

Attitude Towards Ourselves Part 2 Am I Growing?

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Luke 6:40

The right attitudes are absolutely necessary. They are necessary for unity in a local congregation.

We studied our attitudes towards God, Jesus Christ, the gospel, the church, and our brethren; now we shall continue our study in our attitudes towards ourselves.

We studied the first part of our attitudes towards ourselves – “Examine Yourselves”. Now, let us notice some more attitudes we need toward/within ourselves — “Am I Growing?”

Spiritual growth is a choice. We can grow if we really want to.

This lesson is about our attitudes on “Our Goals for Spiritual Growth.”

What should be our goals for spiritual growth? What should we strive for? By what measurement can we determine if our goals have been met and spiritual growth has taken place? As with any venture, having goals and attaining them is essential to any success.

Let us notice what some of our spiritual goals should be.

Behavioral Goals.

Our ultimate goal is to be like Christ. A disciple is to become like his teacher. Luke 6:40, “*The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.*”

God’s desire is that we be conformed to the image of His Son. Rom. 8:29, “*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*”

Image — moral likeness. “Be conformed” means “be changed to a pattern”. Morally, God wants us to be like Jesus.

We are to transform (or change) ourselves into the image of Christ. 2 Cor. 3:18, “*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*” (Same image – moral likeness.)

It is essential that we grow and be more Christ-like. Just as we change when we grow physically, we are to change when we grow spiritually, as well.

This involves growing in the knowledge of Christ. It starts when one is young in Christ. 1 Pet. 2:2, “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*”

When a person first becomes a child of God he doesn’t know very much — he’s not expected to know much. But that person is expected to grow by desiring and studying God’s word.

Someone who has been in the church awhile is also expected to continue growing, and not become stagnant.

Water that just lies still as in a pond will soon become stagnant and infested with all sorts of bugs, algae, and is unfit to drink. Water that constantly flows over rocks and gravel, however, is pure, clean, and normally drinkable.

Our lives should be like that, as well. When we encounter the rocks of this life, it helps to purify us, make us better and stronger. We study God’s word to help us grow and aid us in our times of troubles and difficulties.

We need to be moving and not sitting still.

We, as mature Christians, should also help the younger ones to grow. Heb. 5:12-14, “*For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*”

If we don’t teach them where will they learn?

Peter commanded us to grow. 2 Pet. 3:18, “*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*”

Sometimes I think it would be nice just to reverse the command and tell my physical body to stop growing when I’m gaining too much weight.

But Peter was talking about our spiritual bodies. And he said for us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. Not just academic knowledge, but personal knowledge through character development.

2 Pet. 1:5-11, “*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to*

godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

This how we grow, by piling one character builder upon another character builder in our spiritual life.

Reaching our spiritual goals requires a challenge. It requires diligent effort. (2 Pet. 1:5-10, above). It requires sustained effort. Gal. 6:7-9, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”*

We continue our efforts even if we become tired. When we exercise physically, we get tired, don't we. But the more we exercise, the easier it becomes.

But at the beginning of our physical exercise we get tired, sore, weary, and want to quit. Our body complains to us. Paul says “Don't faint” or “Don't quit”. He was talking about our spiritual exercise.

1 Tim. 4:7-8, “*But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*”

Paul said we shall reap the benefits if we don't stop.

There were some in Paul's day that thought he was a little abrupt and his speech contemptible. Paul evidently thought that of himself, as well, for it was something that he worked at (exercised at). Acts 24:16, “*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*”

Do we have that kind of attitude that we are willing to exercise (work at) and not be offensive to others about us?

Growth does not come naturally; if we are not careful, we may revert back to our former conduct and character. 2 Pet. 2:20-22, “*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known*

the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

Just as with our physical exercise, if we stop exercising we are not going to be as fit as we once were. We need to keep at it.

True spiritual growth demands a renewal of mind and character. Something we do over and over. Rom. 12:1-2, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

Don't be conformed to the world; or don't be like the world. Put on the mind of Christ. Being acceptable to Him is our reasonable service.

Functional Goals.

The church is a body with many members.

Every member is important. 1 Cor. 12:12-22, *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.”*

Every member does not have the same function. Rom. 12:3-5, *“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”*

We are not to look down upon another person because we can do something better than him or her. There are undoubtedly things that person can do better than you or me. We all have different functions in the body of Christ. We work good together as a unit, just as our physical body. Every member must do his or her part.

As members of the body we must grow as a body, individually and collectively. We must find and develop our unique function(s) in the body of Christ.

Rom. 12:6-8, *“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

- For some it will be laboring in the word (preaching, teaching).
- For others, it may involve ministering to others (visiting, serving).
- For many, it may involve a multitude of talents and abilities.

We must utilize our gifts (functions) in the service of God. 1 Pet. 4:10-11, *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”*

- Those who speak, doing it as the oracles of God.
- Those who serve, with the strength God supplies.
- Whatever we do, we do it with the best of our ability.

Failing to grow brings reproach, for we are guilty of wasting what God has given us. Parable of the Talents. Matt. 25:14-30, *“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five*

talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Don't waste whatever talents God has given you.

We have a challenge of reaching our functional goals. The challenge of determining our function(s) in the body of Christ.

Not all members have the same function; ask yourself, what is mine? Am I lacking in certain talents, or do they simply need to be developed? Am I truly a one-talented individual, or am I using that possibility as an excuse not to develop what I am truly capable of?

We have a challenge of reaching our goals. It depends heavily upon the cooperation of all the members.

If we are not united in the need for spiritual growth, it is unlikely we will set goals that will nourish such growth. If we are not growing individually, any goals will unlikely be met. If we desire to grow, we need to be growing as individuals, and set our goals to allow for such!

Conclusion.

Spiritual growth requires the setting and obtaining of goals.

As we obtain our goals Christ will be glorified! As disciples and as members of His body we will become what He desires us to be.

If we desire to grow spiritually, then we need to set and strive for behavioral and functional goals that will inspire us in the right direction.

