

Real Growth in My Life

My Life--part 2

Ephesians 4:14-32

February 24, 2013

DAY 1

Your life is important to you. Your life is important to God.

- God has called us to something great.
- God has a role for us to play. You have to play it. It just doesn't happen.

Growth in the Christian life is slow, methodical, and intentional. It doesn't just happen. It takes effort.

Ephesians 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

1. How is the first way Paul describe our initial condition as new Christians?

2. What do you think of when you think of a real infant?

3. Paul also describes us as new Christians like a ship on the high seas. What things are true of that ship?

4. Recently, the Carnival Cruise Line had a ship that lost power due to an engine fire. It was at the mercy of the sea. How was that great ship's plight similar to what Paul describes as spiritual immaturity?

5. From where does Paul see this "wind" of teaching originating?

6. Sound biblical teaching is meant to move you from "infanthood" to childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

In the following passage identify and underline three different stages of spiritual maturity:

1 John 2:12 I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. ¹³ I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. ¹⁴ I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

7. Which one are you? Do you have elements of two? Or three? Spend a few minutes in prayer for your growth.

DAY 2

Yesterday we discovered the need for sound, biblical teaching. The bible describes different kinds of teaching that can lead us astray, or **stunt our growth**.

Ephesians 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things **grow up into him** who is the Head, that is, Christ.

1. Below is a list of different kinds of teaching that are less than ideal. Put a check by the ones you are already alert to:

False teaching

Heresy

Riding your favorite "hobby horse" and expecting everyone to believe and live like you.

Teaching that is "true" but "out of balance."

Teaching that majors on the minors and minors on the majors, that makes mountains out of molehills, and molehills out of mountains.

Teaching that "tickles my itching ears" that "justifies" what I want to do, anyway.

Taking a simple teaching and blowing it out of proportion.

Taking a simple teaching and not considering what other verses to consider, as well.

Colossians 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

2. What three ways does Paul illustrate our need for spiritual growth in 2:7?

3. Jot down your thoughts about each of his growth illustrations. What does each imply? What kind of effort is need?

a. Agricultural/ gardening: "rooted" -

b. Building/ construction: "built up" -

c. The gym: "strengthened" -

4. Which of these three images is most impactful to you? What's needed to spur your own growth in the Lord?

5. What do you need to do to push yourself ahead in your growth?

DAY 3

Ephesians 4:16 ... From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1. Paul compares the church to a body. What does he say holds the *physical* body together?

2. What holds the *church* body together?

3. What "work" (service) do you do (or can you do) in your church?

4. What does Paul say should happen when everyone does their "work?" Look for two results.

5. What affect should your "work" (service) have on:
 - a. Your church?

 - b. On you?

6. We usually think of growing as a Christian in terms of spending time with God, reading the bible, praying, and going to church to hear a sermon. But we don't usually associate our growth as Christians to *servng!* Is this how you think?

7. What serving are you involved in?

8. Do you have a *heart to serve*?

9. Pray for your service in your church.

10. Pray that God would stir the hearts of the people to serve.

DAY 4

1. As we grow as Christians, we will be tempted to "nudge" back into our old lifestyle. The following verses give indications as to how this happens!

Ephesians 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

2. In 4:17, what does Paul say is one of the "drivers" of our old lifestyle? Why do you think their *thinking* is "futile?" What is futile about it?

Ephesians 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

3. Paul amplifies on "futile thinking." For each of the items, below, jot down either what he means or an example from yours or someone else's life:

a. "*darkened in their understanding*" (understanding about God, human nature, relationships, etc.)

b. "*ignorance*" - (look at the same categories in the previous question).

c. What effect does our sinful perspective and thinking have on our hearts?

d. What results from darkened thinking and a hardened heart in 4:18?

People don't just "plunge" into sin. They lose mental and moral battles in their heads and hearts. The resulting hardening of the heart cuts us off from what God wants to give us--love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, etc., and results in the following...

Ephesians 4:19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

4. What strikes you about this verse?

5. Is there this battle raging in your head? In your heart?

6. Prayer: ask God to soften your heart, and build your thinking around the bible!

DAY 5: Perspective and Patterns

Christian growth perspective.

Ephesians 4:20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹ Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

1. Paul uses the imagery of change of clothing. We take off dirty clothing and put on clean clothes. Underline the exact phrases he uses in 4:22 and 4:24.

2. What is it we are to put off, in 4:22?

3. Why are we to put off the old self? (4:22) For each of the reasons listed, jot down your thoughts:

a. Our old self "*corrupts*" us.

b. The culprit is our "*deceitful desires*."

4. What are to put on? (4:24)

5. What are the two qualities that defines our growth "finish line?" (4:24)

Christian growth patterns.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. ²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

6. Paul gives a number of examples of "putting off" and "putting on." For each of the following, jot down what we are to put off and put on:

4:25-

4:26-27-

4:28-

4:29-30

4:31-32-

7. Which of these put off/ put on patterns needs your attention?

8. What is something you can do to make some headway in this area?