

CHAPTER 3

Growing in the Lord

When you came into this world as a newborn baby, you had a lot of growing to do! You weighed only about six or eight pounds and you were about 20 inches tall! How heavy and tall are you now? _____ GROWING UP is something that you are doing all the time--little by little, day by day, awake or asleep. Sometimes it may not even seem as if you are growing, but if you are young and were to compare your height with what you were one year ago, you would see a difference.

Those who are born need to grow! Those who are born again need to grow also! This is called growing up spiritually or growing in the Lord. Have you been born physically? _____ Are you growing physically (in height and weight)? _____ Have you been born again? _____ How can a believer grow spiritually?

In 1 Peter 1:23, the Bible talks about "being B_____ A_____." As we turn to 1 Peter 2:2 we see that these born again people need to GROW: "As _____ babes, desire the sincere (pure) M_____ of the Word, that ye may G_____ thereby."

What is the one thing that babies yearn for, long for, and earnestly desire and fuss over if they do not get it? _____ Have you ever known a baby that was not a milk drinker? Milk brings that good nourishment and strength to the young infant, and it is not long before the growing child is crawling around, walking around, running around and getting into everything!

What is the spiritual milk that believers must have for nourishment, strength and growth (1 Peter 2:2)? _____ A healthy believer feeds on God's Word so that he might grow stronger and stronger.

Read 1 Peter 2:3. Have you tasted that the Lord is gracious? Have you tasted that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8)? Suppose you taste some new food that you have never had before. As you taste it, you discover that it is very, very good! Would one taste be enough or would you want more and more of it? _____ If we have really tasted that the Lord is good, then we will want to learn more and more about His goodness and His greatness and His grace! As the hymn says, "MORE, MORE about Jesus, MORE, MORE about Jesus; MORE of His saving fullness see, MORE of His love who died for me."

God wants every believer to GROW UP! Suppose you met a man who was 27 years old and he was still wearing diapers and drinking from a baby bottle. Would something be wrong? Suppose a 33 year old woman came up to you and said, "DA, DA, MA, MA, GOO, GOO, GAH, GAH!" Would something be wrong?

Being a baby is wonderful, but you should not stay a baby too long! Read 1 Corinthians 3:1. Had the Corinthians grown up or were they still babies? _____ According to 1 Corinthians 3:2, had the Corinthians gone on to solid foods and meats or were they still in the baby bottle stage? _____

Newborn babies drink milk only. They are not ready for solid foods. They do not even have teeth yet. But as they grow, they are soon ready for some soft baby foods. Later they will begin eating bread and other kinds of solid foods, and after a few more months they will even be able to try some chicken or other meats. They still drink milk (even many adults still drink milk), but they have learned to eat other foods which are important for their health and growth.

If you met a fifth grade student who only drank milk and did not eat any solid food, would you think something was wrong? Something was wrong with the Corinthian believers. They were still babies and they were not ready for the good solid food of God's Word. They needed to grow up!

What would you think of a 30 year old man who still rides a tricycle, plays with marbles and is only in the first grade in school? God wants children to grow up! God does not want children to remain as children forever. "Brethren, be not _____ in understanding...but in understanding be _____" (1 Corinthians 14:20). "That we henceforth be no more C _____" (Ephesians 4:14). God wants children to G _____ U _____ (Ephesians 4:15)!

The book of Hebrews was also written to a group of people who needed to **grow up**. Were these people listening attentively to God's Word as they should have been (Hebrews 5:11)? _____ Had they gone on to the meat and solid food stage, or were they still on the bottle stage (Hebrews 5:12)? _____ They were babies (Hebrews 5:13)! They needed to GROW UP and GO ON to spiritual adulthood (Hebrews 5:14; 6:1)!

A baby cannot feed itself, but it must be fed by others. As the child grows older he learns how to use a spoon and fork and feed himself. As the person grows still older, the day will come when he or she will be able to feed a young baby from a baby bottle or spoon feed the baby with baby food. Had the Hebrew Christians grown up spiritually to the point where they could feed others, or did they still need others to feed them (Hebrews 5:12)?

In Hebrews 5:12 and 6:1 we read about the "FIRST PRINCIPLES" of the Word of God. To help you understand this, just think of the "ABC's" which you had to learn in school. Before you learned to read and write, you had to learn the alphabet. Suppose you were to visit a sixth grade class and you saw that all the boys and girls were still trying to learn the alphabet. Would something be wrong? Then you noticed that they were still learning $1 + 1 = 2$ and $2 + 2 = 4$. Should sixth graders be learning these things or should sixth graders already know these things? _____ If we know these things, then let's go on to other things! Let's go on to reading and writing! Let's go on to multiplication and division and fractions! Does God want the believer to "GO ON" (Hebrews 6:1)? _____

In 2 Peter 3:18 the Bible gives a very important command: "But _____ in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." God commands us to G _____ in the knowledge of our Lord! We are to KEEP ON GROWING every day of our Christian lives and we are never to stop growing! When we fail to grow as we should we are disobeying and displeasing God.

God's Word is very important in our spiritual growth as we have already seen in 1 Peter 2:2. In the next chapter we will learn more about how we can read the Bible and feed on God's Word so that our souls might receive the proper nourishment that we need each day.

One of the things that keeps a child of God from growing is SIN. Sin was keeping the Corinthian Christians from growing as they should (see 1 Corinthians 3:3). If a believer is going to keep on growing, then he must know what to do when he sins.

Confessing Our Sins

One of the first things a born again person needs to learn is what to do about SIN. The growing believer should learn to CONFESS HIS SINS just as a first grader should learn his ABC's! Without knowing your ABC's there is not much that you will be able to do in school! Knowing what to do with SIN is one of the first things a Christian should learn.

Do Christians ever sin (1 John 1:8,10; 2:1)? _____ Does (write your own name) _____
ever sin? _____

We have already seen that sin grieves the Holy Spirit and that God will not use a believer until he is clean. When we sin, we need to come to God for cleansing and forgiveness.

According to 1 John 1:9, what must we do in order to have our sins forgiven and cleansed?

"But wait a minute! I thought that all my sins were already cleansed and forgiven the moment I trusted Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord. Did not God forgive all my sins when I was saved?"

Yes, when a person is saved, God forgives all of his sins. Consider these verses:

1. Acts 10:43--"Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive _____
(forgiveness) of sins." Have you believed in Christ as your Saviour from sin? If so, then what have you received? _____
2. Colossians 2:13--God has "forgiven you _____ trespasses."
3. Hebrews 10:17--"their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."
4. 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Titus 3:5. When God saved you, did He wash you and cleanse you from all your sins? _____
5. Micah 7: 19--Where has God cast our sins? _____
How many of our sins has He cast there? _____

God has forgiven all of our sins and washed us from head to toe! "GONE, GONE, GONE, GONE, YES MY SINS ARE GONE!" Then why does 1 John 1:9 say that I need to have my sins forgiven and cleansed if they already are?

The answer to this is found in John 13:6-11. Did Peter want Jesus to wash his feet (John 13:6-8)? _____ But Jesus answered, "If I do not wash you, you have no P _____ with Me" (John 13:8). The word "PART" in John 13:8 means "partnership" or "fellowship." Jesus cannot have fellowship with a disciple who has dirty feet! If you want to walk in close fellowship with the Lord, then you need to keep your feet clean!

When Peter heard what Jesus said, he answered, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my _____ and my _____" (John 13:9). Peter wanted an entire bath, from head to toe! But Jesus reminded Peter that he did not need a bath. He only needed to have his feet washed: "He that is washed (bathed, a washing of the whole body) needeth not except to wash his feet,

but is **clean every whit** (completely clean): and YE ARE CLEAN" (John 13:10). In other words, Jesus was saying, "Peter, you have already had your bath and you are completely clean. But you do need to get your feet washed so that you can walk in fellowship with Me and be a partner with Me!"

In Bible times, people would take a bath, and then they would walk on dusty roads with only sandals on their feet. Upon arriving at their destination, they would still be all clean, except for their feet. A similar situation may have happened to you at the beach. You may have been rolling around in the sand so that you were covered with sand from head to foot. You then jumped into the ocean or into the lake to clean off all the sand (that was like a bath). But as you walked to the changing room, your feet got all sandy and you had to wash off or wipe off your feet before putting on your shoes.

When a person is saved, he is given a complete salvation bath! God washes us and makes us perfectly clean! Jesus said, "YE ARE CLEAN" (John 13:10). There was only one disciple who was not clean (John 13:11) and this was Judas. Judas was not saved and his sins were not forgiven. Judas never had a salvation bath!

But even though we are saved and forgiven and cleansed, we can still get our feet dirty as we walk in this world as Christians. There are times when we still sin day by day. How important it is to "CONFESS OUR SINS" (1 John 1:9) so that we keep our feet clean! We do not confess our sins in order to get saved. God has already saved us! But we confess our sins so that we can have close fellowship with the Lord. The Lord normally does not use a believer who has dirty feet!

As the Christian walks from day to day, there is only one way to keep clean. He must C _____ his sins (1 John 1:9). What does it mean to CONFESS my sins? Consider the following:

1) The word "CONFESS" in 1 John 1:9 actually means "to say the same thing." God wants us to say the same thing about sin that He says! If God says that lying is sin (Colossians 3:9), then I need to say the same thing! If God says that filthy language should not come out of my mouth, then I need to say the same thing and AGREE with God that such language is sinful (see Ephesians 4:29). I need to see sin as God sees it! If God says something is wrong and wicked, then I need to see that sin just as God does! If the doctor says that I have a broken arm, then I would be wrong to say that my arm was merely scratched!

2) The word "CONFESS" means the opposite of the word "DENY." God wants us to CONFESS our sins, not deny our sins! Think of a criminal standing before a judge and jury. The judge says, "YOU'RE GUILTY!" and the criminal denies it: "No I'm not! I didn't do it! I'm innocent!" The believer must CONFESS and ACKNOWLEDGE his sins: "I _____ my sin unto thee" (Psalm 32:5). God wants us to face up to what we have done and acknowledge it: "Lord, I was wrong and I'm guilty! I did it and I can't deny it!" Or as David said in Psalm 51:3-4: "I _____ my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only have I _____, and done this _____ in Thy sight!"

3) When we confess our sins we are not HIDING or COVERING UP our sins! Don't hide your sin (Psalm 32:5) but bring it out in the open! Don't cover your sin (Proverbs 28:13), but uncover it and bring it to God who can cleanse it! When Adam sinned, what was the first thing he did (Genesis 3:8)? _____ Sinners have been hiding ever since!

4) True CONFESSON also involves FORSAKING SIN. Suppose you were to eat some cookies before supper contrary to your mother's instruction. She catches you in the act and you make your confession: "Mom, what I did was wrong and I disobeyed you. I cannot deny it. I ate those cookies. I'm guilty!" Then as soon as she turns her back, you eat another cookie! You confessed your wrong action (sin), but did you FORSAKE IT and turn from it? _____ God not only wants us to CONFESS our sins, but what else does He want us to do (Proverbs 28:13)?

5) When I CONFESS my sins, I am JUDGING myself! God wants us to "JUDGE O _____" (1 Corinthians 11:31). I must pretend that I am a judge and the person I am judging is no one else but myself! I then arrive at a verdict: (write your own name) "_____ you're guilty because this is what you have done."
(Acknowledge before the Lord what you have done and be specific.)

The account of Achan in Joshua chapter 7 is very instructive to us and helps us to understand what it means to CONFESS OUR SINS. How does verse 19 help us to understand what confession means? _____

Achan's actual confession is found in verses 20-21. Did he tell the truth? _____ Was he specific about what he had done? _____ May the Lord help us to be honest before Him about our sins. Remember, nothing is hidden from Him!

When we have truly confessed our sins, what are two things that God promises to do according to 1 John 1:9?

1. _____
2. _____

Our feet are now clean and we can walk in close fellowship with the Lord! When we sin again, then we must confess again, and the Lord is always ready and willing to forgive us and cleanse us! God is FAITHFUL to forgive and cleanse you! Are you FAITHFUL to confess your sins whenever necessary?

"THAT WE HENCEFORTH BE NO MORE CHILDREN, TOSSED TO AND FRO, AND CARRIED ABOUT WITH EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE, BY THE SLEIGHT OF MEN, AND CUNNING CRAFTINESS, WHEREBY THEY LIE IN WAIT TO DECEIVE; BUT SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, MAY GROW UP INTO HIM IN ALL THINGS, WHICH IS THE HEAD, EVEN CHRIST."

(EPH. 4:14-15)

Preventing Spiritual Malnutrition

