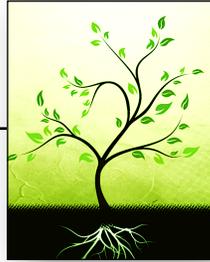


(2 Peter) - Growing In Christ



- How would you describe your spiritual growth—in reverse, on pause, in slow motion, fast forward?
- What factors hinder you from growing deeper in your relationship with God?

Just as Second Timothy records the last words of the Apostle Paul, the letter of Second Peter records the last words of the Apostle Peter. Peter knew his time was short. He writes that Jesus had revealed this to him (2 Peter 1:13-15). History tells us that Peter was arrested and crucified by the Roman Government. Peter felt unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord and Savior, so he requested to be crucified upside down. The Romans granted his request.

The purpose of Second Peter was to give some last instructions and reminders to Christians (2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1). Peter wrote about what he thought was the most important issues for the Church after his death. In short, Peter's last message was: **continue to grow in Christ** (2 Peter 3:18). He develops this theme by talking about the process of spiritual growth (1:3-11), the importance and trustworthiness of the scriptures (1:16-21; 3:2), the hindrances to spiritual growth—mainly error, false beliefs, and false teachers (2 Peter 2), and the hope and anticipation of the growing Christian—mainly the Sovereign control of God over the future and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3).

The Life Application Study Bible explains: "Previously Peter had written to comfort and encourage believers in the midst of suffering and persecution—an external onslaught. But three years later, in this letter containing his last words, he wrote to warn them of an internal attack—complacency and heresy. He spoke of holding fast to the nonnegotiable facts of the faith, of growing and maturing in the faith, and of rejecting all who would distort the truth... Determine to grow in your knowledge of Christ and to reject all those who preach anything inconsistent with God's Word."

Central Lesson:

Every Christian should be **INTENTIONAL** about **GROWING** deeper in his or her **RELATIONSHIP** with Christ.

Author: The author of the book is **PETER**.

Simon Peter's name is given as the author (1:1). Also, the author stated in chapter 3:1 that this is the second letter that he had written. Furthermore, the writer claims to have been an eyewitness of the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain where He let Peter, James, and John see His divine glory (2 Peter 1:16-18; Matthew 17:1-8). Just as Moses saw the glory of God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19, 34), Peter, James, and John witnessed the divine glory of Jesus. This experience so impacted their life that they never forgot it.

Peter was a fisherman whom Christ called to follow Him and become a fisher of men (Mark 1:17-18). Peter occupied a central role in the early church and spread the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Tradition claims that Peter eventually was arrested by the Romans and crucified upside down prior to Nero's death in A.D. 68.

Date: A.D. **67** possibly from Rome (The mention of Babylon in 1 Peter 5:13 was code for Rome which was persecuting Christians). The letter of Second Peter was written three years after First Peter.

Key Verse: **2 Peter 3:18.**

"Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." NLT.

Peter gives us two goals for our spiritual growth: (1.) Growing in "the grace" of Jesus, and (2.) growing in the "knowledge" of Jesus.

1. Growing in "the grace" of Jesus.

Grace means—God's special unmerited favor. Growing in the grace of Jesus means growing in the favor of God. It means growing in our relationship with Christ and seeking to please God. Paul wrote that *"...our goal is to please him."* (2 Corinthians 5:9). Paul also taught the Thessalonians about *"to live in a way that pleases God"* (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

2. Growing in the "knowledge" of Jesus.

Growing in the knowledge of Jesus means that we learn more *about* Jesus and we grow in our *relationship* with Jesus (knowing Jesus relationally and personally). *How do we grow in our knowledge of Jesus?* In short—daily personal Bible reading, participating in Bible studies, prayer, and worship.

Key Chapter: Chapter **1**.

Chapter 1 expands the emphasis on growing in Christ. It presents a clear explanation of the process of spiritual growth (1:5-7). Peter presents the process of spiritual growth as seven stages or seven links in a chain. One stage is built upon the previous. The seven stages of spiritual growth are:

1. **Faith**—the Christian life characterized by faith, a relationship with Christ.
2. **Goodness**—moral excellence; virtue; praise-worthy qualities.
3. **Knowledge**—applying biblical truth to life, values, and beliefs.
4. **Self-control**—mastering the flesh, passions, lust.
5. **Perseverance**—the ability to endure & be steadfast in difficulty.
6. **Godliness**—to be Christ-like; to live God's way.
7. **Brotherly kindness**—to deeply care for other Christians & their needs.
8. **Love**—the ability to deny self & sacrifice for others.

Peter also explains the **benefits** of growing in Christ (1:4, 8, 10-11) and the **disadvantages** of failing to grow in Christ (1:9).

Key Words: **GROW** (3:18). **GODLY** (2:9; 3:11) and **Godliness** (1:3, 6, 7). **Knowledge** (1:2, 3, 5, 6, 8; 3:18) or **know** (1:12, 14; 3:17).

Outline: Bruce Wilkinson, in his book *Talk Thru the Bible*, outlines the book:

- I. **Cultivation of Christian Character (Chapter 1)**
- II. **Condemnation of False Teachers (Chapter 2)**
- III. **Confidence of Christ's Return (Chapter 3)**

Central Lesson:

Every Christian should be intentional about growing deeper in his or her relationship with Christ. *Are you continuing to grow in Christ? Will you apply yourself to the spiritual growth process?*

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ.
- ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.