

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Human Growth & Development

1. The NT uses 5 Greek words to describe 5 stages of spiritual growth.

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| a. Brephos | Lk 2:12, 1Pt 2:2 | A baby on the breast, newborn |
| b. Nepios | 1Cor 3:1, 13:11. Heb 5:14 | Crawlers, yet to speak |
| c. Pais | Mk. 10:13, Mt 2:9 | Toddlers, kindergarten age |
| d. Teknon | Gal 4:28, Eph 5:8 | A Child under training |
| e. Huios | Rom 1:3-4 | Adult son, age 13 considered an adult but not mature |

2. Just like in normal human growth, we grow spiritually in stages & cycles.

- Every stage is designed for developing new knowledge, strength & skills.
- Each stage will have its share of specific hurdles that can only the new knowledge, strength & skills are able to overcome.
 - Walking – combination of knowledge from observation, strength & balance enabling the child to stand up and begin taking steps – practice = perfect
 - The desire to obtain something across the room creates the drive to pursue it and thus the hurdle must be overcome to gain possession of it.
- As these developmental goals of each stage are achieved, the child will be driven by a desire for those things that can only be obtained through the knowledge, strength & skills found in the next phase of development.

3. Each stage of development has the following 4 aspects:

- Need/desire:** for our immediate needs/desires that comes from our humanity and the longings we feel from the emptiness within.
 - Desire for affection, attention, affirmation, accomplishment
- Faith – Expectation:** Attaching our faith to some person, relationship, object, or situation outside of ourselves expecting them or it to fulfill or gratify our desires
 - Mother, father, siblings, friends, mate, children, grandchildren
- Strategy – Relationships:** Developing the knowledge, strength & skills required to implement our strategy of pursuing objects of our affections
 - Singing & dancing to make mom laugh, dad play with us, friends like us
 - Using beauty, personality, talent, intellect, humor, fortune, fame
 - 4 categories of love are attached to the object(s) of desire - conditional
- Challenges:** Running into natural hurdles in the path of our objectives, requiring that we develop & practice greater levels of knowledge & skill to overcome the hurdles, forcing us to grow
 - Learning to walk to get where we want to go, to gain some goal
 - Learning to entertain, persuade, impress to gain the admiration of others

4. This pattern is divinely designed, applies to both OM & NM systems.

- This progressive pattern applies to any/every form of growth in life.
- Our needs produce our desires; We attach faith to some object we choose to desire, expecting that upon securing the object that +H will occur; We form strategies of conditional love, giving to get back from the object(s). We use the challenges to practice & improve our relational skills, thinking that winning the love of another will fulfill our hearts.
- OM system: we are motivated by our own need/desire and all that we do is intended to fill the emptiness in our hearts – all apart from God.
- NM system: we are motivated at first by need to pursue a relationship with God & as we mature, motivated by love for Him.

5. Transformation growth cycle: Col 1:9-10

- a. knowledge of His desire for us,
- b. walking worthy of the Lord at the level of growth we have attained
- c. pleasing Him in every way at the level of growth we have attained
- d. greater knowledge from the application phase of Christian life

6. One of the most misunderstood aspects of CWL is the purpose of the adversities God allows into our lives

- Health problem that we wonder why He allows – how does this help?
- Loss of loved ones both young & old – how does this help us live for Christ?
- Relational losses – divorce, infidelity, financial unfaithfulness, addictions

Rom 5:3-5 And not only do we rejoice in the confidence that we will share in the Lord's glory, but we also rejoice in our adversities, knowing that adversity develops endurance; ⁴ & endurance allows us to experience proof; & witnessing the proof of the power of God's promises produces confidence, & confidence in God never disappoints, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Vs 1 Justified by faith - Positional peace with God through Christ

- Union with Christ – we share all He is and all He has

Vs 2 Gained access by faith into His grace in which we stand – rejoice in glory

- Have Access – *echo* – PfAI – to have, possess – Pf = permanent possession
prosagoge – allowed to approach the king – permanent access to the King.
- Stand – *histemi* PfAI - to be placed; permanently stand – eternal security

Vs 3 Rejoice also in adversities because we know that they develop endurance

Rejoice – *kauchomai* – to boast, brag, celebrate, rejoice

- Knowing that it was all for good, Paul was able to rejoice when adversity hit

adversities – *thlipsis* – tribulation, persecution, troubles in life

develop – *katergazomai* – to develop using great pressure

- To produce an effect through pressure & struggle

endurance – *upomone* – remain under the weight

- Patience with circumstances – to remain under the pressure of waiting on the Lord to fulfill His promises to us, producing confidence that He will.
- Endurance is confidence that God has given His word and that He will move heaven & earth if necessary, to honor it – so we stand firm, waiting on Him

Vs 4 and endurance produces proof & proof produces confidence.

- Ellipsis – the verb in vs 3 is understood to apply to entire sentence (3-5)

- Proof – *dokime* – gold having been purified by melting rendering a true, purified weight & value

Dokimazo – process of purifying ore out of the ground by superheating it. Gold is heavier than other metals and they boil up to the top to be scooped off by the goldsmith. As he continues to purify the gold, he knows it is pure when he can see his face reflected in the gold with no blemishes – the fire of adversity.

- As we endure, waiting on the Lord to honor His word, we discover that He always does, we become totally persuaded that He is faithful – proof.
- Adversity is not “testing” the bel's faith, it is allowing God to prove His faithful love for His children, the power & validity of His word.

2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and **I have been persuaded** that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. (NAS)

Vs 5 – this hope (persuaded confidence in God's proven faithfulness) will never disgrace us because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts.....

- Disgrace – *kataischuno* – to be dishonored, disgraced, put to shame
- When our confidence is in God, we will never fail or dishonor Him or self

Vs 5 love of God poured out into our hearts.

- Poured out – *ekcheo* PfPI – completely poured out, none left to pour out.
- At salvation, in union with the beloved Son, we became the object of all the divine love in existence.
- Endurance (confidence to wait on God’s promises) allows Him to prove His love for us by demonstrating unconditional love in the way He cares for us.

James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (NAS)

- 7. God’s plan for our growth is a circular system, continually supporting itself, offering us opportunities to continually grow into the likeness of Christ.**
 - a. Childhood stages – Abba Father, focus on foundations of forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, eternal security & new identity in Christ
 - b. Training stages – divine power, spiritual skills, armor of God, Faith-Rest Cycle, functional aspects of the Christian walk, promises become rationales.
 - c. Adult Stages – Entering into the battle, intimate relationships, witness, recognizing evil in the world, battle engaged prayer life
 - d. Mature Stages – focus on exchanging belief systems, applying truth to your own character & motives – total honesty, total honesty in relationships, intimate “being” with God
- 8. God uses the normal adversities that come to all of us in life as the pathway to self-awareness & healing of the wounds in our souls.**
 - a. Our childhood adversities are foreknown & allowed, knowing that we will misunderstand their purpose & react to them with false beliefs.
 - b. Our false beliefs that form as reactions to our adversities are the source of our soul pain & misery, not the events we experienced.
 - c. Normal challenges of growing up, learning to interact with the world.
 - d. Challenges of intimate relationships – marriage, children, aged parents
 - e. Challenges of health issues especially as we age – normal decline
 - f. Challenge of facing death as it comes upon us.
- 9. There can be no real growth without adversity & loss to expose our false thinking & motivating us to be free from it.**
 - a. Some (including me) have described the CWL being lived by learning the principles of God’s word and doing them in our life – fallacy.
 - b. This worked perfectly for Jesus in His humanity because He has no OSN nor did He ever believe any false ideas based on His experiences – not for us.
 - c. God uses our adversities and suffering to expose our false thinking

^{NAS} **Deuteronomy 8:2-3** "And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, **testing you (exposing you), to know (to reveal)** what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ "And He humbled you and **let you be hungry**, and **(He)** fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

- The wilderness humbled them, made them helpless to help themselves
- The wilderness evoked their human centered beliefs & strategies so that they could see what was in their own hearts.
- He led them into a place (adversity) where they were helpless and allowed them to get hungry with no means to feed themselves or their families.

- He allowed all of this into their lives to show them that God could provide food & water anytime He wanted and that His promises to provide for them (every word proceeding from His mouth) were far greater & more important than anything else in their lives – how we live.
- d. It is not just that we are being tempted daily by the world & our OSN to believe false ideas about life, it is that we have already believed many, many false ideas about life that must be exposed and patterns broken.
 - e. Only the pain & suffering of adversity & loss is capable of awakening us from the stupor in which we live from our focus on earthly pleasures & the hypnotic trancing of the devil's world.

10. God also uses the normal adversities of life as our opportunities to apply His word righteously, motivated by love for Him.

- a. Once we remove our false beliefs about any one issue or area of life, we are then truly free to apply truth without inner conflicts – true freedom
- b. He is glorified when we use His promises & principles to resolve the inner conflicts within us from false reactions to the adversities of life.
- c. He is glorified when we use His promises & principles to overcome the adversities caused by AOS & the devil's world.

11. God uses the normal adversities of life to enable us to habituate NM beliefs.

- a. As OM beliefs are progressively exposed & removed, we progressively replace the old with NM beliefs.
- b. As we begin to consistently apply the NM beliefs to deal with life, they become our new habituated responses to life.
- c. As we habituate our new way of thinking about the different aspect of our life, these responses become automated – automatic thinking.
- d. It is not that we are never challenged or tempted to sin in these areas, but living like Christ is our habit and momentum carries us past the temptations
- e. Christ having believed only truth as revealed by GHS & the scriptures had built 33 years of dynamic momentum, engraining submission to His Father deep in His heart – not my will but yours be done. Mt 26:39

12. God allows some to share in the sufferings of Christ – persecution for the name of Christ, deprived of every aspect of life, imprisonment, execution.

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to **suffer for His sake,**

^{NAS} **1 Peter 3:14** But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are* blessed. And do not fear them nor fear the trouble they cause.

Vs 14 if you suffer for +R sake – 4th class condition – I wish it were true, but it is not

- These believers were still suffering because of their own choices and from the normal adversities that come with a corrupted body in the devil's world

Vs 14 suffering for the sake of +R is sharing the Lord's suffering – **you are blessed**

Vs 14 do not fear them nor the trouble they will surely bring to your life.

- a. The sufferings of Christ are beyond the normal adversities of life that both believer & unbeliever experience.
- b. Sufferings of Christ are the pressures applied to the believer from the forces of evil attempting to destroy his/her life & testimony.

Ex: political forces targeting believers, churches & images relating to Christ.

Act 8:1 – a great persecution against the church – Saul

- **Diogmos** – to be chased down – systematic harassment

John 16:33 In the world you have tribulation

- **Thlipsis** – troubles brought on by evil

^{NAS} **Hebrews 10:32-34** But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, ³³ partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴ For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one

- Sufferings – *pathema* – passion, extreme suffering – passion of Christ
- Spectacle – *theatrizo* – theatre, used for public entertainment
- Reproaches – *oneidismos* – verbal abuse, unjustified insults, sneering, mocking
- Tribulations – *thlipsis* – troubles

c. Suffering for His sake involves some level of attack by the forces of evil.

- 2Cor 12:7 – a demon was allowed to strike his body causing sickness or pain

d. Suffering for Christ's sake is the highest honor given to a believer in this life.

Act 5:41 – Apostles rejoiced they had been counted worthy to be disrespected for His name – for Christ's benefit.