

# ***Basics... Why Our Church Exists!***

Part 3 - Growing... From the Inside Out!

September 27, 2009

*This morning we come to the third Biblical purpose for the local church... spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is not so much about "doing" as it is about "becoming" – becoming more like Christ. It is not just acquiring more information; it is about character transformation. It isn't just about the head; it is also about the heart!*

## **I. What does spiritual maturity look like?**

A. Our definition of Grow: ***growing through the study of God's Word, personal discipleship, and becoming like Jesus!***

### **1. God's Word is a priority.**

*<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (II Timothy 3:16-17)*

*<sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. (II Tim. 2:15)*

- God gives us principles to live by!
- Maturing in our knowledge of Christ and applying His truth is part of our daily routine; growing in our relationship with Christ is a non negotiable. We make time for it!
- Studying God's Word should affect our decision-making. Our thinking and worldview needs be rooted in Biblical values. Someone has said that a Christian is a...

Mind through which Christ thinks, a  
Heart through which Christ lives, a  
Voice through which Christ speaks, a  
Hand through which Christ helps!

2. Discipleship is **personal!**

*Go ye therefore and make disciples (Matt. 28:19)*

*The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)*

- Growing believers are reproducing themselves through their disciples. Discipleship is personal and ongoing. You don't have to be a pastor to disciple someone.
- Discipleship can take many forms: intentional study, informal mentoring, one on one, in a prayer triplet, older with younger, etc.

3. Christ-likeness is a **process.**

*As the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more. (2 Corinthians 3:18b NLT).*

- We were created to become like Christ! To become like Christ means that I take on his VALUES, ATTITUDES, and CHARACTER

*Since, then, we do not have the excuse of ignorance, everything – and I do mean everything – connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life – a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you. Ephesians 4:22-24 (The Message)*

- What or whom does your life reflect? When people look into the pool of your life, what do they see?
- Critical spirit? Judgmental? Hot tempered? Anxiety? Depression? Fruits of the flesh?

- Or Hope, encouragement, love, kindness, patience, etc. (Gal. 5:22-ff)
- Don't be discouraged. Spiritual growth takes time. Spiritual growth is not so much about "doing" as it is about "becoming" – becoming more like Christ. It's a life-long adventure that takes patience, commitment, and intentional focus. What really matters is who we are becoming in this process. Ultimately, the Christian life is about building an intimate relationship with Jesus as the Holy Spirit changes us from the inside out, and letting Him transform the way we think, behave and live!

## II. How are we doing as a church?

### A. Spiritual Disciplines Evaluation

1. Top 4: We feel best about our personal church attendance (4.1), giving sacrificially (3.8), being in a life group (3.8), serving in a ministry (3.7)
2. Middle 4: sharing faith (2.9), studying God's Word (2.8), consistent QT's (2.7), taking a Sabbath (2.5)
3. Bottom 5: Inviting friends (2.2), praying with my spouse (2.1), reading thru the Bible (2.1), scripture memory and meditation (2.0), journaling and solitude (1.9)

### B. We are **educated** beyond our **obedience**

1. Don't be a hearer, be a doer! (James 1:22)
2. We seek the thrill of new information instead of the tediousness of life transformation.
3. We don't apply those truths we already know, but constantly are looking for that "new" secret about the Christian life; or that novel understanding about that particular passage.
4. Information without transformation is dangerous. Knowledge puffs up!

5. Head knowledge without a heart change provides intellectual stimulation but not life transformation.

### III. What keeps us from growing?

#### A. Sporadic attendance... misplaced priorities?

##### 1. Is Sunday morning a priority for you?

- Do you find yourself at Church of the Inner Spring with Pastor Pillow and Rev. Sheets?
- It is easy to be complacent!
- Have sports and Sunday tournaments taken first place over worship attendance? What lessons do we teach our kids when we miss church constantly because of other commitments?
- When was the last time you were actually at church 4 weeks in a row?

##### 2. **ILLUSTRATION:** *We have Morbus Sabbaticus most commonly known as Sunday Sickness. "Morbus Sabbaticus", better known as Sunday sickness, is a disease peculiar to some church members. The symptoms vary, but these are generally observed:*

1. *It never lasts more than twenty-four hours.*
2. *It never interferes with the appetite.*
3. *It never affects the eyes. The Sunday newspapers can be read with no pain. Television seems to help the eyes.*
4. *No physician is ever called.*
5. *After a few "attacks", at weekly intervals, it may become chronic...even terminal.*

*No symptoms are usually felt on Saturday. The patient sleeps well and wakes feeling well. He eats a hearty Sunday breakfast, then the attack comes until services are over for the morning. The patient feels better and the symptoms are over for the morning. The patient feels better and eats a solid dinner. After dinner, he takes a nap, then watches one or two pro-football games on TV. He may take a walk before supper, and stop and chat with neighbors. If there are church services scheduled for Sunday evening, he will have another short attack. Invariably, he wakes up Monday morning and rushes off to work*

*feeling refreshed. The symptoms may not recur until the following Sunday, unless another service is scheduled at the church during the week.*

3. I will commit to being in worship services (unless I am teaching KidVenture)...
  - ✓ 90% of the time. I only miss when sick or on vacation! Only gone 5 times a year!
  - ✓ 80% of the time. I am there 4 weeks out of 5! Only gone 10-11 times a year!

B. **Spoiled attitudes**... critical spirit?

*"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. (Mt. 5:23-24)*

1. We don't grow when we have a bad attitude toward God, other Christians, the church, or even the pastor!
2. Your attitude affects your ability to hear the HS. If you are in conflict with another believer, it will affect your worship and growth

C. **Superficial attempts**... laziness and apathy?

1. **Spiritual Discipline:** Spiritual growth requires spiritual discipline! We must pay the price of spiritual discipline. It should cost us something...time, effort, planning, etc.

*But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possible, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. I Cor. 9:27*

- **DISQUALIFICATION:** Lit. 'Disapproval, not standing the test'. We are no longer used for our primary purpose. Like a quarterback being used as a water boy.
- **NOTE:** Look at Jesus' example in *Mark 1:35* *In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left {the house,} and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.*
- Application: How about Quiet Time in the morning after a particularly long night?

2. **Preparation:** We must be intentional about taking responsibility for our own spiritual growth. How can you prepare to get the most out of Sunday morning?
  - Prepare for it. Get a good night's sleep the night before. Come refreshed!
  - Ask for it! Come with anticipation. Ask God to teach you this morning.
  - Pray it! Pray for the church and your part in it every day. Join us for prayer at 9 am every week!
  - Read it! Read the passage ahead of time especially if we are in a book study.
  - Write it! Take notes during the sermon... in the outline, in your Bible or in your journal.
  - Review it! Do the table talk/application questions for your QT on Monday morning. It helps with retention.
  - Listen to it! If you miss, listen to the sermon on the web site.
  - Share it! Tell someone something you learned, a truth you applied, a behavior you changed, a conviction from the HS, or decision you made!
3. **Self-feeders:** That being said, it takes more than just attending church to grow spiritually. You need to be a "self-feeder". God's Word needs to be part of your daily routine.
  - Reading through the Bible
  - Praying with spouse
  - Studying
  - Reading other Christian books

#### IV. Where do we “grow” from here?

##### A. A 3-fold commitment...

1. Decide that transformation not information is your goal.

*Rom 12: 1-2 being transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

2. Improve your attendance as well as anticipation in relationship to church!

*Heb. 10:25 not forsaking our assembly together*

3. Make time not excuses about the supremacy of Jesus Christ in your life!

*Matthew 22:37 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all mind.*

- God is most glorified, when we are most satisfied in Him (John Piper)

## Table Talk:

1. How would you evaluate your own spiritual maturity?
2. Are you growing spiritually? Why or why not?
3. What changes would have to occur in your life to make it more of a priority?
4. Take a quick spiritual inventory...
  - Prayer: I pray expectantly. I pray with my spouse!
  - Bible Reading/QT: I spend some “alone” time with God and have some kind of reading plan.
  - Study Topic: I am studying the Bible personally or in a Bible study.
  - Scripture Memory: I memorize and meditate on scripture
  - Journaling: I write down what God is teaching me.
  - Solitude: I reflect and listen to God.
  - Sabbath: I slow down and rejuvenate spiritually.
  - Church Attendance: I attend regularly. I apply the message to my life. You get bonus points for taking notes! 😊
  - Life Group: I am connected relationally. I am doing “life” with other believers.
  - Serving and Ministry: I serve faithfully. I am committed to a ministry at Moorpark Ev Free.
  - Tithe: I give sacrificially.
  - Sharing Christ: I am intentionally evangelistic. I tell others about Jesus as a way of life.