

GROW
Look, Listen, and Learn
1 Corinthians 1:26 – 2:16

Living things grow, and growth is good! I don't know of anyone who would say that they DO NOT want to grow. I am still trying to mark a post in our house to see if I have added any UPWARD INCHES to my height in this last year. Thank God, there are many kinds of growth. We can grow in knowledge and wisdom and maturity and generosity and love. The list is endless. The Word of God helps us to stay focused on the kinds of growth that we need to PURSUE! Paul's letter to the church at Corinth was intended to help God's people at Corinth to do just that. And they desperately needed it! They started out great with one of the greatest leaders that the church has ever known, but after he left to start other churches, the church at Corinth started to slide downhill. An enemy had crept into their midst without them realizing it. Paul's letter was going to set them straight about the presence of this enemy.

Division was the FRUIT of the presence of this enemy, but the ROOT of this enemy was simply PRIDE. They had begun to believe their own press about how great and how important and how gifted they were. *Strangely enough, you and I will never have as high or as exalted a view of ourselves as God has already declared about us in Christ!* This is why Paul had to remind them what REAL LOVE actually looked like when telling them about the importance of spiritual gifts. Their pride made them think that the gifts (and all of the other benefits and blessings of the Christian life) were all about making them feel good and look important. They were wrong. **OUR GROWTH is all about HIS GLORY!** Period. Let's read our passage for today.

1 Corinthians 1:26 -2:16 NIV

26 Brothers and sisters, **think of what you were** when you were **called**. Not many of you were **wise** by human standards; not many were **influential**; not many were of **noble birth**. 27 But God **chose** the **foolish** things of the world to shame the wise; God **chose** the **weak** things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God **chose** the **lowly** things of this world and the **despised** things--and the **things that are not**--to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 **It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus**, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord." 1 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 **For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.** 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. 6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this

age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"-- the things God has prepared for those who love him-- 10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. 14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. 15 The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, 16 for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Today, our message is focused on some of the CONSTANTS that must be in our life for growth to occur. If you really want to grow, then you need to constantly LOOK AT YOURSELF, LOOK AT THE CROSS, and LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT! Let's take them one at a time.

LOOK AT YOURSELF. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 NIV

You will not grow if you do not regularly and properly EXAMINE your self!

-“Consider”=To think about, to ponder

-This must not be in a lopsided manner: Focusing only on faults or strengths.

***You were CALLED and CHOSEN! [Look at yourself as God sees you!]**

-You received a SPECIAL INVITATION to the table!

-You were SELECTED out of a crowd because God wanted YOU!

CHOSEN:

to pick out, choose, to pick or choose out for one's self

1 choosing one out of many, i.e. Jesus choosing his disciples

2 choosing one for an office

3 of God choosing whom he judged fit to receive his favours and separated from the rest of mankind to be peculiarly his own and to be attended continually by his gracious oversight

1 i.e. the Israelites

of God the Father choosing Christians, as those whom he set apart from the irreligious multitude as dear unto himself, and whom he has rendered, through faith in Christ, citizens in the Messianic kingdom: (James 2:5) so that the ground of the choice lies in Christ and his merits only

*Think of how many people are WITHOUT GOD in this world; not you.

-WHY? Because God CALLED your name!

-But you must also ask this: WHY WOULD GOD CHOOSE ME?

*The people at Corinth FAILED to remember a key truth about their value.

***You were NOT WORTHY!**

-We often think about ourselves in the WRONG WAY.

*PERFORMANCE and PRIDE! [Football players celebrating in the End Zone]
[Superman Strut Vs. "Tebow" or the Hand toward Heaven]

***Your value is NOT based upon your GIFTS but upon your CALLING!**

-This is the GREATEST MOTIVATOR for GROWTH! "He wanted me!"

Johnny Lingo's 8-Cow Wife

Ezekiel 16:4-6, 8-13 NIV

4 On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. 5 No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. 6 " 'Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" ... 8 " 'Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. 9 " 'I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you. 10 I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put sandals of fine leather on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. 11 I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, 12 and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was honey, olive oil and the finest flour. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen.

-Classic underdog story with a heavenly twist.

-The Hero is not US! The victory is OURS even before the battle begins!

-Our worth is totally built on HIS SACRIFICE; the COST of his BLOOD!

LOOK AT CHRIST AND HIS CROSS. 1 Corinthians 1:30 - 2:3 NIV

***This is to be a CONSTANT look; not just an initial GLANCE!**

*Paul reminds us of his MESSAGE. [Vs. 1-2]

-He did not rely on SMOOTH SPEECHES

-He came as an AMBASSADOR sharing the TESTIMONY of God

*He did not come to tell his own story or share his personal opinions!

*He did not come to ARGUE with philosophers about religion. [Vs. 3]

-He did not rely on his own skills or personality!

*He knew his LIMITATIONS.

-He was physically WEAK

- He was shaken by fears of persecution and personal inadequacy.
- But he was CONFIDENT in the Lord that led him!
- *He knew his GOAL.
- He focused only on sharing the PERSON and WORK of Jesus Christ.

***The Gospel is the GROUNDS of our GROWTH.**

The Gospel is not LIMITED to truths that we accept for salvation!
The Gospel is our MODEL for growth and our MEANS of growth.

***"BY HIS DOING you are in Christ Jesus." (1:30)**

- You are SECURE in HIS finished work.
- Your growth is in the context of the Cross of Christ.
- He is your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.
- Our BOAST is ONLY in the Lord, not in OUR goodness, strength, etc.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 NIV

23 This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, 24 but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD.

LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT. 1 Corinthians 2:4-16 NIV

***The Spirit is the One that CALLED us to God! (2:4-5)**

- The Holy Spirit is the One that SPEAKS to us and DRAWS us to God.
- *This is WHY you are now a child of God.
- If human eloquence could persuade you to FOLLOW God, it could also persuade you to RUN AWAY from God.
- God wants us to rely on HIS POWER rather than the power of man.
- Refuse to be drawn into some COMMUNICATOR CAMP [Andy/Piper/Etc.]

***The Spirit is the only one that can REVEAL God to us! (2:6-11)**

- He allows us to understand the MYSTERIES of the Word.
- *Mystery=Previously hidden truths that are now manifested.
- This is why ISAIAH 53 was – and still is – misunderstood by many.
- He unfolds the RICH PROMISES that are now OURS in Christ! [Vs. 9-10]

***The Spirit is the One that is GIVEN to us by God! (2:12-16)**

- He is WITHIN us so that he can constantly reveal God TO us. (12-13)
- Those that do not have the Spirit CANNOT understand spiritual truths! (14)
- ILLUSTRATION: Radio Tuner allows us to hear the music around us!**
- The Spirit actually grants us ACCESS into the MIND OF CHRIST! (15-16)

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO GROW:
LOOK AT YOUR SELF. LOOK AT THE CROSS. LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT.

Then, learn to constantly LIVE this way! Let's pray.