

## SESSION THREE

# Growth

*God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love.*

—The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:15 (The Message)

*You have to do your own growing no matter how tall your grandfather was.*

—Abraham Lincoln

## INTRODUCTION

When you plant a vegetable garden or a flower bed, what do you expect? You expect vegetable plants to produce vegetables and flowering plants to produce flowers! You expect them to grow. What about your investment account? It's not a guarantee, unfortunately, but when you invest, you expect your money to grow. Same goes with a new puppy; you expect it to grow into an adult dog. If something is healthy, then we expect it to grow and mature.

What about our Christian lives? Jesus told Nicodemus that to enter into a relationship with Him was to be born again (John 3:1-8). Obviously what you have after a birth is a newborn baby. So it is with a new believer; we have an infant in Christ. In fact, Peter writing to the early church compared them to "newborn infants" and advised them to "long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation."

Fellowship is committed to helping people grow spiritually. In fact, our members commit themselves to seek spiritual growth throughout their lives. In this lesson we will look at what spiritual growth is and how we can pursue it.

How have you grown or changed in the last year? The last five years? Share with the group.



3. Which of these qualities are increasing in your life right now? Which of these qualities do you sense need to increase?

Before something can grow, it must be alive.

**Look at 1 John 5:11-12:**

*And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

Based on these verses, what would you say is the first thing that must happen for someone to grow spiritually?

The writer to the Hebrews used the metaphor of spiritual milk in Hebrews 5:12-14:

*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, <sup>13</sup>for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. <sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

The writer to the Hebrews says that we should not stay on milk! We, like a child, should progress to solid food.

1. What does this passage say “trains” our powers of discernment (verse 14)?





The third spiritual practice that leads to growth is exercise, which is when we work out our spiritual muscles by serving. Service takes on many forms and God has gifted His people, the Church, with various gifts to carry out the tasks He has assigned for us (Ephesians 4:1-16). As Paul wrote the Church at Colossae in Colossians 1:10:

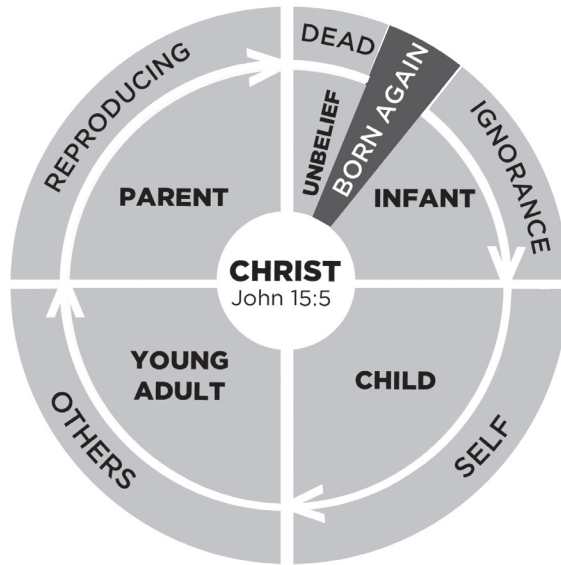
*...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

1. How is serving related to walking in a manner worthy of the Lord?

One of the values of a small group is the ability to process challenging issues together, in order to ascertain the best ideas or solutions. Take some time to discuss answers to the following questions:

1. These three habits are presented in order: studying the Word, prayer, and service. Why do you think they are in this order?
2. How are they connected to one another?
3. What are some good ideas for maintaining a consistent practice for each of these three habits?

Look at the figure below, showing the stages of spiritual development.



Take some time for honest self-assessment.

1. Where are you on this diagram?
2. Where do you want to be?
3. What are some things you need to commit to the Lord to do to move to the next quadrant on this diagram?

4. How can your group help you in the growth journey?

If you are comfortable sharing with the group, discuss what you feel the Lord is impressing on your heart when it comes to spiritual growth. Fellowship asks members to commit to a lifelong pursuit of spiritual growth. This is reflected in our Membership Covenant under “Maturity” where we are challenged to follow after Jesus and live obediently to the Bible.

## **MEMBERSHIP COVENANT**

### **Maturity:**

To endeavor to be a maturing disciple of Christ, continually pursuing spiritual growth. —(Col 2:6-7)