

The Life...  
*Growing in the Faith, Wk. 3*

We've been talking about the Life of faith, the life a believer is supposed to live out. Two weeks ago we talked about the decision of faith, how it's more than just praying a prayer, but it's a choice of who is really Lord of your life. Last week we talked about how what we see usually equals what we believe and what we believe says a lot about who we are. We looked at the different beams of life, the different decisions of life. How some of us will get as close to the edge as possible, others of us will get as far away as possible, and still some of us will try to stay on that beam for as long as possible. The thing is eventually we'll off on one side or the other.

For the sake of discussion then, let's say you've made a true commitment to Christ. He is one that not only saved you, but He's the one in charge, He's Lord of your life. Then last week you're one of the ones that said, "As much as I can, I'm going to try and stay away from the edge of temptation" or maybe you were even one of the ones that said, "I want to see how far out I can go, without falling". Tonight I want to talk with you about how to grow toward Christ. You see each of us is growing. We're all growing toward someone or something. Maybe we're growing more toward what our parents want for us, maybe we're growing into what our teachers want for us, maybe we're sort of like a vine that's growing up around whatever is around us, or maybe we have an idea of the type of person we want to be so we're growing in that direction. All of us are growing though, the question is, in what direction. So tonight we're going to look at what it takes for us to grow closer to Christ, to become more like Him. We've looked the last two weeks at what it means to know Christ, now we're going to look at what it means to become like Him.

For starters we need to ask ourselves, why would I want to be like Christ? What are some of your thoughts...? At some point, on some level our answer has to be that we want to please Him, He is our Lord and Savior, so there needs to be some desire to please Him. Why do we want to please Him though...? For what He's done, for whom He is, because we love him? Those are all answers that would give us reason to become like Him.

So if you want to become like somebody, how do you that...? You spend time with them, you hang out with them. You do the things they tell you to, you do life with them. Some of the things we do to become more like God are really similar to, but those things are all about "doing" and we all know that we can "do" things for the wrong reason, with the wrong heart. You see if we decide that we want to grow closer to God, those things are important, but they are not it. In other words if you decide to do all those things, there still isn't a guarantee. Listen to what scripture says...

*Jer 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

If we really want to grow closer to God, to grow in our walk with God, it really begins with what we want. Do we really want to grow closer to God? Most of us would say yes, but if I asked you do you want to grow more in your walk than \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank) passing class, winning the game or race, pleasing that person, that relationship, getting off being grounded, what would you say? What are the consequences if you don't \_\_\_\_\_? What are the consequences if you don't grow in your walk with Christ...? What's really worth it to us?

Romans 12:2 gives us some further insights into growing in our walk with God...

*Ro 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

You see if we really want to grow in our walk with God, if we really want to grow in our faith we need to (1) want to, and (2) make a change in the way we think. You see we are raised to think a certain way, and that's a good thing. At some point we need to examine why we think that way, why we see things that way? We are also raised to think certain ways by different people. When you go visit or stay with your grandparents, maybe it's fine to stay up all night. On the other hand when your at home you can't. Maybe your parents don't live together and your dad is ok with you watching r rated movies and your moms not. It could be that you're taught @ school that evolution is how we became human while the bible teaches that we were created. It could even be that you read or learn from scripture that we are supposed to love people the way Christ loves us, but your parents are constantly arguing. You could even hear from one person that Christ needs to be Lord of your life, but that same person spends all their time doing things that have nothing to do with God. I don't really know what's going on in some of your personal lives, but I do know that if we want to grow close to God than we need to begin to think like He does.

Personal Testimony/illustration...

The passage in Romans tells us not to conform to the pattern of this world. "Conform" means to be molded by the things around us, specifically in this passage to the pattern of the world. In other words the world has a certain way of doing things, a certain way of teaching things. Let me give you some examples...

However God has a way of doing things, and most of us have spent the majority of our life in the world, so we need to re-learn how to think.

Cody Example/illustration...

That's why the passage in Romans goes on to say we need to be transformed. Transformation is a process. Think of the transformation from a caterpillar to a butterfly, it's a miracle type thing and it's beautiful. The thing is we can see what's going on on the outside of the caterpillar to butterfly transformation, but what's going on the insight? You see even though transformations look awesome on the outside, they can be uncomfortable and even painful at times.

Check this clip out...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhfUzodLRvk>

This transformation is a continual process of growing and maturing from the person we are to the person God wants us to be. Solomon in the book of Proverbs gives some practical tips on being transformed...

*Pr 4:20 My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Pr 4:21 Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; Pr 4:22 for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. Pr 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Pr 4:24 Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. Pr 4:25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you. Pr 4:26 Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm. Pr 4:27 Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

In order for us to change the way we think, to be transformed. We need to not only get rid of the "us" but we need to fill ourselves with the things of God. *We need to fill ourselves.* You see it is up to each of us to "pay attention", "listen closely", "keep them within our heart". It's not our parents job, it's not our pastors job, it's our job. This is where idea of guarding our hearts comes into play. We are each responsible for our decisions, so we decide what we listen too, what we watch, the language we use, the attitude we have. If you look at this practically you see that what we watch and listen to comes in through our senses (eyes, ears, even touch). From there it goes to our brain where we decide to either accept what we see or reject it. As we accept things they become who we are and filter into our heart. The kicker is that once it settles into our hearts it's no longer something we see, or something we think about, it becomes who we are. That's why scripture tells us that...

*Lk 6:45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*

In order for good things to come out, good needs to be stored in our heart. That "good" comes from what we take in and process. The only way we truly process "good" is to be transformed.

So who are you becoming like? Who are you growing toward? Who are you being transformed too? Are you being transformed into the person you want to be, that someone else wants you to be, or the person God's created you to be. Allow yourself to be transformed. Allow the way you see things to be changed to the way God see's things. Allow your heart to be softened for the things that soften his. Guard your heart, for it's who you are. Understand what you allow in becomes who you are. Do you want to be transformed by God's chisel?

Suggested Discussion Concepts:

Think about the chisel skit, why does inward transformation appear to be so difficult? *You may want to bring in a hammer, chisel, piece of wood to demonstrate.* When you look at a physical chiseling project, the result can be a masterpiece by an experienced craftsman. Are you willing to trust yourself to the Lord (the experienced craftsmen) to make you into the masterpiece he desires?