

GREATNESS BEGINS WITH SPIRITUAL GROWTH

“God’s ultimate goal for your life on earth is not comfort, but character development. He wants you to grow up spiritually and become like Christ.” – *The Purpose Driven Life*, Pastor Rick Warren, p. 172

Growing spiritually is about becoming like Jesus, taking on his passions, character, heart and mind.

God designed us to grow up spiritually.

“Our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him.” ~ 2 Corinthians 3:18b (MSG)

KEY TRUTHS ABOUT GROWING SPIRITUALLY

1. Growing spiritually is a lifelong process.
2. We all have a spiritual next step.

“A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴ As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn’t have deep roots, they died. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸ Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!

[Then Jesus explained what the story meant:] “¹⁹ The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don’t understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. ²⁰ The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ²¹ But since they don’t have deep roots, they don’t last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God’s word. ²² The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God’s word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. ²³ The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” ~ Matthew 13:3-8; 19-23 (NLT)

The condition of our hearts determines how we grow spiritually.

Your heart is the foundation of your spiritual growth. It’s the ground where God’s truth grow and transform your life.

Ask God to change your heart.

“And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.” ~ Ezekiel 36:26 (NLT)

God always does the hardest work for us. Jesus lived the perfect life that we couldn't. He gives us a tender, responsive heart when we have hearts of stone. Ask God how you can cooperate with the work he's doing in your life.

Establish a fresh quiet time with God.

Reflection: When you think of the four types of soils our hearts can resemble—good soil, hard soil, rocky soil, and weedy soil—presently which soil does your heart feel like? And how has that affected your spiritual growth lately?

Being aware of your triggers is important so you can maintain a soft and responsive heart even in situations where you previously have struggled.

“¹² How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults. ¹³ Keep your servant from deliberate sins! Don't let them control me. Then I will be free of guilt and innocent of great sin.” ~ Psalm 19:12-13 (NLT)

God can cleanse us from our hidden faults and keep us from deliberate sins. We just have to be willing to cooperate with his Spirit working within us. Spend a minute asking God to show you the sins lurking in your heart or any deliberate sins that control you. Ask him to cleanse you and keep you from them this week.

“I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings.” ~ Hosea 6:6

God wants to shower his love on you through a relationship with him. Spend time talking to him as you would a friend. Share your concerns and delights, and express your gratitude for the blessings he has placed in your life. Do this from your love for him and not out of religious obligation.

Spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes an intentional commitment. You must *want* to grow, *decide* to grow, *make an effort* to grow, and *persist* in growing. Discipleship—the process of becoming like Christ—always begins with a decision.