

“Growing in Christ”

Series: Revealed: What We Learned from the Spiritual Life Survey

Part 2

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I. A Heart to Grow

- a. The verdict is in...the results have come back from the spiritual life survey.
- b. We haven't processed it with our leadership yet, but let me give you a tidbit...49% of those who responded to the survey are in the category we are going to explore this morning....Growing in Christ.
- c. Last week I noted that there are four stages...Exploring Christ, Growing in Christ, Close to Christ, and Centered.
- d. 49% of those who responded are in this category...this stage of development.
- e. I think its the result of years of being a church that focused on putting most of our resources into reaching people outside the Kingdom...
- f. From a church perspective, I look at this the same way that you and I look at our personal spiritual journey...this is where we are. This is not where we will stay.
- g. Based on the outcome of the study (and I am still studying the results, and we have yet to process them in Management Team and Staff) we'll need to adjust our strategy accordingly to help each of us grow.
- h. By the way...I don't believe there's anyone here who doesn't want to grow in their faith. I believe you get it...you understand how important it is to stay on an effective growth trajectory.
- i. That said...SOME among us WANT to grow more than others.
- j. Some would like growth to happen like osmosis...sort of without any effort...we wish...
- k. Other's know the truth...it takes work...attention... intentionality.

II. Growth According to Paul

- a. Philippians 3:12-14 – Paul's perspective on growth.
- b. A bit of background...
- c. Acts 15:36-16:12 tells the story of how the Philippian church got planted...
- d. The Philippian church is a unique church in scripture...

- e. The Philippian church is the first church to be planted in Europe. **Philippi** was a city in eastern [Macedonia](#), in northern [ancient Greece](#), established by [Philip II](#) in [356 BC](#) and abandoned in the 14th century after the [Ottoman](#) conquest. The present municipality [Filippi](#) is located near the ruins of the ancient city and it is part of the periphery of [East Macedonia](#) in [Greece](#).
- f. The church at Philippi is the only church I am aware of in the New Testament that is used as a model for other churches to follow.
- g. The Book of Philippians helps us to define biblical fellowship.
- h. Philippians is a book that helps us get a proper perspective on unjust suffering, persecution, and even death.
- i. It was a relatively healthy church...FYI...never take for granted that ALL the New Testament churches were healthy...
- j. Here's what Paul had to say to them regarding spiritual growth.
- k. ¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
- l. Let's take a few minutes to break this down...
- m. "¹²Not that I have already obtained all this" ...Paul knew...this is a process.
- n. "or have already been made perfect"...Paul was honest about his progress...not perfect...
- o. "but I press on..." Do you ever get discouraged that you haven't grown more? Probably all of us have times when we want to give up...but Paul didn't...and neither can we.
- p. "to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" Get this clear...if you are a follower of Jesus, you are a follower of Jesus because Jesus took hold of you...which is another reason why we can't quit.
- q. "¹³Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it." It's amazing to be that Paul would have this very honest perspective...Paul never assumed that he had arrived...
- r. "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind..." Some of us have failed. Sometimes quite impressively. Enough to make us think we can never
- s. ...straining toward what is ahead,

- t. ¹⁴I press on toward the goal
- u. to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.
- v. What is that prize? A life centered on Him, a life of meaning and purpose.
- w. A life where the good things we do are a by product of the good things he is doing IN us.
- x. He didn't redeem us to just have great workers. He redeemed us because our goal, both here and in eternity is to become more like Him.

III. Stages and attitudes

- a. I talked last week about stages...stages of spiritual growth. Predictable, identifiable stages we all pass through on our way to Christian maturity.
- b. There are some signature attitudes for each stage of spiritual development.
- c. Exploring – I believe in God but I am not sure about Christ. My faith is not a significant part of my life.
- d. Growing – I believe in Jesus and am working on what it means to get to know him.
- e. Close – I feel really close to Christ and depend on him daily for guidance.
- f. Centered – My relationship with Jesus is the most important relationship in my life. It guides everything I do.

IV. Movements

- a. Last week I talked about the need for a map when we go on a journey.
- b. It's important to know how to get from one place to the next. The same is true of our spiritual life and particularly spiritual growth.
- c. If you are one of those who are in the stage of development we call Growing in Christ, then the big question is this: How do you get to the next stage?
- d. Last week we talked about some things we need to do (spiritual activities)to move from Exploring to Growing...
- e. Those three things were these: Attend weekend worship regularly, commit to a small group, and serve the church.
- f. There was also the need to embrace certain core beliefs...
 - a. Salvation by grace – Ephesians 2:8–9
 - b. The Trinity – 2 Corinthians 13:14
 - c. Personal God – Psalm 121

- d. Christ is first – Matthew 6:33
- e. The authority of the Bible – 2 Timothy 3:16–17
- f. Your identity in Christ – John 1:12–13
- g. Biblical stewardship – 1 Timothy 6:17–19
- h. The Personal Spiritual Practices that move us from Exploring to Growing are these:
 - i. Reflection on scripture
 - j. Bible reading...the difference between these is that in reflection we take one passage and live with it. With reading, its to gain a broader familiarity.
 - k. Psalm 119:11 [Psalm 119:11](#)
I have **hidden your word** in my heart that I might not sin against you.
 - l. Spending time in the Bible is hands down the highest impact personal spiritual practice.
 - m. Prayer for guidance.
 - n. Prayer to confess sin.

V. From Growing to Close...

- a. If that's what we do to move from Exploring to Growing... what do we do to move from Growing to Close?
- b. The people in this stage have a personal relationship with Christ. They've made a commitment to trust him with their salvation and for their eternity, but they are just beginning to learn what it means to be in relationship with him,
- c. Let's think in terms of things: Personal Spiritual Practices, Spiritual Activities, Church Activities,
- d. Personal Spiritual Practices...
- e. Reflection on scripture
- f. Bible reading
- g. Prayer for guidance
- h. Tithing – we don't often think of tithing as something that grows us...mostly we think of it as something the church says we must do. Here's the thing...until we learn to trust him with our money, we'll be slow to trust him with the rest of our lives.
- i. Solitude – we need early on to cultivate the practice of getting alone with God...to develop the ability to hear His still small voice in our hearts.

VI. Spiritual Activities

- a. These are things that we do to keep us on the growing edge of our faith.

- b. Evangelism – I don't mean door knocking. I mean engaging in spiritual conversations with our friends throughout the year. Engaging our friends on their spiritual questions.
- c. This doesn't call for you to be Billy Graham...simply that you will be willing to talk about where you are in your faith and your experience with Jesus Christ.
- d. Spiritual friendships – I talked about this last week...this is the wonderful thing of having people in our lives with whom we can take our questions, our thoughts, our doubts, our learnings, our joys...
- e. Serving those in need on my own. It's one thing to serve the poor through the church...but imagine finding ways to serve on your own...not just as a part of GCC's vision, but of God's vision for your life.
- f. Spiritual mentors – This is an area for growth for us as a church. Here's the thing...it's VERY helpful to have people in your life who you can learn from. For Timothy it was Paul.

VII.Organized Church Activities

- a. IN order for us to move from the growing stage to the close stage, we need to engage in some organized efforts which the church is offering...
- b. Serve those in need through my church. The Mobile Soup Kitchen is a prime example of this kind of service. Twice a week a dozen or so committed volunteers prepare meals and deliver them to those less fortunate around our area.
- c. Serve the church. Serving the church matters. Sometimes I hear rather cynical things about serving the church. Like it's a bad thing to serve here. The truth is this...God invested in each of us certain spiritual gifts that according to scripture are DESIGNED to be used in the church. I say it all the time...when you don't serve...you are withholding those gifts from the Body of Christ and we are impoverished because of it. This is the truth...we NEED what God has placed in YOU.
- d. Attend Adult Education Classes focused on Spiritual Topics. I'm looking for some mono-maniacs who have particular topics they'd like to teach on...to share with other believers. We need to develop and release more teachers around here.
- e. Small groups...what do I need to say about this?

VIII.What's Next?

- a. We'll be distributing a brochure in the next week or two that will help you further grasp these concepts.

- b. I hope we can begin to more adult education opportunities so that we can help you gain more tools for your spiritual life.
- c. Also, I hope and pray that there what will develop is a all encompassing, pervasive attitude of following Jesus with abandon...to know Him more as well as knowing more about Him.
- d. I pray that a year from now we can look back on this period and this study and see that it was a turning point in GCC becoming a more balanced, fully orbbed ministry.
- e. Sooner or later everybody's gotta grow up. I believe our time is now.