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Growth - Some Things It Involves - by Ken Weliever Louisville, Kentucky

There are many terms in the New Testament to describe the Christian. He is a disciple, a child of God, a brother or sister, a branch, a sheep, a lively stone, a believer, a light, leaven, a watchman, a sower, a soldier, and even a saint. All of these expressions reflect some quality or characteristic that should identify a Christian. From the standpoint of the new birth, a new Christian is a babe in Christ as the following passages indicate. "For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe" (**Heb. 5:13**). "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby" (**1 Pet. 2:2**). "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (**1 Thess. 2:17**).

The Christian is like an infant that is weak, young, inexperienced, but growing through the nourishment of

milk. Just as we see growth in the physical development of a baby that becomes a toddler, then a preschooler, then grows to childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, we should witness Christians experiencing growth. But what are some things that growth involves?

Growth Involves Change

Infants seem to change almost daily right before our very eyes. There is a change in their physical appearance, eating habits, moods and abilities. Our hearts are touched by children whose growth is retarded. We know this is not natural. We expect our children to grow, and this involves changes.

As a Christian grows, he also changes. His new birth brought about a change of relationship from serving Satan to serving Jesus Christ (**Rom. 6:17-18**). He then begins to change his attitudes (**1 Cor. 13:11**) and his actions (**Eph. 5:22-24**). His

faith grows (**2 Thess. 1:3**). Growth also brings about a change in knowledge and understanding. The Hebrews were rebuked because they had not grown as they ought to have grown (**5:12-14**).

As a church grows, it will also change. There is change in leadership as individuals develop in this capacity and desire the work of a bishop (**1 Tim. 3:1**). As a church grows and changes it abounds in love, develops in knowledge and displays a keen insight into the needs of its members and those in the community who are lost in sin (**Phil. 1:9-11**). And while the gospel certainly does not change, the means and methods of presenting the gospel will change as a church grows. Improvement in Bible class teaching, use of radio and television, the printed page, audio tapes, video tapes and computers, all reflect a change in methods in presenting and preaching the old Jerusalem gospel. Many brethren are slow to change, but change in the right ways reflects growth.

Growth Involves Challenges

Are there challenges as children grow to maturity? Are there challenges in dealing with

four and five year olds? Twelve year olds? Teenagers? What's the answer? Just keep them babies? Obviously not. Growth brings on challenges.

Spiritual growth involves challenges. The five talent man in **Matthew 25** had more responsibility than the one or two talent man. He also had a greater challenge. Growth doesn't mean that life gets easier; the challenges just get bigger, but the rewards are better! Eating meat is harder than drinking milk.

Remember when the children of Israel crossed from one side of the Red Sea to the other? When they changed sides, they became free, but they had new challenges to face in the wilderness. Some cried, "Let's go back to Egypt! Back to the flesh pots!" May we learn from them and not yearn to return to the days of slavery. Growth means marching forward and meeting every challenge.

Growth Involves Pain

What child has not experienced pain in growing up? A baby tries to walk, but falls down and skins its knee. Does the parent say, "I don't want my baby's knees skinned, so I'm not going to let him walk." Children

get their share of bumps and bruises while learning to swing or ride a bike, but it's part of growth.

Spiritual growth may also involve some pain. **Hebrews 5:14** teaches that we must exercise our senses in order to discern both good and evil. The word "exercise" refers to the rigorous training and discipline of the body in which Greek youths engaged. The apostle Paul said such exercise had some profit, but it is limited in time and in results. Spiritual training develops the whole man in body, mind and spirit and will not only affect time, but eternity as well (**1 Tim. 6:8**). Paul also said that he had to beat or bruise his body into shape so that he might not be disqualified from the Christian race (**1 Cor. 9:24-27**). Someone has said, "There is no gain without pain and no victory without struggle." This is true physically; it is true spiritually.

Growth Involves Joy

Is there any joy in a parent whose children have grown up and become successful in life? We take justifiable pride in seeing our children grow in body and in mind. It's exciting to see them learn new things and develop new skills.

Likewise, spiritual growth is joyous! The apostle John said, "I have no greater joy than to hear my children walk in truth" (**3 Jn. 4**). Eighteen times in the short book of Philippians, Paul speaks of his joy or that of his growing brethren at Philippi. There is joy in a growing faith that walks in the truth of God! There is joy in serving Christ! There is joy in seeing a babe in Christ grow and develop into a mature, full grown spiritual man or woman. There is joy when we overcome and out grow our childish thoughts, actions and manners! Remember, happiness comes not to those who wait, but to those who create. You must grow.

Conclusion

Goldsmith once wrote, "People seldom improve when they have no other model but themselves to pattern after." We have Christ as our model and example. Thus we cannot be content to dwell in the mists of the valley of Hinnom, when the mount of Transfiguration awaits! Let us "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (**2 Pet. 3:18**). ---- **Via Guardian of Truth XXXII: 12, pp. 370-371 June 16, 1988**

How Old Is Grandma? Via Whit Sasser

How old do you think grandma would be for the following to be true?

- I was born, before television, penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, Xerox, contact lenses, Frisbees and the pill.
- There were no credit cards, laser beams or ball-point pens. Man had not invented pantyhose, air conditioners, dishwashers, clothes dryers, and the clothes were hung out to dry in the fresh air and man had yet to walk on the moon.
- Grandfather and I got married first and then lived together. Every family had a father and a mother. Until I was 25 I called every man older than me, "Sir" - - and after I turned 25, I still called policemen and every man with a title, "Sir".
- We were before gay-rights, computer-dating, dual careers, day-care centers, and group therapy. Our lives were governed by the Ten Commandments, good judgment, and common sense. We were taught to know the difference between right and wrong and to stand up and take responsibility for our actions.
- Serving your country was a privilege; living in this country was a bigger privilege. We thought fast food was what people ate during Lent.
- Having a meaningful relationship meant getting along with cousins.
- Draft-dodgers were people who closed their front doors when the evening breeze started.
- Time-sharing meant time the family spent together in the evenings and weekends -- not purchasing condominiums.
- We never heard of FM radios, tape decks, CDs, electric typewriters, yogurt, or guys wearing earrings. We listened to the Big Bands, Jack Benny, and the President's speeches on our radios.
- And I don't ever remember any kid blowing his brains out listening to Tommy Dorsey. If you saw anything with 'Made in Japan' on it, it was junk. The term 'making out' referred to how you did on your school exam.
- Pizza Hut, McDonald's, and instant coffee were unheard of. We had 5 & 10-cent store where you could actually buy things for 5 and 10 cents.
- Ice-cream cones, phone calls, rides on a streetcar, and a Pepsi were all a nickel. And if you didn't want to splurge, you could spend your nickel on enough stamps to mail one letter and two postcards.
- You could buy a new Chevy Coupe for \$600, but who could afford one? Too bad, because gas was 11 cents a gallon. In my day, "grass" was mowed, "coke" was a cold drink, "pot" was something your mother cooked in, and "rock music" was your grandmother's lullaby.
- "Aids" were helpers in the Principal's office, "chip" meant a piece of wood, "hardware" was found in a hardware store, and "software" wasn't even a word.
- And we were the last generation to actually believe that a lady needed a husband to have a baby. No wonder people call us "old and confused" and say there is a generation gap..... and how old do you think I am ???.....

Grandma is only in her mid sixties. ---- anonymous

This Article was written many years ago, which would make Grandma several years older than mid 60's - the principle still applies!