Your desire is to know him and to make him known. When we are God centered, we reflect the heart of God. We become generous with our time, treasure, and talents. We give ourselves fully to the Father. We become All-In followers of Jesus. Once we’ve reach this stage we dedicate our lives to helping others grow to this stage. Be encouraged because it’s a life long process and God has already included every season in the plans he has for you. God sees you as his very own child growing into the Christlike mind and heart.

PART II:

KEY TRUTHS TO GROWTH

“Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.”

James 1:18 (NKJV)

II. KEY TRUTHS TO GROWTH

Truth is the key that unlocks the door to your destiny. It's the master key to your purpose, identity, freedom, victory, and eternal life. The bible gives us some insight to living a life of perpetual growth. This is how we overcome every stage of life.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Revelation 12:11 (NKJV)

Revelation 12:11 gives us the three key truths to spiritual maturity, overcoming the enemy, and living a Jesus-centered life. We will explore these keys further to learn how these truths help us move through each stage of growth.

1. GRACE OF GOD

When a person chooses to believe in God's _____, they begin to move from exploring Jesus to beginning a relationship with God.

“For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God freely and graciously declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” Romans 3:20-25 (NLT)

A person who has chosen to believe in the truth of God's grace understands that there is nothing they can do or ever will do that can earn their salvation. They understand that their relationship with God is founded on God's free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. They also treat others in the same manner God has treated them by graciously forgiving others as they have been freely forgiven.

2. GOD'S WORD

When a person chooses to believe God's _____ is true, they begin to move from beginning a relationship with Jesus to being close to Jesus.

“And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth

you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ." Colossians 2:6-8 (NLT)

A person who has chosen to believe that God's word is true understands that it is the final authority on how they make all their decisions in their life. They understand that without the truth of God's Word, their life is built on a shifting, sand-like foundation that cannot withstand the trials of life. They look to the word of God to learn about the nature of God, His character. They learn the truth about mankind, male and female, and how we should respond to good. God's word teaches the truth about marriage, sex, family, parenting, finances, friends, and pretty much every aspect of life.

3. GIVING SACRIFICIALLY

When a person understands the truth of _____, they move from being close to Jesus to being centered in Jesus.

"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." Matthew 6:19-21 (NLT)

"If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it." Mark 8:35 (NLT)

"Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked." Luke 6:35 (NLT)

A person who understands the truth of giving has developed a mature, selfless, giving heart that gives to give and not to get. They understand that giving is beyond just money; it is giving our time and talent as well. It's about giving ourselves, which is the type of heart that allows God's Word to produce in them a fruitful life.

PART III:

A HEART OF GROWTH

“Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.”

Hebrews 6:1 (NIV)

III. A

HEART OF GROWTH

Growing in God and becoming a mature believer isn't so much a chronology of growth in which once we arrive at the last step, we are done growing. This is a continual process in which we learn to remain Jesus-centered. Anyone can eventually go backwards, that's called back sliding. So what is the key to remaining God-centered?

In the parable of Mark 4, it speaks of good ground. Good ground represents a good heart. So how can we maintain good ground or a good heart? The same parable is also recorded in the Gospel of Luke and gives insight to maintaining a good heart.

“And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest.” Luke 8:15 (NLT)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A GOOD HEART?

1. Having a good heart is to have a _____ heart.

“Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart.” Psalm 15:1-2 (NKJV)

To have an honest heart is to be honest with ourselves, with God, and with others. An honest heart has the courage to face its own imperfections, the ability to recognize its own faults, and can humbly admit its own wrongs. The more we spend time with God in his word, which reveals His heart to us, the more we will reflect an honest heart.

2. Having a good heart is to have a _____ heart.

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV)

When we become honest with ourselves and realize our faults in a healthy way, this allows us to develop a humble heart. When we are humble, we choose to have a submissive attitude and God promises to heal our land, which represents our heart. In this way we develop good ground in our hearts which allows God's Word to take root and grow inside of us until it produces a harvest. Jesus is humble and as we follow Him we grow in humility. We deal with our pride. I believe the worst kind of pride is false humility. This is when someone wants to appear to be humble. False humility is when we care about pleasing others more than pleasing God. False humility is very subtle and easy to miss. It's serving with the motive

of one day being served. False humility is manipulation with the motive of exalting oneself. So we surrender all pride and false humility so that we can show forth the results the word of God was meant to have in our lives.

3. Having a good heart is to have a _____ heart.

“From the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.” Daniel 10:12 (NKJV)

When we take on a humble and submissive attitude in life, we allow ourselves to become teachable. Instead of becoming defensive or a know-it-all, a teachable heart is always willing to learn things from anyone or re-learn things they already know. I’ve heard it said that, “the more you know, the more you know you don’t know”. A teachable heart is growth conscience because growing people are happy people. When we are continually learning, we are continually living. Armed with enough humility, we can learn from anyone. Our desire is for every person within our church family to grow in honesty, humility, and teachability.

WHAT’S NEXT?

We all have a next step that leads us to growth and maturity in our faith. Take a moment to consider what your next step is.

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” 2 Peter 3:18 (NLT)

SOME NEXT STEPS

1. If you are not currently tithing, consider tithing as your next step. God has commanded us to try Him in this area so that we would grow in blessing.

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field, says the Lord of hosts; and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land, says the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 3:10-12 (NKJV)

2. Continue to step three which focuses on believing in Jesus.

“They will take root in your house, Lord God, and they will do well. They will be like trees that stay healthy and fruitful, even when they are old.” Psalm 92:13-14



PO BOX 4212 FORT WORTH, TX 76164
WWW.TREEOFLIFE.CHURCH