

Growing in Christ Jesus

¹⁵ *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,... {Ephesians 4:15}*

Now that you are a saved and a member of the church, exactly what does that mean for you? First of all, you received Christ as your personal Savior. Having done so, you are now a Christian. Beware, others who have not received Christ as their Savior may throw the word *Christian* around loosely to further their own hidden agenda. Yes, we are Christians, more specifically, we can define ourselves as Christ Followers. Jesus gave us the Great Commission which is to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Sam Rainier stated in his book the 7 Basics of Belonging, that “the purpose of following Jesus is to be more like Him. Discipleship in its simplest form is defined as being more like Jesus” (pg. 26). A disciple is a learner. The point is not information, but transformation.

Last month we discovered that ‘Worship is the first basic of belonging to the church (Rainier, pg. 15). Church membership is not stagnant but dynamic. Remaining a babe in Christ should not be our vocation or final aspiration. Scripture admonishes us to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 6:1). As disciples of Christ, we are to grow spiritually. The bible references growth many times [Col. 2:7, 1 Peter 2:1-3, 2 Peter 3:18, 1Cor.13:11, John 15:5, Ephesians 4:13-16). According to Rainier, the second basic of belonging is spiritual growth (pg. 26). Just as the physical body needs nutrition to grow, so do our Spiritual beings need a healthy diet. God uses His Word to facilitate and nurture our growth but, we must take steps to grow. Since it does not happen without effort, we must be intentional about it. It begins with hearing the preached or taught Word on Sundays and/or Bible studies through the week. To avoid stunted growth, we should feed our spirits and minds continually on God’s Word.

Spiritual growth is a key purpose of the church (Rainier, pg. 26). We look to the church to provide opportunities for growth and it does, particularly every Sunday morning. Moreover, there are ways we can continue the growth process by self- study tools, books, cell phone apps, bible schools, online classes, and studies through our district and national associations. Rainier suggested that there are ways to personally foster growth; through spiritual disciplines of meditations, prayer, fasting, and confession. Daily Bible reading and personal devotion time are imperative to being a follower of Christ (pg. 30).

Isolation does not produce disciples, but disciples are made through the ministry of the church (pg.28). According to Rainier, spiritual growth occurs in proximity to others. Disciples help others grow into mature believers. Attending Sunday Church School and Church Bible studies on a regular basis are wonderful ways to grow spiritually in proximity to others and to increase knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. Interacting with fellow believers, whether in person or virtually, can help us remain motivated and committed to learning and growing.

Peter instructed us to long for or crave pure spiritual milk that we may grow up into salvation [ESV]. The Greek text literally says we grow “into” our salvation. Dr. John Koessler stated that we are growing into “the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” as related in Ephesians 4:13. (Dr. John Koessler, “*Growing Into Salvation*” Today In the Word, Jan, 2022) Paul related in the Ephesians passage that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro carried by every wind

of doctrine, by the trickery of men... [Ephes. 4:14] “Ultimately, it God who makes us grow. He has given His Word and those who teach it. His Holy Spirit grants understanding and empowers us to obey it. God is the source of our spiritual life and the secret behind our spiritual growth.” [Dr. John Koessler, *Today in the Word*, Jan. 2022] Let us *grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ,....* {Ephesians 4:15}