

Following God's Lead

Capital Campaign Series

Gather, Grow, & Go

©Pastor Marty Baker

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Currently, your Elder Council, Pastoral Team, Master Planning Commission, and the Capital Campaign Committee are calling each of us to consider how we can financially support a new building program designed to give us a large facility to accommodate the numerical growth God has sovereignly sent our way over the last few years. Over the last five years we are just 100 people shy of tripling in size, and the people keep coming; therefore, we have to look to the future with a detailed strategic construction plan to accommodate this growth and continual upward trend. It's an exciting time, isn't it? It always is when you are part of the movement of God, and God is, as I have said before, moving in a big fashion in and through this local church body. We, of course, give Him all the praise and commit ourselves to follow where He is leading us, yielding ourselves to His will and not our will.

More specifically, why are we growing? Because ...

We Are Corporately Committed To Mission & Vision

We are serious about the implementation of our Lord's Great Commission to create disciples and to evangelize the world (Matthew 28:19-20). As we all know, this is our God-given, single-focused mission of all missions, and in order to realize it we have developed a simple, concise, and memorable vision, one which is built around discipleship and evangelism. This vision is comprised of three words:



As we have studied, the gather concept speaks of our worship environment, the place where we corporately meet to praise and adore our risen Savior, Jesus Christ, to be taught how to follow Him, and to challenge the lost with His life-giving gospel. Pragmatically, you could say our entire gather, grow, go concept is wrapped up in our worship experience to some degree or another. But, in any event, this is typically how people, Christian and non-Christian, enter into our church, and as they do we desire to purposefully move them either toward a faith

relationship with Jesus, or show them areas in our body where they can get plugged in so they can grow and mature in their personal relationship with Him.

Spiritual growth is, as we learned in our last study, what God desires from His children. Paul's teaching to Corinthians in his second letter to them, chapter 3, verse three is but one of many verses which substantiate this point:

¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3).

Contextually, Paul contrasts here the difference between the Old and New Covenants. The superiority of the New Covenant, established by the redemptive work of Jesus through His sacrificial death and resurrection, is all believers, not just one man as with Moses in Old Testament times, stand in God's holy presence, resulting in the reflection of His glory. The difference, however, is whereas the outer face of Moses glowed after spending time with God, our inner faces, our inner lives should glow brighter and brighter as God transforms our character to reflect His. In all reality, this is just a great way to think about Christian maturity, a real daily, moment by moment transformation of who we used to be into who God wants us to be.¹ Please, underscore in your Bible the present tense verb, "being transformed." It is a translation of the Greek, *metamorphoōmai* (μεταμορφόομαι), a word denoting radical inner transformation.² The present tense nature of the verb suggests a continual transformation of our

¹ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*: 18 In vv. 4-6 Paul was speaking primarily of the apostolic ministry. Now, as he draws his conclusion concerning the superiority of the new covenant against the background of his commentary on Exodus 34, he refers to Christian experience in general. Under the new covenant, not one man alone, but all Christians behold and then reflect (see note) the glory of the Lord. Moreover, unlike the Jews, who still read the law with veiled hearts, Christians, with unveiled faces, behold in the mirror of the gospel the glory of Yahweh, which is Christ. Again, the glory is displayed not outwardly on the face but inwardly in the character. Finally, so far from losing its intensity or luster, the glory experienced under the new covenant progressively increases until the Christian finally acquires a "glorious body" like that of the risen Christ (Philippians 3:21). Paul concludes by noting that the progressive transformation of the Christian's character is the work of the Lord who is the Spirit (cf. v. 17a). After conversion to the Spirit (v. 16), there is liberation through the Spirit (v. 17b) and transformation by the Spirit (v. 18).

² Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature*: 639. μεταμορφόω 1 aor. pass. μετεμορφώθη; pf. pass. ptc. μεταμορφωμένος (Diod S 4, 81, 5; Castor of Rhodes [50 B.C.]: 250 Fgm. 17 Jac. εις ἕτερα μεταμορφουῦσθαι σώματα; Plut., Mor. 52d al.; Athen. 8, 334c; Aelian, VH 1, 1; Ps.-Lucian, Asin. 11; Herm. Wr. 16, 9; PGM 1, 117; 13, 70; Ps 33:1 Sym.; TestSol; AscIs 3:13; Philo, Mos. 1, 57, Leg. ad Gai. 95; Ar.; Tat. 10, 1; Orig., C. Cels. 5, 42, 30; Theoph. Ant. 2, 6 [p. 108, 16]) 'transform, change in form' in our lit. only in pass.

① to change in a manner visible to others, *be transfigured* of Jesus, who took on the form of his heavenly glory Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2 (Orig., C. Cels. 2, 65, 17. Simon Magus claims that he came to save the world μεταμορφούμενον και ἑξομοιούμενον ταῖς ἀρχαῖς και ταῖς ἐξουσίαις, και τοῖς ἀγγέλοις Iren. 1, 23, 3 [Harv. I 193, 4]; cp. 1QH 7:24).—RHartstock, Visionsberichte in den Syn. Evangelien: JKaftan Festschr. 1920, 130-44; AvHarnack, SBBerlAk 1922, 62-80; ELohmeyer, ZNW 21, 1922, 185-215; UvWilamowitz, Red. u. Vorträge⁺ II 1926, 280-93; D. Verklärung Christi; JBernardin, The Transfiguration: JBL 52, '33, 181-89; JBlinzler, D. ntl. Berichte üb. d. Verklärg. Jesu '37; JHöller, D. Verkl. Jesu '37; EDabrowski, La transfiguration de Jésus '39; GHBoobyer, St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story '42; HRiesenfeld, Jésus transfiguré '47; HBaltensweiler, Die Verklärung Jesu '59; SHirsch (βαπτίζω 2a). Of the transformation of raw material into a statue Dg 2:3.

② to change inwardly in fundamental character or condition, *be changed, be transformed* τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφουῦσθαι *be changed into the same form* 2 Cor 3:18 (i.e. p 640 Christians progressively take on the perfection of

inner character, and the passive nature of the verb informs us that it is God who does the transforming as we submit and yield to who He is and what He desires from us.

It is because of divinely inspired verses like this, that ...

We Are Committed To Grow

So far, in our analysis of spiritual maturation, we have considered two sub-topics:

- *The Reason For Growth* ... which is directly related to all the verses calling us to grow up once we experience the new birth (John 3).
- *The Reality Of Growth* ... which tells us there are three levels of spirituality; infancy, young adulthood, and older adulthood (1 John 2:12-14).

Again, I must stop and ask you, “Where are you on the growth continuum?” God is expecting for you to make appreciable, noticeable movement, and we join Him in His expectations. To these two concepts we add a third:

The Road of Growth

Or, put differently, the nuts and bolts of how to mature spiritually. Before we sink our interpretive spades into some rich biblical soil in relation to this concept, let me first say that a numerically growing church is typically wedded to a spiritually growing church. Why is this a valid statement? Here are a couple of reasons.

One, radical life change is an attractant. When some people see the old godless you being replaced by the new, godly you, they will want to come and investigate what is going on so the change and hope you’ve discovered can become personalized.

Two, love is catchy, and as we know, spirituality is all about love ... loving God and loving man as God loves him (Matthew 19:19).

Three, spiritual growth is intrinsically tied to feasting on the great meals found in the Word of God, and, as we all know, good food draws people who hunger for real, lasting, profound, and practical answers to their deep, inner questions and the purpose of life (Psalm 19: 9-10 119:103, 105; 2 Peter 1:19).

Four, unity and peace flow from lives dedicated to spiritual growth because the saints in question collectively reflect these traits found in their Lord. In a word know for disunity and unrest, lasting, loving unity and peace is a breath of fresh air and those who breathe it will want to breathe it as often as they can.

Now, back the topic at hand: the path of spiritual maturity. Of the many things I could say, I have to limit myself for this is not a full-blown study of the topic, but a mere overview.

Jesus Christ through the Spirit’s operation; on the acc. s. B-D-F §159, 4; Rob. 486; for the idea Rtzst., *Mysterienrel.*³ 262–65; cp. Seneca, Ep. 6, 1, esp. 94, 48). μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς *do not model yourselves after this age, but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds Ro 12:2* (in contrast to the process expressed in συσχηματίζω ‘model after’ and thus superior to what the world displays).—DELG s.v. μορφή. M-M. TW.

Hence, I will touch upon three concepts directly related to the spiritual maturation process. To grow up in Jesus, to live a life which progressively and distinctly has Him all about it, we must first ...

Walk In The Word. Peter teaches us regarding the importance of the Bible for the growth of saints when he writes:

¹ Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow ³ in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord (1 Peter 2).

How can you not see the cause/effect relationship between Christlike character change and a longing and love for the drinking and partaking of the Word of God? The reading, study, reflection, and meditation of the Scriptures are vital to spiritual maturation because of a variety of reasons:

- It is milk which feeds the soul of the hungry infant, moving them toward an appreciation of a more substantial and filling meal based on spiritual meat as they leave infancy and head to spiritual adulthood.
- It is a fire which burns sin, as God told Jeremiah: ¹⁴ *Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, "Because you have spoken this word, Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it will consume them"* (Jeremiah 5).
- It is a hammer, destroying false teaching and pointing to true, spiritual teaching. Again, we appeal to Jeremiah for much needed insight: ²⁹ *"Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"* ³⁰ *Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," declares the LORD, "who steal My words from each other"* (Jeremiah 23).
- It is a lamp for the path of life. David tells us this on several occasions: ¹⁰⁵ *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119). To use it is to move closer to the likeness of Christ.
- It is a powerful mirror designed to show you the real you so you can move toward Christlike character. The words of James are memorable and graphic: ²³ *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror;* ²⁴ *for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.* ²⁵ *But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does* (James 1).
- It is a sword capable of helping you to see your innermost motivations so you can make course corrections. Along these lines, how can we not mention the words from Hebrews 4? ¹² *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

In order for my twin granddaughters, Olivia and Harper, to grow out of infancy, they had to drink a whole lot of milk. But, now, at eighteen months, they are transitioning from milk to meatier meals, and they must in order to continue to grow strong and healthy.

The same ideology holds true spiritually speaking. As saints, we all must crave the milk of the Word, as a baby craves literal milk, and as we do this we grow in our ability to develop character traits which resemble Christ. We also learn to appreciate meals in the Word we wouldn't have appreciated as spiritual infants, meals which dig into the book of Hebrews as our women are doing on Tuesday mornings with our Precepts training, meals crafted to help you understand the deep theological waters of Leviticus as taught by Pastor Nace on Sunday mornings at 9:30 in Modular 3-B.

All of this, of course, speaks loudly of hearing and obeying. Growth doesn't just come from knowing spiritual truth. It comes from applying spiritual truth to your life. Once more, Peter clearly understood this reality:

²² Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart ... (1 Peter 1).

These saints knew the truth of the Word, they were familiar with its mandates and commands and then achieved inward spiritual purification by obeying what they read and studied.

Countless saints over the years have written about the utter importance of the Word of God for maturation:

“When you read God's word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, ‘It is talking to me, and about me’ ... Soren Kierkegaard.

“The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts” ... George Muller.

“The Bible sanctifies and molds the mind into the image of Christ” ... Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

“We must allow the Word of God to confront us, to disturb our security, to undermine our complacency and to overthrow our patterns of thought and behavior” ... John Stott.

“I began to read the holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light and power from above” ... George Whitefield.

Meat and power ... what great ways to describe the Bible and its relationship to the saints ability to press on in Christlikeness.

Because the Bible and its application is so vital to our growth in Christ, you can better believe it is showcased in this place. From apologetic studies, like they have in our current High School program, to countless studies occurring in a wide array of home groups during the week, we crave the milk and the meat of the Word because it is the Word which shows us what God

expects from us as kingdom members and what needs to go to look like kingdom members. In light of this, I must ask you a couple of personal questions:

- Are you currently reading your Bible in private, feeding your own spiritual soul?
- Are you plugged into a group Bible study here at BCC? We have many to choose from, but as a saint choose you must for it is the way of disciplined disciples.

In addition to this point, we realize we must ...

Fill 'Er Up! Paul develops this motif in Ephesians 5:

¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit ...

Paul isn't speaking here about spiritual baptism, which is clearly a one-time event, occurring at the moment of confession/conversion (1 Corinthians 12:13). This work of God moves the sinner into the body of Christ, making them a saint or a son/daughter of God. It is, therefore, an unrepeated mystical event which identifies you, the repentant sinner, with the Savior, Jesus.

Becoming filled by the Spirit is a separate doctrine altogether. The very fact Paul makes filling a command shows it is highly distinct from baptism. And the present tense nature of the verbal command also underscores its perpetual nature, as opposed to an event. Just what, then, is this doctrine about and what has it got to do with spiritual growth? Everything.

In this insightful, instructive verse, Paul makes a direct comparison between how wine controls a person and how the Spirit should control a saint. As a person who is under the control of wine acts unnaturally, the Christian who is under the Spirit's control will act in a fashion unnatural as a person. What does this mean? It means they will evidence behavior and character traits, really Christlike ones, which run counter to those still dead in their sins inherited from Adam. The point Paul makes, then, is this: As a Christian you have to constantly look at your life and ask, "Am I Spirit controlled or flesh controlled?" The former doesn't come instantaneously or naturally, but is a power, a control you cognitively pursue. From another theological angle we could say, "All Christians have been born spiritually, are baptized spiritually, are indwelt by the Spirit, and are sealed by the Spirit; however, whether they are controlled by the Spirit is another question, really a choice they must make in their quest for achieving spiritual growth in their life." Regarding this truth, the late Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, founding pastor/professor of Dallas Theological Seminary, writes in his book *He That Is Spiritual*:

One may learn better how to 'walk in the Spirit' but he will never come to a moment in this life when he will need to walk less by the Spirit. The divine resources for a moment by moment triumph in Christ are limitless; but the utter need of the helpless creature never ceases.³

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1973): 43.

How true. The process, then, is quite clear: The Word of God, therefore, shows us what kind of living God desires from us, and the filling and control of the Spirit enable us to realize God's lofty goals for our spiritual character development.

How do you get filled by the Spirit? Before I answer this, first let me quote Dr. Chafer again:

To be filled is not the problem of getting more of the Spirit; it is rather the problem of the Spirit getting more about us. We shall never have more of the spirit than the anointing which every true Christian has received. On the other hand, the Spirit may have all of the believer and thus be able to manifest in him the life and character of Christ. A spiritual person, then, is one who experiences the divine purpose and plan in his daily life through the power of the indwelling spirit. The character of that life will be the out-lived Christ. Because of that life will be the unhindered indwelling Spirit (Ephesians 3:16-21; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

The Spirit of God resides in all believers. Paul's command in Ephesians, therefore, concerns how much you yield to Him and permit Him to work in and through your life to conform all aspects of it to Christ.

This latter point naturally leads us to a discussion of how a Christian is filled or controlled by the Spirit. I think the answer is really quite simple: *Spirit filling is directly related to reading and teaching of the Word of God and the saint's desire to yield to the promptings and leadership of the Spirit in relation to what is cognitively received from God in that interchange.* Sure, you can ask for God to fill and control you on a given day, at a given time, and as you confess your sin to Him (1 John 1:9), I'm sure He will oblige. However, in its base form filling occurs as you submit to the God's voice as displayed, first and foremost, through His inerrant, inspired, living Word.

Go back to Ephesians 4 and listen carefully to what Paul says prior to his divine mandate about Spirit filling:

²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, ²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. ²⁵ Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸ He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. ²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you,

along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4).

When the Spirit convicts you of any of these sins you are currently engaged in, sins which control you, and you move to confession and seek to gain victory through His power not to cave to the sin in question anymore, He fills you to help you gain control and victory. Have an issue with a hot temper? You don't need another anger management class as a saint. You need to confess your sin, commit to being obedient in this dysfunctional area of your life, and then you should anticipate the release of God's power in your life to give you many victories on your path to maturity in this key area of your life.

In light of this, here are some things to consider:

- Show me someone who is in the Word and exposed to the Word, someone who is up close and personal with saints who will hold them accountable to holiness, and someone who is moved to yield more of their life to Christ so they can, and will, reflect His holy character, and I'll show you someone full of the Spirit's power.
- Show me someone who evidences the fruit of the Spirit, as detailed by Paul in Galatians 5, show me someone whose old, sinful character has been replaced by the character of Jesus Christ, and I'll show you someone who knows the filling of the Spirit.
- Show me someone who doesn't grumble anymore but is thankful, and I'll show you a person full of the Spirit.
- Show me someone who speaks to their wife with a loving tone now, as opposed to their old cutting, degrading tone, and I'll show you a man full of the Spirit.
- Show me a high schooler who speaks respectfully to her parents, when she used to degrade and mock them, and I'll show you a young teen full of the Spirit.

How about you? Are you full of the Spirit? Is that you? Will it be you? What about your character needs His power for change? He's waiting to help you grow up, and now the next move is yours. If you're running on spiritual empty right now, it's time to fill 'er up, wouldn't you say?

A logical outcropping of this second point about the road to spiritual growth is this:

Put Off & Put On. We need to head to Colossians 3 for this timeless growth principle.

⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its *evil* practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- ¹¹ *a renewal* in which there is no *distinction between* Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of

compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity (Colossians 3).

Do you see the putting off and putting on language? How could you miss it?

Here in Colossians Paul employs clothing wording to talk about our duty as saints who want to become more saintly. We must daily, really constantly, be looking at our lives and listening to God's voice telling us what needs to go about our character, and what godly character traits need to be put on like beautiful clothes. It's not all right to say, "Well, that's tough. That's just the way I am. Deal with it. I've been distant and rude all my life, and if Christ accepts me, you should too." Right. A truly spiritual person, a person desirous of growing up in Jesus, a person who wants to look like Jesus, will perpetually scan the radar screen of their life to determine what needs to go from God's perspective and what needs to be embraced and evidenced.

As a new pastor, I had a parishioner pop in the church office one day unannounced. After he let me know he was coming to our small church plant from a very large church in the area, and that he had had issues with the pastoral staff there, he looked me in the eye and said, "Pastor Marty, you are going to have to earn my respect. I don't give it to any pastor outright. No, it's gotta be earned." He went on to become a church dragon who caused me more pastoral heartache than I'd like to recall. Looking back at him now, I'd say he needed a change of spiritual clothes. The only problem was his own arrogance kept him from seeing how tattered and torn his spiritual garments truly were. It's tough changing clothes, spiritually speaking, isn't it, but, oh, so necessary for maturing.

What, then, is spirituality? It is seeing the clothing of the old, sinful you, pulling them off and then purposefully putting on the new, holy clothing provided by God. It is walking in the staff office and telling the pastor, "You have my respect because you have God's call on your life, and, after all, I'm just getting to know you anyway so any judgment on my part would be inappropriate and ungrounded." It is putting on the garment of compassion, by God's power, when you aren't compassionate by your former sinful nature. It is putting on the godly garment of forgiveness and restoration when you typically were known for nursing grudges and keeping severed relationships that way for a variety of founded and unfounded reasons. Yes, when you grow spiritually you get into the mode of doing a whole lot of taking off the wrong garments and putting on the new ones.

Got any garments which need to go right now? Got any garments you know you should be wearing to please God? Put on that new garment and one thing is bound to happen: You'll grow up a little more in your walk with Jesus Christ. Another thing is bound to happen, as well. A church will grow because people will be drawn to folks sporting new spiritual clothes.