

Send questions to: pastornick@htchurch.com

On YouTube: @htchurch

Some housekeeping items...

- You can watch sessions on our YouTube channel at @htchurch, or listen on the church's audio podcast.
- We meet on Wednesdays except when there are church-wide events. Please refer to the course schedule.

Responding to the Lord's call to grow.

We are called to "...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). We need to believe, and yet we need to go **beyond** belief. Belief is essential, but belief by itself won't enable us to experience growth.

Many believers are like Swiss cheese. We've had a real experience of God, and yet there are noticeable holes. There are things we're missing in our Christian experience.

God is calling us to grow and to pursue Him so we can know Him better. "Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain..." (Hosea 6:3). God doesn't invite us to a fruitless and frustrating quest. He said, "...you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

This calls for faith on our part. I need to believe that when I seek Him, He will help me grow, help me overcome, and reveal Himself to me in a deeper way: "...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

What does it mean to grow in grace?

God commanded us to go on this pursuit when He said through Peter, "...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

First, we are called to grow in grace.

We celebrate the fact that God has given us His grace to come to Him for salvation. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). However, there's more to grace than simply being saved. Otherwise, we could never **grow** in grace.

God's grace continues to flow to believers even after they are born again! Paul told Timothy, "You... my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:1).

That grace is also sufficient to help us endure in any circumstance. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9b).

Perhaps many of us cease to grow because we've kept grace in the "salvation box." We've had a low experience of grace in other areas of our lives.

Second, we need to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

There are two parts or two aspects to growing in the knowledge of Christ. The first kind of knowledge is *actual (or intellectual) knowledge*. How much do you really know about Jesus? How familiar are you with His Word? Are you *biblically illiterate*?

But there's also a second kind of knowledge: many times, when the New Testament speaks about the *knowledge* of God, it's speaking about knowing Christ as a *person*.

Don't let your experience of God be *academic*, and don't let it be *accidental*. Don't be content just to have an experience of God in special moments, but decide that you're going to *pursue* the knowledge of the Lord.

Growth is possible, but it isn't automatic!

We can become more mature Christians. In his first letter, the apostle John addresses three different groups of people: *little children*, *young men*, and *fathers*.

I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

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 wicked one.

I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father.

I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning.

I have written to you, young men,

Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you,

And you have overcome the wicked one.

(1 John 2:12-14)

- Little children are those who have to be fed.
- Young people, however, are able to care for themselves.
- And parents are those who have the wisdom and maturity to feed others.

Growth will require some effort. In the beginning of Second Peter, we are told to make an effort to grow. In fact, we're told to make **every** effort:

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. (2 Peter 1:2-7).

Peter says to *give all diligence* to this kind of growth; many English translations put it this way: they say to *make every effort*.

Notice that almost nothing in his list could be interpreted as speaking about growing *intellectually* as a Christian.

Be diligent to grow.

If growth isn't automatic, then we need to make a commitment to know the Lord in a deeper way, and make a commitment to grow in grace.

- There may be some attitudes of the heart to examine.
- We may not be applying the same kind of discipline to our spiritual life that we apply to other areas of our lives.
- We will also experience hindrances when we commit to grow in Christ and become more like Christ.
 - Some of us are perfectionists.
 - Some of us can't forget the past.
 - Some of us haven't really received the truth that God is *for* us.
 - Some of us have fallen into the trap of condemnation.

Conclusion

Can you make a fresh commitment to grow in grace? Can you commit to knowing Him better and deeper? No matter what hindrances or failures you've experienced, Jesus says: "Come to Me!" Thank God you've been given the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, through the grace of God. But now it's time to go ***beyond belief!***

Homework: Colossians 3:1-17; read it at least once every day.
