



SPIRITUAL CHANGE

How Does a Christian Grow?

People set goals to make them better and happier people. We all want to grow by doing new and different things. For the Christian though, transformation often comes from going deeper into the same few things. God is changing people just like He always has. He is changing them to be more like Him. Instead of trying something new, let's go deeper into what Jesus already has for us.

The Bible Changes Us

Read

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” - Colossians 3:16a (ESV)

Reflect/Discuss:

- What is your favorite Bible verse? Why?
- Do you have a favorite book of the Bible? What is it and why?

Consider:

God’s Word brings about powerful change. It was this Word that created the universe from nothing. He spoke to Abraham and created the nation of Israel. Then, God’s Word changed human history. Jesus came as the very Word of the Father to speak new life into His people.

Paul the apostle was transformed when Jesus spoke to him. Augustine, a famous leader in early Christianity, was changed by God’s Word when reading Romans. A thousand years later the Word of God sparked a Reformation of change across the Western World when it was put in the hands of ordinary men and women. The Lord of Heaven and Earth has spoken. People are changed when they listen.

Paul’s encouragement to the Colossians is to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly. Christians are supposed to steep and marinate themselves in the Scriptures. Jesus is still speaking to us through the Bible. This is how we will hear God’s voice. It is living and active and contains all sixty-six books of the Bible. The best way to experience growth is to open your Bible. Read it every day. Memorize verses. Study it. Meditate on its meaning. Keep pressing deeper. The more we dwell on Christ’s Word, the more it will dwell in us. The more it dwells in us, the more we will be changed by it.

Act:

- Make a plan for reading the Bible regularly. Find a time and a place, and decide beforehand what you are going to read.
- Take one step deeper than your regular habit. Consider reading daily, memorizing verses, meditating and journaling, etc.

Go Deeper:

[Do You Read The Bible?](#)

Prayer Changes Us

Read:

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.” - Colossians 4:2 (ESV)

Reflect/Discuss:

- Do you find it easy or hard to pray? Why?
- What is the biggest obstacle to your prayer life?

Consider:

God has spoken to us through his Word. Next, we respond to Him in prayer. Communication is essential to the health of any relationship, and this should be no different in our approach with God. The Creator of the universe is not far off and distant like many think. Instead, he is very near to us. He hears us when we speak to Him.

Prayer is more than just asking God for things. Prayer is praising the One who is holy and magnificent. Prayer is confessing and repenting of our sins to the Lord. Prayer is giving thanks for what He has given us, even if they are hard. Prayer is yielding to His will in our lives.

More than anything, prayer changes us. When we seek the Lord in prayer we are forced to put aside our selfishness and personal desires. Praying to God is an act of submission to what he has for us. Maybe we'll grow when he answers our prayers. But maybe we'll grow by simply reorienting our posture before Him. Praying aligns ourselves with God's character and makes us more like Him, and that is the greatest change. So let's keep praying. When we talk to God, we are transformed. Let's "continue steadfastly" in it.

Act:

- Schedule enough time in your day to pray in response to your Bible reading.
- Find someone in your church to regularly pray with and for.

Go Deeper:

[A New Year's Prayer](#)

Community Changes Us

Read:

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...” - Hebrews 10:24-25a (ESV)

Reflect/Discuss

- Who has had the biggest impact on you in your life?
- Who is your closest friend? Do they help you change for the better?

Consider:

Christians aren't meant to be alone. Throughout the Bible, when people repented of their sins and turned to faith in Christ, they were immediately welcomed into a new community. This was the norm. They were meant to experience the Christian life together. Even God is not alone! He exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in constant relationship with one another.

Our growth in the Christian life will be stunted without a church community surrounding us. God has given us leaders to teach us how to grow. God has given us older, godlier people to model how to change for the better. God has given us peers to rebuke us in love and encourage us toward transformation. Without any community, we risk a subtle drift off course into stagnation or unbelief.

The church is God's gift to help us persevere together. Its harder to give up when there are others around. It allows a context for us to fulfill the commands of Scripture to “love one another,” “bear one another's burdens,” “rejoice with those who rejoice,” and, “weep with those who weep.” Experiencing Christianity in community will change you to love others in a way you wouldn't or couldn't before. The more you open yourselves up to relationships, and the deeper you go, and the more vulnerable you become, the more God will use community to transform you.

Act

- Determine one way you can take a more meaningful step into community
- Find a way to encourage or help a friend in this community

Go Deeper:

[This is What You Need From Church](#)

Repentance Changes Us

Read:

“Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” - Acts 3:19

Reflect/Discuss:

- Why is it so hard to repent of our sins?
- What is one barrier to repentance in our lives?

Consider:

Deep down, we all want change. That’s why we set goals and make resolutions. We want to become better versions of ourselves and forget the old us. The problem is that we simply try to hide the old us by adding new habits. But biblical change requires us to address our old habits, decisions, and actions as well. Repentance happens when we turn away from our sin. Put simply: we won’t experience growth until we stop doing what God has forbidden.

Repentance changes us by changing our desires. By addressing our motives and desires, God can transform us from the very core. New habits will only act as a bandaid to cover a deeper wound, but it won’t stop the bleeding. True repentance is the act of hating the things you once loved. Repenting is the painful process of loving God more than you love your sin.

Repentance doesn’t come easy. In fact, it can’t be done alone. The change that comes from repentance is only available through the cross of Christ. Growth in the Christian life comes by the Spirit of God working deep within us. God in His kindness shows us our sin so that we can repent and turn back to our loving Father. If you want to grow, repent. Then you will experience times of refreshment from the Lord. You will be free to live a life of pleasing to Christ and be transformed into his likeness.

Act:

- Pray for God to reveal sin in your life
- Confess your sin to someone and create a plan for repentance and change

Go Deeper:

[Five Elements of Repentance](#)

Obedience Changes Us

Read:

“Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart”
- Psalm 119:2 (ESV)

Reflect/Discuss:

- What feelings or emotions come to mind when you think of obeying God?
- What are some commands in the Bible you can think of?

Consider:

The happiest people in the Bible are the ones who obey God’s law. Over and over again, especially in the Psalms, those who delight in the Scriptures are called “blessed.” This word can be translated as “happy, fortunate, blessed.” God knows what we need and has told us in His Word. Our Father knows just how we need to grow. More obedience to God, not less of it, will make us happy and blessed people. Obedience will transform us into the person God has for us.

The Bible is full of commands, but they are not meant to be burdensome or harsh. The Lord’s instruction is given to guide us along the way. His commands are meant to reveal our sin and teach us God’s character. They light our path and keep us from danger.

Obedience is nothing less than seeking God with your whole heart, and this can only happen when you are captured by the wonder of the cross. Obedience changes us when our desires are aligned with God’s desires. We are meant to love what He loves and do as He does. Then, and only then, will we grow into the men and women God has for us. This is the Christian path to growth.

Act:

- Pray that you would have the same attitude as the author of Psalm 119 toward God’s law
- Take note of any commands in the Bible and make a plan to put them into practice

Go Deeper:

[Obedience is a Good Choice](#)

Our temptation is to rush change. We want to grow as fast as we can as soon as we can, but Biblical transformation is more like a plant than a microwave. By God's grace, the small daily steps of Bible reading and prayer, committing to community, and walking in repentance and obedience, will slowly but surely grow us into Christlikeness. You might not notice much change day to day, but at the end of the season you'll see just how much you've grown.

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