

A Maturing Christian: Is your life as a Christian growing?

1. A new life and a new identity (I Peter 2:9-10);

New life in Christ results from regeneration and salvation (John 3:3, 5)

- Are you living a new life in Christ?

2. The WHY and HOW of spiritual growth

2.1 Why must we grow up spiritually? (Ephesians 4:13)

2.2 How can we grow up spiritually?

God gives us life; he also gives us the proper environment that sustains our growth:

Rain: Being filled with the Holy Spirit (John 7:38)

Sun: Drawing close to Jesus Christ (John 8:12)

Food: Studying God's word daily (Jeremiah 15:16)

Air: Breathing – praying without ceasing every day (I Thessalonians 5:17)

Action: living right, living well, manifesting and witnessing for Christ through actions (Acts 1:8)

Rest: Resting in the Lord (Isaiah 30:15)

- Has your new life in Christ been growing and improving?

3. Christian attributes are lived out in everyday living (I Peter 2:12 Live good lives among the pagans)

3.1 Godly living (II Peter 1:3-7; Galatians 5:22-23)

- a. Being filled with the Holy Spirit; having God's love poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5)
- b. Trusting in the Lord with all our hearts (Proverbs 3:5-7)
- c. Having God's word securely stored up in our hearts (Psalm 119:9-11); desiring pure spiritual milk (I Peter 2:2)
- d. Living in God's love (I John 4:16, 12)
- e. Being clear-minded, self-controlled and alertly prayerful (I Peter 4:7)
- f. Clothing ourselves with humility toward one another (I Peter 5:5)
- g. Having the attitude of a sojourner (I Peter 2:11); unpolluted by the world (James 1:27)

- h. Using our God-gifts to serve others, wisely administering God's grace (I Peter 4:10)

Reflection: What is my attitude toward Christian living? Am I faithfully participating in God's work? Or am I ruining his work?

3.2 Challenges (I Peter 4:4; II Corinthians 11:3; II Peter 3:17)

- I Peter 5:7 - "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."
Philippians 3:7 - Put Christ first
I Peter 4:19 - Overcome adverse circumstances
I Corinthians 6:12-20 - Life principle: exercising self-control

- Share your successes and failures in confronting challenges in life

3.3 Eternal hope: living expectantly for Christ's return every day (Phil. 3:20; I Pet. 1:5, 13)

- Seek continual spiritual maturity; put Christ first; build up ourselves and others in all we do.

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. (II Peter 3:18)

Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit so that I may be your successor (II Kings 2:9-10)

1. When they had crossed the river (River Jordan), Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?” “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit (so that I may be your successor),” replied Elisha. (II Kings 2:9-10)

1.1 What are we seeking after today? Fame and fortune? Professional advancement? Academic achievement?

1.2 It isn't that God doesn't allow us to pray for our needs. He knows our needs, and that is why there is the petition, “give us this day our daily bread,” in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:11). It is only that God wants us to receive greater blessings. If we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, he will supply all our needs (Matthew 6:33).

1.3 God desires us to receive the precious Holy Spirit. Have we ever sought this?

2. “You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise not.” (II Kings 2:10)

2.1 While he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised...but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:4-5)

2.2 God will bestow the Holy Spirit upon us. We need to adopt the same strong desire of Elisha and ask and wait for God with all sincerity and concentration.

2.3 While seeking for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, many seekers have all kinds of worries. Have no doubts about our unworthiness. Elisha was a farmer, yet God used him mightily. God also told Samuel, “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (I Samuel 16:7)

2.4 Do not let our past sins put fear in our hearts. God is merciful; he will forgive repentant sinners. He will not despise a broken spirit and contrite heart (Psalm 51:17).

2.5 Whether you are seeking spiritual revival, or the infilling of the Holy Spirit, or whether you had already received the Holy Spirit, we should all boldly ask the Lord, "Give me a double portion of your Spirit."

For Jesus had once said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." (John 14:12-13)

3. So that I may be your successor [II Kings 2:9b (implied meaning not stated in the NIV)]

3.1 After we have been given the Holy Spirit, we must serve the Lord just as Elisha did. He served the Lord mightily and faithfully, his work was accompanied by many miracles. (II Kings chapters 4-6)

3.2 Before his ascension, Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

3.3 How have we carried out the Great Commission among our friends, in our family, in school, at work, or in our community?

Cultivate heavenly-mindedness, formulate celestial values, celebrate abundant living

Texts: Revelation 21-22; Hebrews 11:13-16

1. What is your current attitude towards, and readiness for, “Heaven” (Heavenly Kingdom, Holy City, eternal heavenly home of Christians) described in Revelation? (Revelation 21:1-7, 10, 22-26; 22:1-5)

Facts and questions for reflection

- With regard to biblical teachings⁽¹⁾ on death, resurrection, the End Times, the end of the world, everlasting life, eternal death...Do you know about them? Do you believe them?
- Jesus Christ came to the world (his First Coming) to fulfill God’s plan of salvation. It is God’s will that all who are redeemed will reunite and dwell with him forever in heaven. (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10; 1 Timothy 2:4-6)
- When Jesus comes again (his Second Coming), he will come to judge the world, reward the righteous with everlasting life and condemn the wicked to eternal death. (Revelation 20:11-15; 22:12, 14)
- Your eternal destiny (Heaven or Hell) will depend on the decisions, choices and pursuits you make in this fleeting life.
 - “Everlasting Life”—dwelling joyfully with Christ and his saints and fully enjoying their presence forever. (Revelation 20:4-6; 21:1-7, 10, 22-26; 22:1-5)
 - “Eternal Death”—being tormented day and night for ever and ever in the fiery lake of burning sulfur with the Devil and the impure. (Revelation 20:10, 11-15; 21:8, 27)
- Concerning your heavenly home, have you ever savored the experience of having “God’s Kingdom within you”?⁽²⁾ Do you have such a desire or craving?
- In what ways does that real sense of belief, desire and hope become a motivating force in your life?
- What do you set your heart and mind on today? If it is not Heaven, then who or what has attracted you or blurred your vision and focus? (Matthew 6:21)

2. Are you aware that you are only an alien, a sojourner in this life? What values will you live by in order to live this life right and well? (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Facts and questions for reflection

- Measured by the world’s values, the 33 years of Jesus’ life was a failure. Examine the following from the human standpoint and according to secular values:

- a. Appearance (Isaiah 53:2);
 - b. Background (having an unwed mother, born into a carpenter’s home);
 - c. Achievement (Matthew 11:20);
 - d. Honor / Fame (betrayed, condemned to death);
 - e. Wealth (Matthew 8:20);
 - f. Family (John 7:3-5; Mark 3:21)
- Viewed with transcendent heavenly values, how well did the incarnated Christ live his life? What were his priorities? What were the things on which he placed little value?
 - If your heart truly desires Jesus and heaven is your priority, how would your values (e.g., “a” to “f” above) or worldviews be changed? (John 16:7-8; Romans 12:2)
 - If you have already decided to follow Jesus and rely on God’s word and the Holy Spirit to live right and well, whose assessment on your life as being “good” or “bad” will bear more weight? (Revelation 22:8-9; 1 John 2:27)
 - Beware of self-deception and becoming deceitful and vain, e.g., mixing worldly standards, trends, human desires, outward appearances into the criteria for “living well”! If such is the case, then life becomes entangled with contradictions and endless struggles. An impure heart blurs one’s vision. The eye of sinful man cannot see God and his glory. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:13-14; 1 Timothy 3:7)

3. How would you cultivate heavenly-mindedness and live this life well after this retreat?

Living in God’s love is a pathway of grace and faith. Even as sojourners on earth, we will be accompanied by the Lord himself until we reach our heavenly home. (1 John 2:27)

For sharing and mutual encouragement:

Reviewing your current condition and properly processing all that you have learned, how would you adjust your decisions, choices and pursuits in order to live this life in a better, richer and more God-pleasing way—in church and outside the church?

Scriptural references for ⁽¹⁾ and ⁽²⁾

End Times	Mt 24:3-44; 2 Th 2:1-12; 2 Ti 3:1-5,7; 2 Pe 3:1-14
Death, Resurrection, Rapture	1 Th 4:13-18; 1 Co 15:42-44, 15:50-54; Re 20:4-6, 11-15
The Devil’s Dismal End	Re 20:1-3, 7-10
Final Judgment, Eternal Death or Damnation	Re 20:11-15, 21:8
Eternal Life, New Heaven & New Earth	Re 21:1-10, 22-27, 22:1-9
Heaven on Earth or Within	Lu 17:21; Jn 15:11, 17:13; Co 1:27