

Series on the Holy Spirit

Last week: PERSON, DIVINE, RELATIONAL, HELPER

TODAY: The Holy Spirit Helps Us Grow

Thinking of ways that we measure growth in our lives:

- Taking tests – Lilia physical fitness exam
- Competing against others – Caraline spelling bee
- Life Experience – Madelaine wheelchair in public - ZOO
- Getting Feedback – Person or device: SCALE

How do we measure growth when it comes to living out our faith?

Galatians – letter written by the Apostle Paul – churches in Galatia region
CRISIS IN THIS YOUNG CHURCH: what does it look like to be a disciple?

Chapter 5: Paul is helping them understand what it looks like to embrace and embody the life of Jesus in their own lives.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO GROW!

[16] But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. [17] For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. [18] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. [19] Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. [22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. [25] If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. [26] Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5 (ESV)

Four things we learn about true growth

True growth IS INVISIBLE

WHEN TALKING ABOUT SPIRITUAL GROWTH: Scripture often uses botanical metaphors – seeds, trees, vines, branches, harvest, fruit...

Why these botanical terms?

Growth is natural, organic, slow and often INVISIBLE

THIS MEANS WE MUST

- **trust the process** – trust that God is working in us
- **endure the seasons** – 3 days without precipitation!! First since Sept
- **go through the struggle**
 - [17] For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

BTW THIS means that **the people closest to us won't always see it AND we might be the last to see it in those closest to us** (watching your own kids grow versus other kids...)

It ALSO means that we **need to be patient with each other** and allow the Holy Spirit to do his job – you aren't the HS! Only he changes us!

True growth IS INTERCONNECTED

DEFINE TERMS! (girls always asking)

Let's define **these 9 characteristics individually...go quick here...**

Love – first (highest priority!)

Agape is a love that **always seeks the highest of the other**, no matter what he or she does. It is a self-giving love that gives freely without asking anything in return, and does not consider **the worth of** its object.

In most cases: **Love is a commodity we trade** instead of a no string attached free gift – “I love you IF...” “I love you as long as...”

SOCIAL MEDIA: “Attention and affection have gone from being private bonds to being publicly traded goods.” – David Brooks

HOW CAN WE LOVE PEOPLE THIS WAY?

WE NEED AN UNDESERVED UNLIMITED SOURCE – we have one!
Give away flowers that make someone’s day (1, 10, UNLIMITED!)

Joy

"The Greek word for 'joy' is chara, **derived from the word charis, which is the Greek word for 'grace.'** CHARA COMES FROM CHARIS!

This means **'joy' isn't a human-based happiness that comes and goes...true 'joy' is** a Spirit-given expression that **flourishes best in hard times.**

Peace

The word "peace" comes from the Greek connected to the Hebrew **word shalom, which expresses the idea of wholeness, completeness, or tranquility in the soul that is unaffected by the outward circumstances or pressures.**

When a person is dominated by peace, she has **a calm, inner stability that results in the ability to conduct herself peacefully,** even in the midst of circumstances that would normally be very nerve-wracking, traumatic, or upsetting.

Patience

Patience is **the ability to endure persecution and ill-treatment.** It **describes a person who has the power to exercise revenge but instead exercises restraint.**

It also describes the capacity to **continue to bear up under difficult circumstances,** not with a passive complacency, but with a hopeful **fortitude that actively resists weariness and defeat.**

Kindness

The word kindness **conveys the idea of being adaptable to others.**

Rather than **harshly** require everyone else to adapt to his own needs and desires, when kindness is working in a believer, **he seeks to become adaptable to the needs of those who are around him.**

Goodness

The word goodness comes from a Greek word which is an **energized expression of kindness**. This sort of kindness may be expressed in a zeal for goodness and truth that **rebukes, corrects and chastises**. **BOLDNESS!!**

Faithfulness

Faithfulness is another divine characteristic; **it means consistently doing what one says one will do.**

Gentleness

Gentleness **is not as an indication of weakness, but of power and strength under control**. The person who possesses this quality pardons injuries, corrects faults, and rules his own spirit well.

Self-control

Self-control is the discipline **given** by the Holy Spirit that allows Christians to **resist the power of the flesh – you can't give this to yourself!!!**

The fruit of the spirit **appears individual** and we can understand it in that context but in reality... **true growth is INTERCONNECTED!**

Paul uses word **FRUIT IN SINGULAR FORM** – one piece of Fruit NOT A BUFFET – *“yes to that, no to that...”*

“If it's not all there, it's not there at all...” – Tim Keller

EXAMPLES:

- **Patient but not LOVING** – you tolerate others and rise above their issues but in your heart you disdain them, **you're just too cultured or mature to appear impatient** - you think you're better than other people
- **Self-controlled but no JOY** – you're self-righteous, using your self-control and moral and upright living as a way to prove yourself, save yourself, etc...
- **Faithful but not PEACE** – you might be staying faithful to things and to rules and regulations and traditions in order to obtain control over your life...NO PEACE IN THAT

INTERCONNECTED GROWTH!!

True growth is IMPOSSIBLE

This is the **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** – NOT THE FRUIT OF A GOOD PERSON, A CHRISTIAN, A DISCIPLE

In John 15 Jesus on bearing fruit. Here is what he says:

4 "Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. 5 "I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. John 15

Many of us fall into the trap of thinking **that we mature and grow the fruit of the Spirit by simply trying harder**. That we can **ACHIEVE** growth. But it doesn't work that way. True growth will never be achieved by your effort alone. **It is impossible.**

When is the last time you drove by a tree and said – **"wow look how HARD that tree is working and straining to grow fruit. What hard work! What a burden!"** of course not – trees don't work hard to grow fruit – **they grow fruit because they're in the right environment.**

So what is the right environment for us? FOR GROWTH?

Jesus **says you need to stay connected to me.** You MUST abide in me and I will abide in you. We have to stay together cause with me you will bear much fruit but **apart from me you are unable to grow anything lasting – anything eternal.**

Apple tree in our front yard – cut off branch...Put it in their kitchen and expected it to provide them apples for the rest of their life. **It's absurd! But we do the same thing sometimes with our lives.**

We disconnect from our source of life and then we expect ourselves to be able to produce things like love and patience and peace and joy. **IT IS IMPOSSIBLE!!!**

Others area of life – growth plans, efforts, sacrifices, energy...
WHAT IS YOUR PLAN???

If we are going to bear the Spirit's fruit – we need to remain in the Son. **TRUE GROWTH IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT THE SPIRIT.**

True growth IS INEVITABLE

In the right environment...Apple trees bear apples, cherry trees, pear trees, peach – THE CHICK FIL A PEACH MILK SHAKE....**IT IS INEVITABLE**

To **“walk by the Spirit”** in Scripture regularly represents the pattern of conduct of all of one's life. **CHANGE!!!**

Inevitable growth means that if there is **no change, if situations aren't impacting us differently** then the problem is with our environment....we aren't in Christ.

- The fix is not **be just trying harder** to grow fruit (be kind, loving...)
- **The fix is not pretending – taping apples on a maple tree**

Jesus ends the John passage with these humbling words:

16 "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won't spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.

Here we find the final key to true growth.

Remembering that HE CHOSE YOU!

You may feel like **you've done all the choosing and you've made all the sacrifices and you've made all the adjustments to accommodate God.** If you believe that you'll never be thankful, you'll never be grateful and you'll never bear fruit.

Before you could ever choose God – HE CHOSE YOU!

He made the **greatest sacrifice to have you** – to call you His own – even though he created you – he bought you back – that's redemption!

GROWTH is IMPOSSIBLE and INEVITABLE – how both?

Trusting vs. trying – rock climbing story