THE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH  
Pt 2

What does God say about our life’s journey with Him?

HEAVEN

SALVATION

Does God have

anything to say

about how

life's journey

is handled

between here?

Does God have anything to say about how life’s journey is handled between salvation and our final resting place. YES! Scripture works in the heart of believers creating their faith and leading them to obey the gospel. Someone said that it is not the date that you were born or the date that you died written on the gravestone that is important, it’s the life you lived in the dash between.

Scripture has a powerful effect on man. Scripture does not remain void, empty, without effect, Is 55:11, but rather is intentional and dynamic. The process of change is spiritual in nature, therefore, God and His Word, must be involved as agents of change.

*1 Thess 2:13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.* (“is at work” is a word group that means activity or energy, be in action or function, to produce an effect.)

Gods power works in us greater than we think.  *Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,*

*Phil. 2:13 For it is God who works in you* (same word as in 1 Thess 2:13 above)Both God and man are one, in the growth process. God working in us “*abundantly*” more than we ask or even think, *“according to the power at work within us”.* Yes, God is working in us, the fruit we bear is a result of His work.

*Hebrews 2:11 For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,* God does have something to say about our life’s journey because God is in our life’s journey.

1. The believer should recognize that they are active and involved in the progressive sanctification process. In the process of moving from salvation to heaven on earth, man is to be growing spiritually in partnership with His God. Although our redemption is all of God, we are commanded to cooperate with the Spirit as He uses the Word to mature us.

*Phil 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

“An understanding of how grace and personal, vigorous effort work together is essential for a life- long pursuit of holiness.”[[1]](#endnote-1) Ask how the counselee understands this process. Teach them that spiritual life is dynamic, it is growing, that Christ in them should also be Christ working through them. This should be evident in their lives. Ask questions about their spiritual growth.

1. You are freed from sin. The old capacity to sin is not eradicated, but we have been separated from its power through Christ. We do not have to yield to sin or be ruled by it. Think about it like this. Pre-salvation -- I could only sin!! Post-salvation -- I have a new capacity not to live selfishly in sin! If a person is ambivalent toward sin read through Romans chapter 6 and discuss what the Bible is teaching in this passage. “*How can we who died to sin still live in it*?” is a good question.

Active participation in the process of spiritual growth is assumed and commanded in Scripture.

1. You are to walk worthy. Eph. 4:1. You must mortify the flesh. Col. 3:5-7. You are to cleanse yourself. 2 Cor. 7:1. We cleanse ourselves, not with any intrinsic power of our own, but by obeying God’s truth. We make a volitional choice to obey God as a living sacrifice, Rom 12:1,2. Don’t get caught up in a debate about God’s role and their role. This could be an excuse for not wanting to change. Explain their responsibility to change and God’s work in the process of change. (see 4b Change or Application bah.docx)

Vi. Key elements in biblical change

Spiritual growth replacements unfortunately are common. In the chart below when the process of spiritual growth is experience oriented, the persons reason for change is ruled by an event or a feeling. The Christian life that is ruled by experience and feelings is constantly confessing sin, waiting for the right feeling, the right sign, or some other mystical, sensational, emotional tug from the “Spirit.” When our moods, emotions, or feelings play into our spiritual life, they often overrule how God desires for us to change. (See What Do You Feel.docx)

This person’s spiritual growth is something that happened in an experience. We are not saying that experiences do not help us to grow. But experience-based Christianity usually defaults to being feeling oriented. A crisis centered “heart tugging” feeling oriented Christianity has a stair step view of that “experience with God moment.” Some would say, “victorious living or “living victoriously” -- “getting right with God” or even being “separated”, instead of a deeper more theological understanding of the doctrine of spiritual growth. Their spiritual life is lived in a series of experiences or emotional moments and feelings. Because they are feeling oriented their language and life reflect a stair step approach to what might be considered “victorious living”.

1. Elements Of Emotion Oriented Christian Living

**HEAVEN**

The growth process is not a series of crisis that causes a person to finally “experience God”.

It is not a lifelong stair step experience from salvation to heaven, growing to another level of spiritual experience, or through an infusion of grace, or a mystical emotional high after “getting right with God”.

It is not the act of going through life “experiencing God”, then growing stagnate, then getting right with God over and over again. Growth in Christ cannot be reduced to dynamic emotional experiences with God.

**SALVATION**

**#1** The Stair Step Approach To “Victorious Living”.

**#2**   
The believer is said to be growing when they are most victorious.   
  
Spiritual growth is measured by a crisis driven moment, an experience or a mystical or emotional event, taking their lives to a presumed higher level, an infusion of grace.

**#3**Things have flattened out in life. The believer struggles or is said to be living in a “backslidden” condition or living as a “carnal” Christian. They need “revival” or need to “get the victory”. Something more something felt.

**#4**This person lives their Christian life in a series of experiences or emotional moments. They “feel” close to God. They “experience” God mystically.

* This kind of Christian living leads to:

1. A guilt-ridden Christian life. Living with guilt about not being right with the Lord until the breaking point and then “putting it all on the altar”, or “giving it all to the Lord”.
2. Multiple rededications. “I rededicate my life to the Lord, and now things are going to be better”. Be careful that the moment of rededication is not the magic hour. Be careful that “full surrender” now means that moment equals biblical spiritual growth. Young people are often caught in this trap.
3. Insecurity of salvation. Doubt’s salvation so is going through the motions of asking to be saved repeatedly.
4. The danger of being works oriented. The thinking is that since “God smiles” on anyone who does a good work, each step of “getting right with God”, will get me closer to God. The more “separated” I am, the more I am “holy”, therefore God will be pleased with my life and smile on me.

* All of these and more leave a person empty because of being performance oriented and never being able to measure up. They do not notice that they have a works-based performance-oriented life. The believer that is feeling oriented gets caught up in the cycle of emotional change that they cannot keep up with. Since feelings may change at any moment, their spiritual life is up and down, totally unstable, therefore their hearts are unstable, and they feel the tension. Being feeling oriented creates a stairstep of experiences that strains to move toward God. This up and down emotionally driven experience-oriented life is spiritually exhausting. Constantly grasping to “feel” God’s presence in a life leaves a huge emptiness.
* Another danger is not “feeling” like serving God because of a trial or an experience. Feelings take precedence over obedience to God and His Word because they don’t feel like it. Point out that Christ did not submit to feelings, rather He obeyed under the cruelest of conditions. Jesus modeled the command-oriented life rather than the feeling-oriented life even unto death. *Philippians 2:8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.* Listen for feeling oriented language as they communicate to you. Listen for replacements for true biblical growth and change.
* “Why are these replacements so attractive? In 2 Cor 10:5, Paul talks about “pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of God.” Remember that a pretense is a plausible lie, with enough truth to be believable. The lies that capture us as Christians usually seem to fit well within the borders of our Christianity……We have not forsaken the faith, but we may have redefined it in ways that are fundamentally different from the gospel laid out in Scripture.” [[2]](#endnote-2) As counselors we should understand the full scope of the sanctification process. Read, How People Change by Timothy Lane and Paul Tripp. How to Help People Change by Jay Adams. Gospel-centered counseling by Robert Kellemen. Read and study as much as you can about the gospel and progressive sanctification and don’t neglect good theological works as you read. The counseling we do is Christ centered and gospel oriented.
* “Today we have instant pudding, instant coffee, instant houses shipped on trucks, instant everything. And we want instant godliness as well. We want somebody to give us three easy steps to godliness, and we'll take them next Friday and be godly. The trouble is, godliness doesn't come that way.”[[3]](#endnote-3) When the process of spiritual growth is biblically applied, repentance and triumph over sin takes place in concrete ways. Change into the image of Christ becomes outwardly apparent because of inner-man transformation. Whenever we are missing God’s plan of progressively transforming us into the image of Christ, replacements will compete against that process and create even more tension. Tension in life, and with God. Watch for biblical sanctification replacements in your counselling.

1. Elements Of Biblical Change And Growth

No illustration is perfect, the chart on the next page attempts to demonstrate the progressive nature of spiritual growth, how a person changes and grows. Substantial change takes place gradually. “Substantial change Is “brought about by the ministry of the Word.” Note the gradual movement and ways and means. The ministry of the Word involves teaching, exhortation, rebuke, encouragement, discipline, etc., a series of steps. “Is blessed by the Spirit of God.” The Spirit is a unique factor in the process, not controlled by the counselor but essential to the process. “Brings the counselee closer to the likeness of Christ.” Thus, you have direction and movement, along with goals and objectives. There, along with the general elements of any process, is the manifestly unique factor—the presence of the Holy Spirit and the necessity for His blessing in conforming the counselee to Christ, through God’s Word.”[[4]](#endnote-4) Growing and changing in Christ is a process.

Starting at salvation the believer is progressively growing, hungering, learning, applying, and rejoicing in truth. In an upward slope. Eventually and naturally sin enters their lives in one manner or another, that is the first downward slope. The believer struggles, but in that struggle the Spirit of God convinces and convicts them of sin. They have a contrite heart and mind because of the Spirits work, they then seek truth in repentance from sin. They then put off, repent of the sin, renew the mind with biblical truth, and then put on a new pattern of behavior and living. The clearing of sin with the replacement principles of Eph 4:22-24, create a renewed rejoicing in truth, a growth into Christlikeness.

The next downward slope illustrates the trials and struggles the believer may face in life. The valleys are due to various trials or response to those trials, as well as making sinful choices in those trials. As they go through the trial or testing, they learn truth from the trial, they see God in the trial. They begin to see how God is shaping them in the trial. As a result, they begin to grow more in Christlikeness in an upward trend. As we have noted spiritual growth throughout life is progressive. The lines are going upward progressively, growth is building upon growth in Christ, it is steady, and it is progressively maturing. You can see the upward trend of their spiritual lives. When a believer allows sin or trials to dominate their lives, they will remain stagnant, they will remain in a downward trend. It is the downward trend that many believers find themselves as they struggle through life. God expects us to grow in grace, 2 Pe 3:18, and not remain stagnant or remain in sin. He does not want us to remain in the trial or to remain a victim of a trial. Spiritual growth is an upward trend of becoming more like God’s son. It is a lifelong process. Rom 8:29.

**Sanctification Is Not Mechanical Or Magical**.  
All of life’s experiences and all of the resources of God’s Word are brought to bear upon the process of spiritual growth.

The Spirit of God works in daily living, disciplined study, and the application of the fruit of the learning process.

Receiving truth with an open heart, and living truth out in an obedient life, is not just mere separation from sin. It is the progressive development of making holy the whole life so that it will grow into the stature of the fulness of Christ.

**Salvation**

•

**Hunger for Truth**

•

**Learns Biblical Truth**

•

**Applies**

**Truth**

•

**Rejoice in Truth**

**Growing in Truth**

**SINNING**

•

**Contrite Mind**

•

**Seek Truth**

•

**Renew Mind.**

•

**This is where**

**Scripture**

**replaces error.**

**Confesses to**

**God & people**

•

**Put off & put on**

•

**Apply truth**

•

**Radical amputation**

•

**Trusting In God’s Strength**

•

**Grows through  
the experience.**

**Rejoice in Truth**

•

**Trial or**

**misunderstood trial**

•

**Learn**

**truth**

•

**Sees God in**

**the trial**

**Rejoices  
in truth.**

**Hungry for  
Truth**

**Not Perfection But Constant Growth.**

**Renewing of the mind through**

**Scripture; showing the worthiness of**

**Jesus Christ and His way.**

**Putting off old habits of thinking and**

**acting by the Spirit’s strength.**

**Putting on the likeness of Christ or fruit**

**of the Spirit in patterns of growth.**

**Scripture  
begins to   
have a   
shaping   
influence.**

C. Spiritual growth is an ongoing process.

1. Perfection is not the goal but growing into Christlikeness in tangible ways is.
2. The Bible describes spiritual growth in these terms: *2 Pe 3:18 “But grow.” 2 Cor 3:18 “are changed into the same image.” Gal 5:16 “Walk in the spirit.”* These are solid biblical terms that can be easily biblically defined. The preceding three verses teach that perfection is not the goal but growing into Christ’s likeness is. The verb tense in the phrase “walk in the Spirit” is continuous action which implies an ongoing process.

D. Spiritual growth requires a great expenditure of effort.

*1 Tim 6:11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.*

*2 Tim 2:22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*

1. The word “pursue” literally means “to hound, track down.” It is used of being pursued by a lion -- that would cause you to exert great effort.
2. Paul’s imagery of an athletic event or an athlete show us that you and I must exercise (practice) ourselves unto Godliness. Godliness comes through disciplined, devoted, meaningful, measurable ways that we pursue God in partnership with His pursuit of us. Through His Word and by His Spirit, as well as trials and other people, He conforms us into the image of Christ. Godliness is an exercise of faith alongside of God, depending fully on Him to work through His Spirit and His Word.

*1 Tim 4:7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;*

The word train means to exercise. It is used alongside of the idea of competitive games. It is a metaphor for “training in godliness.” This is where we get our English word gymnasium. This is a lifelong process that builds on what we have learned in the past just like building muscle in the gym. This is spiritual exercise; it is growing in Christ in dependence upon Him.

*2 Tim 4:6–7 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

*Eph 6:10–12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

*1 Cor 9:23–27 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.*

1. Remember working out or getting ready is one thing, fulfilling the goal of competing and winning is another. Reaching the goal of pleasing God by becoming like His Son should be evident in anyone who claims to know Christ.

E. Spiritual growth is implicit in Scripture.

1. A key to understanding spiritual growth is the replacement principle taught in Scripture.“This portion from Ephesians is the most extensive passage that teaches what is often referred to as “the replacement principle.”[[5]](#endnote-5)

*Eph 4:21–24 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*

1. A key question to ask is, “what does the Bible say I should replace? -- (could it be anger, worry, slothfulness, envy, pride, vengeance, fear, etc.) and what does it say I should replace it with – (the virtues of love, forgiveness, unity, compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, purity, or patience). The key to that replacement is the renewing of the mind, what God places in our hearts concerning the reason we change. Sanctification is a lifelong process that requires us to willingly change.

*Col 3:8–10 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*

We might ask, when is a liar not a liar? When he stops lying? No. That’s only the “put off.” He must have a renewing of the mind (learn what Gods Word has to say about lying) and then train himself to “put on” truth telling as a righteous, habitual response.

* Notice the three categories and how they blend together***.***

***Examples of the Dynamic of the Put off/Put On Principle***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Scripture/Renewing*** | ***Put Off*** | ***Put On*** |
| Eph 4:25 | Lying | Truth Telling |
| Eph 4:28 | Being a thief | Getting a job and giving to others |
| Eph 4:26,27 | Resentment and clamming up | Keep current |
| Eph 4:29 | Unwholesome words | Gracious words that edify |

1. Nothing in our lives can be “taken out” without being “replaced”. If you try to put off without putting on you are in danger of falling back into former sins worse than before. If you attempt to put off sin and put on a right way of living you are only accomplishing behavioral change, that is another danger. God wants His Word to be the dynamic factor in changing your heart before you putt off sin and put on righteous living. Be careful to look for behavioral change in a counselee instead of biblical change from the heart level shaped by the Scripture. Look for a hunger and desire for righteousness. Ps 42. After some 25 years of being saved, Paul still desired to grow in Christlikeness. *Philippians 3:10–12 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.*
2. The reason you must change is to please God by bringing Him ultimate Glory, 1 Cor 10:31, Jn 8:28,29. Remember that sanctification is a process, God is reproducing Christ in you and making you more and more holy as you become more and more like His Son. *1 Pe 1:14–16**As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*
3. The sanctification process is purging us from ourselves and replacing us with Christlikeness. “To sanctify” means that God repossesses persons and things that have been devoted to other uses and have been possessed for purposes other than his glory, and takes them into his own possession in order that they may reflect his own glory. . .. Underlying all is the motif of expressing this divine image: being holy as he is holy. . .. Sanctification means being restored to the glory-image of God by being made like Jesus Christ . . . Christlikeness is the end in view; sanctification is the transformation which produces it.”[[6]](#endnote-6)

* The chart on the next page visualizes The Flow Of Spiritual Growth. From top to the bottom of the chart there are six blocks. The first box is Christlikeness from God’s perspective which is His eternal purpose for us. Box #2 is the desire for spiritual growth, which is to please God by bringing Him ultimate glory by becoming more like His Son. Box #3 is the primary resource of change, God’s Word. God uses many other instruments, but primarily the Word of God, and never without the aid of the Holy Spirit using His Word to change us. Box #4 is the Biblical principles that renew the mind in areas of needed growth. Box #5 moves Truth off the page of Scripture and brings it to bear upon our heart to respond. Box #6 is how we practically apply Truth to our lives.

***THE FLOW OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH***

***#1 CHRISTLIKENESS***

Romans 8:28,29

II Tim 3:16, 17 II Peter 1:1-8

***#4 BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE***

***#2 PLEASE GOD***

John 8:28,29 II Cor 5:9

# *#5 BIBLICAL COMMAND. WHY?*

Because we want to please God by bringing Him ultimate glory with our lives.

Because studying to find truths that deal with the area of needed growth in your life and renewing your mind with the truth of its teaching are crucial to continued spiritual growth.

Because obedience is not an option. You must grow and change because spiritual growth is not optional or even voluntary, it is mandated.

Because disciplining yourself to godliness depends on your willingness to obey and submit to God’s Word. It shows your heart attitude.

Because God wants me to diligently work toward godliness and please Him in Christlikeness. 2 Pe 3:14-18, 1 Tim 4:7, 8, 2 Cor 5:9

***#6 PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE BIBLICAL COMMANDS.  
HOW!***

*How* You Will Grow in Obedience to Scripture.

Thinking through concrete ways to obey Biblical commands by personalizing God's truth in your own life.

Being creative in your approach to practice what Gods Word says you should do. You can learn how to grow and change by creatively adapting truth to your life.

Understanding that this is a lifelong project - a lifelong exercise. You will never reach perfect stature in Christ until you meet Him in heaven, Philippians 3:1-16. “no sinless perfection”

Although the Biblical command never changes this box may vary from person to person as you think of different and creative ways to obey Biblical commands. This is living theology out in life!

God’s ultimate goal for us.

***#3 THE BIBLE***

Our Resource

My area of needed growth may be self-control, anger, fear, conflict resolution, communication, habitual sinful practices, lust etc. Areas are identified and biblical principles are found that address my needs.

The Christians ultimate goal.

NOTICE: The reason the *IMPLEMENTATION* box is on a lower level than the *COMMAND* box,  
 is because my implementation does not carry the same weight of authority as the biblical command does.

I may change my implementation as I personalize God's truth, but I can never change God's truth, (commands) to suite my implementation.

VII. The local church is VITALLY involved in the growth process.

1. Every believer should be under the care and the authority of a local church, so that every privilege can be provided for him or her that God has made available.

I often refer to this as Matthew 28 MINISTRY. Matt 28:*19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* Here in this passage, that is rightly referred to as the Great Commission, we see an order of where to start a church philosophy of ministry.

1. EVANGELISM / MAKING DISCIPLES, Winning people to Christ.
2. ASSIMILATION, Baptizing Converts into the church.
3. EQUIPPING DISCIPLES, Teaching them to observe.
4. Everything about the local church emanates first from this model of making, baptizing and equipping disciples. This is a seminal passage. “If a Christian understands all the rest of the gospel of Matthew but fails to understand this closing passage, he has missed the point of the entire book. This passage is the climax and major focal point not only of this gospel but of the entire New Testament. It is not an exaggeration to say that, in its broadest sense, it is the focal point of all Scripture, Old Testament as well as New.[[7]](#endnote-7)” This is why it is important to emphasis and to remind ourselves of this passage being the starting point for a New Testament philosophy of ministry.
5. Everything about the local church falls under the umbrella of Matthew 28 ministry as a starting point for talking about local church philosophy and purpose. If we start anywhere else in the New Testament we miss the emphasis about Jesus authority in verse 18, and how we are being given this same authority to do what a church should do. “When Jesus said, ‘Go, make disciples of all nations,’ he announced in the simplest and least ostentatious way the most original, the broadest, the sublimest enterprise that ever human beings have been called upon to accomplish.”[[8]](#endnote-8) This is where original gospel ministry through the ages would follow. Everything else follows, every teaching from the New Testament after the great commission given here is a reinforcement of Matthew 28 ministry. “They who disciple and baptize men must teach them the duty of obeying Christ in all things; and the Christian instructor has still fallen short of his task unless those whom he is called to instruct have both learned what Christ’s commandments are, and have learned to observe them.[[9]](#endnote-9)” The church is first called to do these three things. “The task of fulfilling the Great Commission includes therefore not only evangelism but also teaching. And the task of teaching all that Jesus commanded us is, in a broad sense, the task of teaching what the whole Bible says to us today.[[10]](#endnote-10)”

In the previous verses in Matthew 28, Jesus claims universal authority to enact such a commission. The church is commissioned to exercise this authority as the basis to make disciples, assimilate them, and then equip them. This passage is the basis for all ministry that the church did before us and should be doing now. It is the blueprint for elders/church leaders, members, and the mission of the church.

1. According to Matthew 28, a disciple is “one who follows one’s teaching, who is not only a pupil, but an adherent.[[11]](#endnote-11) In fact the phrase, “Make disciples”- translated from Greek – Mathēteúō, “means not only to learn, but to become attached to one’s teacher and to become his follower in doctrine and conduct of life.” [[12]](#endnote-12) The gospel’s move us from a promised Messiah to a suffering and crucified and risen Messiah, to an authoritative commission to propagate the Messiah’s message in perpetuity.

In the gospel of Luke we are introduced to the new covenant era by John the Baptist. *Lk 16:16 “The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it*. The New Testament era began with John the Baptist proclaiming the messiah as the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world. Jn 1:29 The Old Testament era, otherwise called the period of the Law and the Prophets, had come to an end, here is the promised messenger preparing the way of the Lord. Mal 3:1 The fact that the Law and Prophets were until John means that he had a new message, which would usher in a new era. Jn 1:35-36

And then we read in Matthew’s gospel, *Matt 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* The church’s existence is recognized and established by Christ the Rock, the body of Christ exists in infancy form, and is later given instruction and authority on how to function as a body of believers in Matthew 18 verses 15-18 “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to *you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

1. With that instruction the church is commissioned with authority to make, baptize, and teach its disciples. *Matt 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

How the church “teaches her people to observe” Matt 28 ministry can be done in all kinds of ways, through preaching, teaching, personal mentoring /discipleship/ counseling. The point is that it is God’s truth being communicated accurately for the purpose of shaping the heart and changing the life into the conformity of Christ. It is the process of bringing redeemed people into conformity to the teachings of God’s Word and doing that together.

1. We see Matt 28 Great Commission ministry reproduced in the early church in Acts chapters 2-6, when the disciples’ made disciples, baptized them, and then taught them to observe. We see Matt 28 ministry throughout the book of Acts being reproduced, for example 2:37-41, 10:44-48, 14:21, 16:14-34. We see Paul continuing this equipping process as he is under the authority of the Local church at Antioch. He trains Tim in Acts 16:1-3 and the Eph elders in Acts 20, preaching, teaching from house to house, and counseling. Elder responsibility is not relegated just to know and defend doctrine, but to feed the flock of God, 1 Pe 5:1-4, to be an example by living with them, leading, teaching, discipling, counseling .

VIII. THE functional aspect of matthew 28 ministry

1. This brings us to the practical functional side of Matthew 28 ministry; I refer to this as Ephesians 4 ministry.
2. The church leadership should:

* Feed the flock of God. *Ac 20:28, 1 Pe 5:2*
* Mature the saints. *Eph 4:11–16*
* Watch over the flock and provide soul care. *Heb 13:7, 17*
* Oversee a Perpetuate the training process*. 2 Tim 2:2*

The church’s membership should:

* Be a disciple and be a disciple maker. Matt 28, 19, Jn 15:8
* Be obedient and thoughtful toward church leaders. Heb 10:7, 17
* Be doing one another ministry. Jn 13:35, and many other “one another” commands in Scripture.
* Be a faithful encourager and attender. Heb 10:24, 25
* Be a restorer. *Jam 5:19–20, Gal 6:1*
* Be a counselor. *Rom 15:14*

1. The church is to grow and change together through Ephesians 4 ministry.

*Eph 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

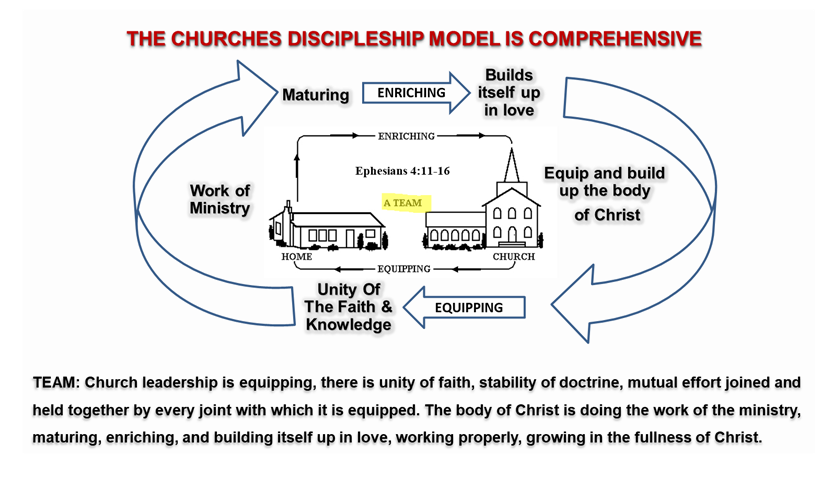
1. Growing and Changing Together” is what life in the body of Christ should always look like.

*Eph 4:15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ*

1. As we learn truth, we apply it in specific areas of our lives to *“grow up in every way”,* into Christ.

The local church is only as strong as each individual and each individual family that is growing into Christlikeness. Remember that spiritual growth is not about what you are doing, but about WHO you are becoming like, Jesus Christ, vs14. Its an inner transformation that is reflected in out ward behavior. Spiritual growth is not about a list of doing things, its not about being performance oriented. It is about applying truth in specific areas of our lives in order to model Christ in every area of our lives. Jesus is the perfect model of sinless behavior that ultimately pleased the Father, it is His example, it is the Person of Christ being reproduced in us that we want to attain in fullness, vs 13, it is growing in Him. 1 Pe 2:21, 2 Pe 3:18 This inner change results in outward behavioral change that models Christ. Christ in us, is Christ working through us, is Christ being modeled in our daily behavior.

1. The church leaders equip the saints and then the church, the body of Christ, enriches the church. We work together as a team, as seen in the inner illustration of the church equipping and the home enriching as a team. Starting at the arrow under “equipping”, the church equips the home, or individual believers who do the work of the ministry, together we build each other up, “to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God”. We then attain maturity in the “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” together, and then the cycle continues to go, grow, and we continue to enhance one another in Christ.



The context of Eph 4:11-16 is very important. “Paul just said in *verse eleven* that Christ gave, “Pastors/Teachers” as gifts to the church. In *verse twelve*, Paul gives a strong ministry priority: The pastor/teacher was given as a gift to the church to fully equip the flock for ministry and service. This is comprehensive equipping. It is a strong emphasis on knowing how to use God’s Word, both publicly and privately, to help the flock apply truth to daily life (as husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, children, employers, employees, etc.).”[[13]](#endnote-13) Spiritual growth functions best within the local church community. That does not mean that we only grow and change through the church, we grow privately as believers in many ways. It does mean that God has ordained the church to be the primary place that growth in the “*measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*”, is being developed, perpetuated, and fully functioning within the body of Christ. Matthew 28 ministry as well as Ephesians 4 ministry are an inseparable part of a believers life and growth in Christ, and should be a priority in the churches leadership. The biblical mandates of Matthew 28 and Ephesians 4 ministries are the task or purpose of New Testament biblical ministry. The goal or focus of New Testament biblical ministry is to please God by bringing Him ultimate glory.

GODS GLORY AS LIFE’S FOCUS

*Jn 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, 2 since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

See lesson: Please God Chart Demonstration.docx

THE GLORY OF GOD MANIFESTED IN THE BELIEVER

*20 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

Growing in Christ-likeness is also growing in grace. Jesus was the unique manifestation of grace and truth, Jn 1:14. We are commanded to 2 Pe 3:18 *“grow in grace”,* growing in Christ is growing in grace. Grace is not only unmerited favor, it is the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in life. Grace is God imparting the character, nature and personality of Christ upon the heart of believers. That grace is working in us and reflecting God’s Glory.

The Greek word for Grace has to do with the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life. So we could say that grace describes the whole of God's character and activity toward man, in and through Christ. God grace working in our life as a growth pattern is a reflection of His glory, the glory of God’s Son, the glory that he has given us through His Son. *2 Cor 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

The ultimate goal of pleasing God by bringing Him glory by becoming like His Son is a full description of our focus and purpose in life. God is using many things in our lives to bring this about, the local church which is the body of Christ is the place where we functionally live out our spiritual growth and spiritual gifts. This is very important for every believer to understand clearly. The church, which is the body of Christ is not perfect, but the God who made us into the body of Christ is.

If a person has any hesitation about local church membership, elder leadership issues, or church functional issues in general, probe the reasons why. There may be legitimate reasons that they mistrust or do not want to function within a body of believers at this time. We want to be careful and respect their views and experiences until we can address them. Eventually you can work through those issues and help them see the importance of the local church in a believer’s life. Heb 10:25. Take them through passages that deal with their gifts being utilized as an encouragement within the body, let them know that their spiritual gift is unique and benefits the body of Christ. Read through 1 Cor 12 with them and other passages dealing with spiritual gifts. Be sure to address bad experiences or bad theology about the local church.

Conclusion

1. For man to change he must have a model or an example of what that change may look like. If we are asking for change, we must ask, change into what? The world’s tallest order and highest model is self. If self is happy with the change, then you have accomplished the goal of making life worth living. Change is being normal, living a normal life among the citizenries, change of behavior not change from the heart. God is not interested in just changing behavior, God is interested in changing the heart, so that the person’s behavior is changed into the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ. Rom 8:29
2. The believer has the ultimate example and model in Jesus Christ, 1 Pe 2:21. He is a perfect model of sinless behavior that ultimately pleased the Father. None of the models of the world can compete with the sinless Son of God. It is important to teach the counselee that the believer is transformed in their inner heart to resemble the Lord Jesus. This inner change results in outward behavioral change.
3. Because of this there is a depth to which biblical discipleship/counseling can go that secular agents can’t touch. For an example: 2 Pe chapter one verses three and four clearly outlines how a person is enabled and how a person is empowered.

*2 Pe 1:3–4 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

DIVINE EMPOWERMENT

3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, **through** the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,

DIVINE ENABLEMENT

*4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

1. To be confident of being spiritually enabled and divinely empowered is super important and extremely faith building. The Bible in this passage assures us of being enabled and empowered to apply truth to our everyday lives. “In the Bible we face facts, but far more than facts: on the pages of Scripture, we face God Himself! We see Him inaction, hear Him address us in our sins and need, and, as we read, listen to His call, not merely to learn, but to repent, believe, and love—as well as think….In short, in the Bible you find *truth applied.[[14]](#endnote-14)* That’s real hope, that’s real confidence![[15]](#endnote-15)

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11. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
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