

Growing Through the Word (Bible)



SABBATH—JUNE 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 22:37, 38; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 5:14; Ephesians 4:14, 15; Hebrews 4:2; Hebrews 5:12-14.

MEMORY VERSE: “We will no longer be babies in the faith. We will grow up into Christ in every way. He is the Head” (Ephesians 4:14, 15, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: The Bible is very important in helping us grow in Christ.

THE BIBLE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT OUR WALK WITH CHRIST DOES NOT STOP ON THE DAY OF CONVERSION.¹ Instead, when people give themselves to Christ, they begin a whole new life (Romans 6:4). This does not mean that a new Christian has to work to reach salvation,² as in other faiths. Instead, the Christian already has salvation. He or she already stands perfect and accepted in God. For this reason, the Christian begins to live a life that shows that salvation. Sure, we are saved by faith. But what kind of faith? It is a faith that is shown in a life that serves Jesus Christ.

Very important to our new life in Christ is spiritual growth. As Christians, we cannot remain the same. We are always changing to better show the image of Jesus Christ. And important to spiritual growth is the Word of God. The Bible shows us how and why we must “grow in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Get to know him [Jesus] better” (2 Peter 3:18, NIV).

This week we will study what it means to grow in Christ. And we will see how important the Word of God is to that growth.

¹conversion—the time when a person fully accepts Jesus as his or her Savior and repents of past sin.

²salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

SUNDAY—JUNE 17**THE NEED FOR GROWTH
(John 3:3, 5)**

Nicodemus went to see Jesus by night. Nicodemus asked Jesus how to have eternal (without end) life. Jesus said that we need to be born again (John 3:3, 5). This condition shows that a Christian life begins as a baby. The beginning of a Christian life is pictured as a new birth. The new believer is considered a baby in Christ. So it is important for every Christian to be “bottle-fed.” This gives each of us the chance to grow.



Nicodemus asked Jesus how to have eternal life.

Peter encouraged believers to “grow in the grace³ and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18, NIV). Earlier, Peter used a new-birth example to make

³grace—God’s mercy to us.

⁴spiritual walk—growing close to Jesus every day.

⁵righteousness—God’s character that is given to us; holiness.

⁶character—who you are; your character is the sum of the choices you make, such as a decision to be honest or to cheat.

this point (1 Peter 1:23). Then Peter encouraged his readers to desire the “milk of the word [Bible].” This would help them grow (1 Peter 2:1-3).

What point is Paul making in Hebrews 5:12-14 about growth in Christ? How does Paul describe the faith of a new believer? And how does he show the difference between the faith of a new believer and the faith of someone who has grown in Christ for a long time?

In 2 Corinthians 7:1, Paul shows that accepting Jesus is not the end of our spiritual walk⁴ but the beginning. There is a need for growth. “Perfecting holiness” means to bring our walk to a complete finish. Paul also warned followers of Christ to lead a life worthy of their call (Ephesians 4:1).

The Bible says that we are saved by faith. Our acceptance with God is based on the righteousness⁵ of Jesus. God gives this righteousness to us by grace through faith alone.

But the Christian life is one of growth in Christ and change for the better. We are to change, and for the better. Our lives are to show more and more the character⁶ of God (read 1 Peter 1:14-16).

Look over your life as a Christian, no matter how long you have been one. In what areas have you seen much growth in Christ

and maturity?⁷ What are the weaker areas? Why must your hope of salvation⁸ depend on Christ's righteousness (goodness) and not on yourself?

MONDAY—JUNE 18

GROWING IN FAITH (Hebrews 4:2)

In Hebrews 3 and 4 Paul talks about the children of Israel. After escaping from Egypt, the children of Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years. What is most interesting is what Paul said about the children of Israel in Hebrews 4:2.

What was the problem with the children of Israel in Hebrews 4:2? What were they missing?



God performed miracle after miracle for the children of Israel, leading them out of Egypt.

What bothers us so much is that this generation of God's people had so much proof of His leading. Go back over the story of the Exodus and of what happened to them in the desert. God did miracle after miracle. He parted the Red Sea for them so they could escape the Egyptians. God gave His people manna to eat each day. But they still lacked faith!

What lessons about faith can we learn from this story? Read Hebrews 3:12.

So often people think that if they had more signs from God and more proof, their faith in God would grow. But it does not work that way. Faith, or no faith, is not a matter of the mind. It is not a matter of signs and wonders. Instead, faith is a matter of the heart. We grow in faith as we surrender (give fully) our hearts and souls to the Lord. We can grow in faith only through using our faith. We grow in faith when we study God's Word with a heart open to learn from Him.

God is the Creator of faith. We must put our trust in Him. Faith grows through study of the Word (Bible) (Romans 10:17). But we must take the time to study the Word. We must study with a heart and mind surrendered to the Lord. Then we will know more about our loving God. And the more we know God, the more we love and trust Him. The more we can trust Him, the more we do whatever He wants us

⁷maturity—being full grown.

⁸salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

to do. We must study the Word of God if we want our faith to grow.

A number of years ago, a scholar (thinker) stopped believing in Jesus. He told someone later, “If only I had kept up reading my Bible. If only I had studied it. If only I had used it in my life. Then I probably would not have lost my faith.” How important is your faith to you? You can know the answer by this simple question: How carefully do you guard and keep that faith strong?

TUESDAY—JUNE 19

GROWING IN LOVE (1 Corinthians 13:8)

The Bible says that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves, too. We are to love our enemies and our fellow believers. These are God’s commands. These commands are not always easy to follow. This is because we are selfish sinners who love self above everything else. If you love someone, that person is usually someone who loves you back. But the Bible says that is not enough (Matthew 5:44). It really takes growing in the Lord to be able to love those who do not love you and those who are your enemies.

What point is Paul making in 1 Corinthians 13:8? Why is that point so important? What does

that point tell us about how important and powerful love is? Matthew 22:37, 38; Galatians 5:14; 1 John 3:14; 1 John 4:7, 8, 16.

The word *love* is used so often that it is easy to forget what it really means. Bible examples show that love is something we do rather than simply an emotion (feeling). The Bible speaks about love as attitude⁹ and actions (1 Corinthians 13). We know that love will push us to action. The Bible clearly gives an example of what true love really is: “We know what love is because Jesus gave His life for us. So we should give our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16). To love like this, we need to think about the rights, interests, and hurts of others. And we can do this only through the power of God, as we grow in Him and His grace.



We might make a million mistakes, but love can never be one.

⁹attitude—a way of thinking, acting, or feeling.

How often have you been wrong? Wrong about Bible study? Wrong about doctrine? Wrong about the reasons for other people's actions? But love never fails! Whatever mistakes we make, we can never go wrong when we love others. We might make a million mistakes, but love can never be one. Not when we are commanded to love even our enemies. Try to think about what our witness¹⁰ would be like if all Christians loved the way Christ loved.

Look at how you treat people. What do your actions say about how well you love these people? What do these actions say to you about how to love as God wants us to love?

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 20

GROWING IN CHRIST (Ephesians 4:14, 15)

How does Paul describe growth in Christ in Ephesians 4:14, 15?

The Bible is our final authority¹¹ on what we believe. Then, studying God's Word is very important in helping us grow in Christ. Knowing the Word and its teaching protects from the lies and tricks of other people.

But it is not enough just to read the Bible. We need to obey it. We need to follow what it says. If not, we will see no change in ourselves. By obeying, by trying to be like Christ in our words, in what we do, and even in our minds, we will grow in Him.

Paul wrote to the Romans that we are called to be like Christ (Romans 8:28, 29). This means our thoughts, too (2 Corinthians 10:5). If our thoughts are right, our words and actions and attitudes¹² will be too. By keeping our hearts pure, our words and actions will be pure, too.

How does Galatians 2:20 teach us to grow in the Lord?

We can never grow in Christ without giving ourselves totally to Christ. Paul talked about his being "crucified with Christ" so that Jesus could live in him. Being crucified with Christ means we no longer follow the desires of human flesh. Instead, we now follow the commands of God. Our decisions (choices) are no longer based only on what we think. Rather, Christ is now Lord of our lives. And our actions should show His Lordship in us. This surrender¹³ takes place day by day. Surrender is something that must be part of our walk with Christ day by day, moment by moment. The moment we start letting self rule, sin is to blame. And sin leads to death.

¹⁰witness—when the Christian life is an example of God.

¹¹authority—the influence or power that creates respect and trust.

¹²attitudes—ways of thinking, doing, or feeling.

¹³surrender—to give one's whole life to Jesus.



To be crucified with Christ means dying to self so that Jesus can live in us.

What are some of your own experiences in surrendering to Christ? What happens? How do you feel? What are the results? What have you learned that you could share with others who are trying to have the same experience? Share your answers with your class on Sabbath.

THURSDAY—JUNE 21

**GROWING IN THE SPIRIT
(John 3:5)**

Jesus told Nicodemus that “no one can enter God’s kingdom without being born through water and the Holy Spirit” (John 3:5, NlrV). Born of water means baptism.¹⁴ And born of the Spirit is conversion. Conversion means that the Holy Spirit comes within us at the moment of spiritual

birth. Just as a baby needs to grow, the newly baptized member needs to grow in the Holy Spirit. “‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth’” (John 16:13, NlrV). This means that the Spirit has a very important duty to guide every Christian into all truth. The Spirit reminds us of the things that the Bible says. This is because the truth is the Word of God (John 17:17). The Spirit also has the duty of letting us know about the true condition¹⁵ of our souls (see John 16:8).

As we grow in Christian living, we need to grow in the Spirit. Growing in the Spirit means that we are more and more open to His leading. We know that the Spirit is talking to us, because we know the Word of God. And the Spirit will guide us to the Word of God.

How can we grow in the Spirit? Read the verses listed below. What principles (rules) needed for spiritual growth¹⁶ are found there?

Matthew 5:6 _____

Galatians 3:11 _____

Galatians 5:16 _____

¹⁴baptism—when a person is put completely under water and brought back up out of it.

¹⁵condition—the way a person or thing is; a state of being.

¹⁶spiritual growth—becoming more like Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:15 _____

1 Peter 3:11 _____

1 John 1:9 _____

Jesus in Luke 11:13 makes it clear how ready the Holy Spirit is for those who want Him. But God never forces Himself on us. God has shown us who He is and what He has done for us. In our hearts, we ourselves have to make choices about faith every day. They are the choices to believe, obey God, surrender¹⁷ our lives to Him, and confess¹⁸ our sins. Good choices will help us to grow in grace¹⁹ and in the Spirit. Poor choices will lead us toward eternal²⁰ ruin.

Is there anything in your life, such as what you read or watch or do, that could reduce (weaken) the influence²¹ of the Holy Spirit? What might those things be? Why not let the Holy Spirit lead you to do what you need to do about these

¹⁷surrender—to give one’s whole life to Jesus.

¹⁸confess—to tell Jesus what sins you have done.

¹⁹grace—God’s mercy to us.

²⁰eternal—forever; without end.

²¹influence—the power to act on or affect persons or things.

²²spiritual life—our relationship with Jesus.

²³human—man, woman, or child.

²⁴mature—full grown.

²⁵bread of life—to eat the bread of life means to let Jesus live His life through us.

²⁶water of salvation—the forgiveness of Jesus for our sins; to drink the water of salvation means to accept Jesus’ death on the cross, which washes away the guilt of our sins.

things? This is because the longer you wait, the harder it will be for you to listen to His voice.

FRIDAY—JUNE 22

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, “Growing Up Into Christ,” pp. 67–75, in *Steps to Christ*.

“The Author [God] of the spiritual life²² is unseen. And the way He creates and supports this life is something the human²³ mind cannot understand or explain. But the work of the Spirit always follows the Written Word [Bible]. As in the natural world, so in the spiritual world. For example, the natural life is kept going moment by moment by God’s power. This is not done by a direct miracle, but through the use of blessings placed within our reach. So in the same way, the spiritual life is kept going by the use of those things that God has given. The follower of Christ would ‘become mature,²⁴ attaining to [reaching] the whole measure of the fullness of Christ’ (Ephesians 4:13, NIV). To become so the Christian must eat of the bread of life²⁵ and drink of the water of salvation.²⁶ He must watch and pray and work. He must listen to what God in His Word tells him to do.”

—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*,²⁷ pp. 284, 285.

“Sabbath keepers must use the time they now have to become mature [grow] in Christ Jesus. They must be educated and refined [made pure in heart]. If they do not do this, they will not bring honor to the cause of truth or to Christ.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*²⁸ for the Church, vol. 4, pp. 358, 359.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ What useful steps can you take to help other church members who are

trying to grow in the Lord but feel they have made very little progress (growth)? What hope and advice can you offer them?

❷ As a class, go over your answers to Wednesday’s last question. What can you learn about giving yourselves completely to God from one another’s experiences?

❸ What things get in the way of growing in Christ? What things in your life work against growing in Christ? What are your defenses²⁹ against these things?

²⁷apostles—God’s disciples (followers) who preached the gospel after Jesus returned to heaven.

²⁸testimonies—a statement about one’s belief in God. The writings of Ellen G. White.

²⁹defenses—the means of keeping safe from harm or danger.