



## Spiritual Growth - 9

**(1) AS NEW BABES IN CHRIST, WHAT SHOULD BE OUR DESIRE SO THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST CAN BE DEVELOPED?**

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*1 Peter 2:2*

**Related Texts:** 1 Peter 1:23; Psalm 19:7; 1 Corinthians 3:1, 2; Hebrews 5:12, 13

When we have a change of heart we become children of God and the Bible calls this being born again. You can compare it to the growing of the good seed in the parable of Jesus that was planted by the farmer. In the same way those who have just given their hearts to Jesus are, “as newborn babes,” to “grow

up” to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. 1 Peter 2:2; Ephesians 4:15. Or like the good seed planted in the field, they are to grow up and bring forth fruit. Isaiah says that they shall “be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.” Isaiah 61:3. We are shown real life examples like these to help us to better understand the mysterious truths of spiritual life.

Even with all the wisdom and skill that man has he cannot make life in even the smallest object in nature. It is only by the life which God alone gives, that either plant or animal can live. It is the same way with our spiritual lives: only through God is spiritual life awakened in our hearts. Unless we are “born again” we cannot have the life which Jesus came to give. John 3:3.

**(2) WHY ARE WE NOT ABLE TO CAUSE OUR OWN SPIRITUAL GROWTH?**

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*1 Corinthians 2:14*

**Related Texts:** 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23, 25, 27; Matthew 13:11; John 3:6; Romans 8:5-8

Just as God is the Source of all life, it is the same with our spiritual life and growth. It is God who brings the buds to bloom and gives fruit. It is by His power that the seed develops, “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” Mark 4:28. And the prophet Hosea says of Israel, that “he shall grow as the lily.” “They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine.” Hosea 14:5, 7. Jesus tells us “consider the lilies how they grow.” Luke 12:27. The plants and flowers do not grow by their own worry or effort, but by God’s life-giving care. A child cannot make himself grow by worry or by his own power. It is the same way with our spiritual growth. We cannot grow spiritually by worry or by our own efforts.

**(3) WHAT ARE TWO SOURCES OF NOURISHMENT REQUIRED FOR A PLANT TO GROW AND ARE SYMBOLICALLY USED IN THESE VERSES TO REPRESENT THE LORD’S INFLUENCE ON OUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH?**

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*Psalms 84:11*

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*Hosea 14:5*

**Related Texts:** Malachi 4:2; Micah 5:7; John 1:9-12; 8:12; Revelation 21:23; 22:17

Both the plant and the child grow by getting from their surroundings the things they need for life. These things are air, sunshine, and food. What these gifts of nature are to the animal and plant, spiritually Jesus is to those who put their trust in Him. He is their “everlasting light,” “a sun and shield.” Isaiah 60:19; Psalm 84:11. “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass.” Psalm 72:6. He is the living water, “the Bread of God ...which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” John 6:33.

God has covered the whole world with the presence of His grace that is as real as the air which surrounds the earth. He did this by giving the unmatched gift of His Son. Everyone who chooses to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow to be mature men and women in Christ Jesus.

When a flower grows it turns to the sun so that the bright beams may help make its beauty and symmetry complete. In the same way we should turn to the Sun of Righteousness so that heaven’s light may shine upon us, and we may become more and more like Christ.

**(4) HOW CAN WE CONTINUE TO GROW IN JESUS AND BE THE BEARER OF GOOD FRUIT?**

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*John 15:5*

**Related Texts:** John 15:4-7; Colossians 2:6; Romans 6:22; Psalm 91:1; John 14:16

Jesus teaches that we have to depend upon Him in order to live a holy life, just as the branch must depend upon the main vine to be able to grow and give fruit. When we are apart from Him we have no life; we have no power to resist when we are tempted; we cannot grow in grace and holiness. But when we walk with Him we can prosper. When we draw

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our life from Him, we will not wither or be without fruit. We will be like “a tree planted by the rivers of water” [Psalms 1:3].

### **(5) WHO IS OUR SOURCE OF FAITH AND HOW DOES IT GROW DURING THE COURSE OF OUR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE?**

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*Hebrews 12:2*

**Related Texts:** Ephesians 2:8; Luke 17:5; Micah 7:7; Hebrews 2:10; Isaiah 8:17; 45:22

Many people think that they have to do the work alone. They have trusted in Jesus to be forgiven of their sins, but now they try by their own efforts to live the right way. Our own efforts will fail. Jesus says, “Without Me ye can do nothing” John 15:5. The way we grow in grace, our joy, and our usefulness all depend upon our bond with Jesus. It is by spending time with Him and abiding in Him each day and each hour that we can grow in grace. He is not only the Author, He is also the Finisher of our faith. We should make Jesus first, last, and always in all that we do. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our journey, but at every step along the way. David says, “I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Psalm 16:8.

### **(6) HOW DO WE CONTINUE TO ABIDE IN CHRIST?**

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*Colossians 2:6, 7*

**Related Texts:** Colossians 1:30; 1 John 5:11, 12, 20; John 14:6; 2 Corinthians 5:7

In the same way as we accepted Him at first, we continue to walk in Him. Hebrews 10:38. We gave ourselves to God to be totally His, to serve and obey Him, and we accepted Jesus as our Saviour. We could not make right our sins or change our own hearts. But since we gave ourselves to God, we believe that He, for Christ’s sake, did all this for us. By faith we became Christ’s and by faith we are to grow in Him. This growth will come by giving and taking as we walk with Him. We are to give our heart, our will, our service, and our obedience to Him. We must accept the fullness of all blessings which is Christ living in our hearts, to be our strength, our goodness, our everlasting helper, and to give us power to obey.

### **(7) WHY IS SEEKING THE LORD AND HIS WISDOM FOR OUR LIFE AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH DAY SO IMPORTANT?**

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*Proverbs 8:17*

**Related Texts:** Psalm 143:8-10; 91:14-16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Matthew 5:6; 6:33; 7:7-11

Give all of yourself to God each morning. Make this the very first thing you do. Let your prayer be, “Take all of me, O Lord, to be Yours, I lay all my plans at Your feet, use me today in Your service. Walk with me and let all I do come from You.” This is something that must be done each day. Each morning dedicate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, let Him decide if they should be carried out or given up. By doing this day by day you will be giving your life into the hands of God, and will become more and more like Christ.

### **(8) WHAT IS THE WAY TO KEEP PEACE IN OUR HEARTS?**

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*Isaiah 26:3, 4*

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*2 Corinthians 3:18*

**Related Texts:** Romans 5:1; Isaiah 57:19-21; John 14:27; 17:3; Ephesians 2:14-16

A life in Christ is a life of peace. There may not always be excited feelings but there will always be a peaceful trust that stays with us. Our hope is not in ourselves, it is in Jesus. Our weakness is joined to His lasting strength, our lack of wisdom to His endless wisdom. We are not to look to ourselves. We should not think about self, but instead always look to Jesus. We should let our minds dwell on His love and on the beauty and perfection of His character. Think about how unselfish and humble He is. Think of how pure and holy He is. Think of His matchless love for all. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending totally upon Him, that we are to be changed and become like Him.

**(9) WHAT INVITATION HAS CHRIST GIVEN TO ALL MANKIND?**

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*Matthew 11:28*

**Related Texts:** Matthew 11:29; Jeremiah 6:16; Isaiah 28:10-12; 48:17, 18; Psalm 94:11-13; 116:7-9; Revelation 22:17; Hebrews 4:1-9; John 6:37; 7:37, 38

Jesus says, "Abide in Me." These words bring to our mind the idea of rest, trust, and assurance in Him. The words of the psalmist express the same thought: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." And Isaiah gives the promise, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Psalm 37:7; Isaiah 30:15. This rest is not found in doing nothing, for in the Saviour's invitation we are asked to "Take My yoke upon you: ...and ye shall find rest." Matthew 11:29. The heart that rests the most fully upon Jesus will be the one eager to do the most work for Him.

**(10) WHAT THREE AVENUES DOES SATAN USE IN ATTEMPTING TO DIVERT US FROM UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST?**

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*Mark 4:19*

**Related Texts:** 1 Timothy 6:9, 10, 17; 1 John 2:15-17; Luke 14:18-20; 21:34-36

When the mind is always thinking about self, it is turned away from Jesus who gives us life and strength. By this diversion Satan is always trying to keep us from thinking about our Saviour and staying close to Him. Satan tries to keep us thinking about the pleasures of this world, life's cares, difficulties and sorrows, the faults of others, or our own faults. All of these are the tools he uses to try to keep our minds from dwelling on Christ and being under His control.

**(11) HOW CAN WE REST IN THE ASSURANCE OF KNOWING WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE?**

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*1 John 5:12, 13*

**Related Texts:** 2 John 9; John 17:2; 3:16-18; 10:28, 29; 1:12; 6:54-58; 15:4-6; Isaiah 41:10

Some people have a sensitive conscience and desire to live for God, but allow Satan to lead them to think about their own sins and weaknesses. By separating them from Jesus he hopes to win the victory. We should not be worrying about whether or not we will be saved. Doing that only turns our hearts away from Jesus who is our Source of strength. Give the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Always talk and think about Jesus. Let thoughts of yourself be lost in Him. Don't have any doubts and don't be afraid. Say with the apostle Paul, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20. Rest in God. He is able to keep you safe when you have given yourself to Him. If you will leave yourself in His hands, you will have the victory through Him that loves you.

**(12) WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE ONCE RIGHTEOUS WHO CHOOSE TO RETURN TO SINFUL WAYS?**

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*Ezekiel 18:24*

**Related Texts:** Ezekiel 18:20-23; 3:20, 21; 33:12-19; 1 Samuel 15:11; Psalm 125:4, 5; 2 Peter 2:20-22 ; 1:10; Hebrews 10:29, 38, 39; 6:4-6

When Jesus took on human nature, He bound us to Himself by a tie of love

that can never be broken by any power. But we have the choice at any time not to accept it [Hebrews 10:29,39; Proverbs 28:18]. Satan will always be trying to tempt us with things to cause this special tie to Jesus to be broken. He will be trying to get us to choose to separate ourselves from Jesus. This is where we need to watch and pray so that nothing can draw us to another master [2 Peter 2:21, 22], which He always gives us freedom to choose. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus, and He will protect us. Looking unto Jesus we are safe. Nothing can pull us out of His hands of safety. When we are always looking unto Him, we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

**(13) WHEN WE HEAR THE CALL OF CHRIST, HOW WILL WE FIND HIM?**

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*Jeremiah 29:13*

**Related Texts:** Jeremiah 29:11-14; Deuteronomy 4:29-31; 30:2-6; Isaiah 55:6, 7

It was by doing this that the early disciples became like our dear Saviour. When the disciples heard the words of Jesus, they felt their need of Him. They searched, they found, and they followed Him. They went with Him everywhere: in the house, to the table, in private places as well as public ones. They were with Him as students are with a teacher. Every day they received from His lips lessons of holy truth. They looked to Him, as servants do to their master, to learn their duty. Those disciples were men "subject to like passions as we are." James 5:17. They had the same battle with sin to fight. They needed the same grace, in order to live a holy life.

**(14) WHAT STATEMENT IN THIS TEXT SHOWS THAT MEN OF GOD ALSO STRUGGLED WITH TEMPTATIONS?**

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*Romans 7:19*

**Related Texts:** Galatians 5:17; James 5:17; Psalms 119:5; Philippians 2:13; 1:6

The disciples had the same battle to fight with sin. They needed the same grace in order to live a holy life. Even John, the “beloved” disciple, the one who came to reflect most closely the likeness of the Saviour, did not naturally have that beauty of character. He not only tried to put himself before others, he tried very hard to get glory for himself. He was also blind to good, and bitter when he was hurt. But as the character of Jesus was shown to him, he saw his own failures and became humble when he realized it. His heart was filled with admiration and love as he saw the strength, patience, power, tenderness, and meekness in the daily life of the Son of God. Day by day his heart was drawn closer to Jesus. He lost sight of self because of love for his Master. He gave his bitter and strong temper to Christ for Him to change. The rebuilding power of the Holy Spirit made his heart new. The power of the love of Jesus brought a change in his character. This is the sure result when we are one with Jesus. When Christ lives in our heart, our whole nature is changed. Christ’s Spirit and His love softens our heart, tames our soul, and brings our thoughts and desires toward God and heaven.

**(15) WHAT GREAT PROMISE OF COMFORT DID JESUS LEAVE FOR HIS FOLLOWERS AS HE ASCENDED TO HEAVEN?**

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*Matthew 28:20*

**Related Texts:** John 14:3, 12, 16, 18, 26; Luke 24:50, 51; Isaiah 41:10, 13

When Christ went to heaven, His followers could still feel His presence with them. It was a presence as if He were still there in person, full of love and light. Jesus the Saviour, who had walked, talked and prayed with them, who had spoken words of hope and comfort to their hearts, had been taken from them into heaven while this message of peace was still upon His lips. The sound of His voice had come back to them. As the cloud of angels greeted Him, He spoke the words, “Lo, I am with you always.” He rose up to heaven in the form of a man. They knew that He was now before the throne of God, and He was their Friend and Saviour still. They knew that His sympathies were unchanged and that He was still one with them. He could relate with those still in this suffering world. He was showing to God the merits of His own precious blood, showing His bloodstained hands and feet in remembrance of the price He had paid for those He saved. They knew that He went to heaven to prepare places for them, and He would come back again and take them to be with Him there.

**(16) HOW IS JESUS ABLE TO ALWAYS BE IN THE HEARTS OF HIS FOLLOWERS?**

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*John 14:16*

**Related Texts:** John 14:17, 23; 16:7-11, 13; 15:26; Romans 8:14-16

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As the followers of Jesus met together after He had risen to heaven, they were eager to bring their prayers to the Father in the name of Jesus. In deep respect and awe they bowed in prayer, claiming the promise of John 16:23, 24. They used their faith more and more and believed that “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Romans 8:34. Pentecost brought them the presence of the Comforter, of whom Jesus had said, He “shall be in you.” He had also said, “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” John 14:17; 16:7. From that time forward through the Holy Spirit, Jesus would always be in the hearts of His children. They were closer now to Him than when He was there in person. The light, love, and power of Jesus living in them now was seen by others in such a way that, when they were with them they, “marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” Acts 4:13.

### **(17) WHO ELSE DID CHRIST PRAY FOR AS HE PRAYED FOR HIS DISCIPLES?**

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*John 17:20*

**Related Texts:** John 17:9; 16:26; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1, 2

All that Jesus was to the disciples, He desires to be to His children today. In that last prayer, with the little group of disciples gathered around Him, He remembered us along with them. Jesus prayed for us, and He asked that we might be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father. What a union this

is! Jesus said this about Himself, “The Son can do nothing of Himself” “the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.” John 5:19; 14:10.

### **(18) IF WE DAILY ABIDE IN CHRIST AND WORK WITH HIM BY SHARING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT?**

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*Ephesians 4:15*

**Related Texts:** 1 Peter 1:22; 2:2; John 15:5; 1 John 3:18, 19, 22; Proverbs 11:25

With Christ living in our hearts, He will work in us “both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Philippians 2:13. We will work as He worked and will show the same spirit. By loving Him and walking with Him, we will “grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

*I realize that when I come to Christ, I begin a growth process that He works in me over the course of my life.*

**Circle:    Yes    Undecided**

*In my relationship with Christ there is nothing I can do: neither worry or works, that will cause my spiritual growth.*

**Circle:    Yes    Undecided**

*I choose to do my part to seek Him and put myself in His life-giving atmosphere so He will help me to grow.*

**Circle:    Yes    Undecided**