

## **GROW** (part 2) **Babyhood**

Review

Last week:

**Anything healthy is growing *and* changing. Growth means change. If you're not changing, you're not growing.**

We know something is deeply wrong if our child fails to go through the stages of growth.

Spiritually, we also go through stages of growth. And just as in physical growth, if we are not changing and going through the stages of growth, something is wrong!

In this series, I am seeking to help us understand what growing spiritually looks like.

**Before I get into this, let me talk about who is listening.**

You may be listening, and you are *not a Christian*, but you have interest. My hope is that this encourages you to pursue a relationship with Jesus, because that relationship can change how you live your life! A relationship with Jesus can change you!

You may be listening, and *you are a new Christian*. Maybe you're a new Christian. This will help you detect the phases of growth you will go through. Don't compare yourself with someone who has been with Jesus for a long time. It takes time to grow! Give yourself some space and grace to change.

You may be listening, and you've been a Christian for a long time: 5 years, 10 years, 20 plus years. You will be able to see if you are growing, or if you've gotten stuck along the way. This will move you to feel a bit uncomfortable with where you are, and it should!

**Natural growth and spiritual growth parallel each other.**

1. Babyhood - Lots of dependence, few habits.
2. Childhood - exploring independence, forming habits.
3. Adulthood - independent - well-formed habits.

**It's possible to stop growing spiritually and get stuck, making no progress.**

**Today: The babyhood stage of spiritual growth:** Lots of dependence, few habits.

Ok, let's start with a healthy dose of honesty! Nobody wants to be labeled as a baby believer. But let's be real with ourselves! All of us have to go through these stages. And yes, we can get stuck in a stage and cease growing.

Spiritual growth is not on the timeline with natural growth. You can grow *faster* spiritually than you can in your natural growth.

So, in reality, a young believer who really applies himself or herself to God and determines to go after God with intense zeal, can grow past a person who had settled down and has become lethargic in their walk with Jesus.

Objectivity will be necessary today. Be willing to hear another opinion about yourself, even though it means you need to make adjustments!

The Bible mentions the babyhood stage of spirituality:

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV)

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, (2) as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, (3) if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4 (NKJV)

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. (2) I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; (3) for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? (4) For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

\*Did you know that when the senior pastor is out of the pulpit, and you don't come to church because of that, it's a sign of a spiritual infant??

Matthew 18:3-5 (NKJV)

and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. (4) Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (5) Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

## **Four Characteristics of babies that apply to spiritual growth.**

### **1. Babies need a lot of help.**

They need lots of TLC and personal attention. That's normal.  
Talking to, holding, feeding, and pampering are all part of a normal baby's life.

Spiritual infants need lots of time, TLC, help, encouragement, space, and grace as they change into new life patterns.

Spiritual babies are not going to live perfectly right away, but they will grow a little at a time.

Their minds must be renewed, and their bodies must be trained to live a different way. Give grace and space to new believers.

## **2. Babies are innocent. They have no past.**

No shame, no guilt, no preconceived ideas. They are totally trusting of anyone.

This really is a characteristic we should never outgrow!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

What is forgiven by God is forgotten by Him!

Isaiah 43:25 (NKJV)

I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.

Psalms 103:12 (NLT)

He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

Psalms 145:8-9 (NLT)

The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. (9)  
The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.

A new believer has tasted of the goodness of God's mercy and forgiveness. You never need to look back again!

This is a characteristic we really should never lose. Innocence keeps our hearts tender.

### **3. Babies are hungry and curious.**

They need protection. They don't know what is bad for them.

They examine everything with their eyes, ears, hands, and mouth! Inquisitiveness is a sign of health and growth.

They will eat anything! They will put anything in their mouths.

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV)

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, (2) as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, (3) if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

They need to be directed! They can get into trouble easily.

They can get hurt easily.

When I was young in the Lord, I knew I needed to know the Word very well.

I was careful as to what books I read and who I listened to.

Be careful what you hear or read on Facebook, Youtube, any website. False doctrine and error *always* contain an element of truth.

Make sure that what is being preached is scriptural. Otherwise you could be led astray.

Don't even take what I say for granted. Check it out in your own Bible.

We need to keep the innocence of childhood lifelong!

If you are a fairly new believer, understand that it's a really healthy thing to get close to some other Christians in small groups and just hang out. That's a place of safety. Having a mentor that is a seasoned, well-balanced believer is a healthy thing, and will keep you on a level path.

#### **4. Babies are self-centered.**

They think of themselves and their needs first. They cry when they are hungry. They cry when they need a diaper change. They cry when they are tired. Sometimes they seem to cry for no reason at all!

Really, babies are self-absorbed. When they are happy, all is well. But when they are unhappy, they create mayhem for everybody else!!

When we are infants spiritually, we are thinking mostly of ourselves; what people think about us, our appearance, is all important!

And, as spiritual infants we want others to pay attention to us!

Matthew 16:24-25 (NLT)

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. (25) If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."

Mark 8:34 (PHILLIPS)

Then he called his disciples and the people around him, and said to them, "If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps, he must give up all right to himself, take up his cross and follow me. The man who tries to save his life will lose it; it is the man who loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's who will save it."

*As we grow*, we come to need our own way less and less, and we learn to listen to and put others and their desires before our own.

Are you willing to let another have their way at the expense of you getting your way?

Philippians 2:3-4 (NLT)

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. (4) Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

Sometimes, as we get seasoned in the Lord, we have expectations that our believer friends and family *man up*, so to speak, and acts, think, and speak a certain way, or we shun or project a certain attitude. That my friends is being carnal, not spiritual!

#### **Action Points:**

1. A key to growing is deciding to do what God says, period!

James 1:22, 25 (NLT)

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves ... (25) But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

2. Ask yourself: Am I reading God's Word and applying what I read to my life daily?
3. Am I open to allowing my pastoral staff team and other friends to speak into my life and help me in my *blind spots*, areas that I can't see clearly about myself that need help?