

There is an Expectation of Growth

There is a Presumption by many that Growth will happen automatically

But these scriptures teach us that there is also a **PRESCRIPTION** for growth

1. Are we GROWING in the areas of **Trust, Contentment and Thankfulness**?
2. Are we GROWING in our **Hatred of Sin and our Pursuit of Righteousness, Holiness, and Godliness**?
3. Are we GROWING in our **Knowledge of, Understanding of and Obedience to The Word of God**?
4. Are we GROWING in our **Awareness, Study and Practice of the other Spiritual Disciplines**?

Series Texts:

2 Peter 1:5-11

5 For this very reason, **make every effort to add to your faith** goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; **6** and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; **7** and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. **8** For if you **possess these qualities in increasing measure**, they will keep you from being **ineffective and unproductive** in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** But whoever does not have them is **nearsighted and blind, forgetting** that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, **make every effort** to confirm your calling and election. For if you **do these things**, you will never stumble, **11** and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:13

13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and **become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

Hebrews 6:1

6 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be **taken forward to maturity**, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God,

5. Are we GROWING in Kindness, Grace, Mercy and Love?

Isn't it interesting that Peter saves Mutual Affection and Love for the last part of his "add to" list. This is so important in our Christian life and in our representation of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

- Colony of heaven
- Ambassadors for Christ

2 Corinthians 5:20

20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

1 Corinthians 13 tells us that without love all the rest is useless

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

KEY TEXT

John 13:34-35

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

KINDNESS

The attitude and way in which we approach people. It starts with an attitude that expresses itself in many good things... A smile, a kind word, an act that blesses

Colossians 3:12

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

God is our example...

Isaiah 63:7

7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

GRACE

Unmerited favor... Actions that are not based upon what people deserve

Matthew 20:1-15

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. **2** He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

3 “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. **4** He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ **5** So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. **6** About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

7 “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

8 “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

9 “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. **10** So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. **11** When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. **12** ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

13 “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? **14** Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. **15** Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

We can grow in this area by not focusing on what others get or don't get as compared to us and keep the focus on ourselves. What if the workers had...?

1. Been thankful for the fact that they had a job and were getting paid what they had been promised?
2. Rejoiced that others needs were being taken care of too?
3. Realized that it was the generosity of the landowner that was meeting ALL of their needs?

MERCY

Underserved forgiveness

That's the point... to grow in these areas will take forgiveness... A lot of forgiveness...

Ephesians 4:32

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Colossians 3:13

13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Peter asked... How many times (Matthew 18)

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. **24** As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. **25** Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' **27** The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

29 “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

30 “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. **31** When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. **33** Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ **34** In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Think about all that God has forgiven you... Think about how patient He is with you...
Extend that same grace and mercy to others

Matthew 7:1-5

7 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. **2** For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? **4** How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? **5** You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Luke 17:4

4 Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.”

I am quite sure I will never hear the Lord say to me one day... "David, you were just too forgiving. You shouldn't have given people so many chances. You were naive to trust that person again and again. I wish you wouldn't have been so merciful."

However, I can assure you that if we are not kind, full of grace, mercy and love, we will stand before God one day and we will give an account for every word and every action that fell short of what God wanted for us.

Micah 6:8

8 He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

LOVE

More than kindness, more than grace, more than mercy... Love encompasses the other three, but it is more in that it focuses its attention on the person themselves. But what we will find is that when we work on growing in KINDNESS, work on growing in GRACE and work on growing in MERCY; we will begin to grow in our LOVE

There is so much anger, animosity and hate in the world today

SOFTEN UP... So many Christians need to work on the basics of having a kind attitude toward others. We can get so bristly. It is in our tone... Don't be so gruff,

Colossians 4:5-6

5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. **6** Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

1 Peter 3:15

15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

TOUGHEN UP... We react way too quickly.

James 1:19

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

Listen more, talk less and don't be so quick to react.

Let more things slide off you without taking offense to them (Water off a duck's back)

SPIRIT UP...

We can't do this on our own.

Ephesians 5:18

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

Think about the person who is drunk... For the most part they are not very kind. They are self-absorbed. They do and say stupid things. They have no will to show grace to someone else because it is all they can do to keep themselves going. They don't have the capacity to show mercy, that's why there are so many fights when people are drunk. Like alcohol changes the person who drinks it, we need the Spirit of God to change us from the inside out.

Where can I begin Growing in Kindness, Grace, Mercy and love today?

I want to grow by Softening Up, Toughening Up or Spiriting up this week. (Pick one to focus on)