



# The Examiners

...Examining the Scripture daily to see whether these things were so... Acts 17:11

## SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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**God required (commanded, mandated, and directed) Christians to growth spiritually and to reach spiritual maturity.**

**2 Peter 3:18** But grow in grace,<sup>G5485</sup> and<sup>G2532</sup> in the knowledge<sup>G1108</sup> of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory<sup>G1391</sup> both now<sup>G3568</sup> and forever. Amen. **1 Peter 2:2** as newborn babes desire the pure soul-nourishing milk, that you may grow by it.

The spiritual life of every believer began at infancy without any information about God, without ability to communicate or serve God. At the moment of spiritual birth, the new believer is “newly born in Spirit” without capacity to please and live for God. The spiritual babes regardless of physical age, academic or social achievements, position in the society is not capable of learning the Word of God by himself. The believers in spiritual childhood must show a steady momentum of spiritual growth, because we are mandated to keep advancing unto the measure of the fullness (spiritual maturity) of Christ (Eph. 4:13). The believer must keep his advance toward the high upward call of spiritual maturity (Phil. 3:13-14), overcoming every obstacles and barrier (Heb. 12:1-2) through the power and grace of God.

No believer is exempted from this command to grow spiritually. Growth is a must for every human being born physically, for those in marriages and for every person born spiritually. Without spiritual growth the believer will be living by human and satanic viewpoint which manufactures self-induced miseries. Apart from consistent spiritual growth the believer will be continually rejecting divine viewpoint, divine solutions and the plan of God in general. Without spiritual growth, the believer will

focus on man’s emphasis lifestyle, prioritizing human relationship resulting to endless frustrations.

**God provided His Word as the only mean of the spiritual growth.**

**1 Corinthians 3:6** “I planted, Apollos watered, but God made to grow”. The majority of believers today are engaged in painstaking and oppressive religious activities that keep them from further study of the Word of God. Majority of pastors are enslaved by tremendous church activities, programs and projects. These sincere and dedicated “servants of God” are missing the opportunity of the lifetime to grow, unaware of their spiritual decline, becoming stunted, stagnant and unproductive.

**1 Corinthians 3:7** “So as neither he planting is anything, nor he watering, but God making to grow”. They are engulfed by spiritual illusion of doing great things for God without spirituality. Church programs and activities have replaced the essential of spiritual growth. They basically disobeyed the Scripture command for spiritual growth (Deut. 31:12, Prov. 8:33). There are two basic categories of Bible doctrine; the basic doctrine which the Scripture called “milk” (1 Peter 2:2) and the advance, which the Scripture called “meat” (Heb. 5:14). The basic doctrines are essential diet for believers to move from spiritual childhood to spiritual adulthood.

**Ephesians 4:15** But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, the Christ. The advance doctrines are essential diet of the believers in spiritual adulthood to continue their momentum toward spiritual maturity and beyond super grace. Spiritual maturity is just the beginning of the normal Christian life, where the believer can enjoy the divine resources which the humanity of Christ enjoyed during His Hypostatic Union.

Spiritual maturity is described by maximum Bible doctrine residing and functioning in the soul (kardia) of the believer. It is the result of continuous metabolization of Bible doctrine in season or out of season, in gradual but progressive and systematic mode (Isaiah 28:10). Spiritual maturity is the divine objective for every believer of the Church Age. God respect the human freewill or volition to grow, resist or reject God's provision for spiritual growth.

The positive volition believer who continues to advance toward spiritual maturity are called 'wise or righteous', while the negative volition believer who resists God's grace provision for growth are called "wicked". The righteous reverentially fear the Lord based on Bible doctrine (Prov. 1:7), he continue to increase his spiritual strength (Col. 1:10, 1 Thess. 4:10), he continues in walk by faith (2 Thess. 1:3) and has the capacity to execute the power of God in his life (Eph. 6:10).

The Holy Spirit is the divine delegated teacher for the believer to grow.

Spiritual growth comes from God through His Bible doctrine which the Holy Spirit uses to energize and renew his mental attitude, producing growth and development in the soul of the believer (1 Cor. 3:6-7). The Holy Spirit is the official Teacher of every Church Age believer and He is irreplaceable. He alone has the capacity to teach the things of God and the power to make man understand spiritual things (John 14:26).

The Holy Spirit cannot operate on His teaching function if the believer is in carnality. Rebound is requisite before any spiritual activity to assure the believer's acceptance, reception, and perception of Bible doctrine. In the state of carnality, the believer is absolutely incapable of learning Bible understanding and learning Bible doctrine. There is no spiritual growth apart from Bible doctrine progressive and systematic intake under spirituality. The equation for spiritual growth is:

Positive volition + Spirituality + Bible Doctrine = Spiritual Growth

**God assigned the pastor /teacher as the official communicator of Bible doctrine.**

The pastor/teacher has the responsibility of rightly dividing the Word of truth using isogical (historical), categorical (comparing scripture with scripture), exegetical (using the original languages of the Bible, namely; Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) in interpreting the Scripture. This pastoral responsibility put restriction for the novices (believers in spiritual childhood – 1 Tim. 5:22), to any role of spiritual leadership. The spiritual, physically, and emotionally mature pastor is responsible to teach the Christians the distinctions between the essentials and the nonessentials of life. The essential is the Bible doctrine residing in the soul while the non-essentials mean everything else in life. Not all the pastor, regardless of their sensational background or specialized training has the capacity to teach Bible doctrine since majority of seminaries failed to train their students in Bible doctrine.

**God designated the local as the divine venue for teaching and training the believers in Bible doctrine.**

"And indeed He gave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; with a view to the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all may come to the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, being blown and carried about by every wind of doctrine, in the sleight of men, in craftiness to the deceit of error" (Ephesians 4:11-14).

Many devoted student of the Bible went to the seminary with the expectation of truly learning the Word of God only to be frustrated. They have developed their pastoral skills, enhance their so-called spiritual gifts in Christian music, education counseling, or social mission but still ignorant of Bible doctrine. Anyway, the local church is commissioned to teach and train Christians in Bible

doctrine not the seminary. The local is the official classroom designated by God to learn Bible doctrine under the spiritual mature pastor who has laid aside the non-essential church activities and programs that attracts crowd of doctrinally disoriented Christians. Sad to say, majority of these devoted pastors are engaged in "church ministries" not commissioned by God. In the absence of Bible doctrine-centered church, the positive volition believer has the logistical provision of audio and printed publications of Bible doctrine provided free of charge by the grace of God. Spiritual growth is not complicated but quite simply, in the same way the totality of God's plan for man is simple. God's plan is perfect and complexities in the realm of humanity always distort perfection. Satan has complicated our lifestyle to deprive us of the most precious benefits of spiritual maturity.

You have to identify the essentials from non-essentials of life to avoid spiritual shipwreck. There is only one Bible doctrine but church doctrines abound everywhere. These religious teachings are not the Word of God but simply heaps of dung. It has no spiritual benefits for your souls and it can not produce genuine spirituality. Only God can produce genuine spiritual growth and momentum in the life of the believer through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Church doctrine can only excite, indulge, or psychologically inspires the believers but there will be no real changes in their life; there is no renewal of the mind. There is only one Bible doctrine and infinite numbers of church doctrine which Satan use to deceive and mislead people.

At this point, we can draw the principles we have just discussed. Spiritual growth is a divine indispensable requirement for every believer. The Word of God is the divine provision for spiritual growth. The pastor/teacher is the divinely assigned communicator of Bible doctrine. The local church is the divine venue for teaching and training the believers in Bible doctrine.

Spiritual maturity is the beginning of the normal spiritual life and is a pre-requisite for the execution of the plan of God for your life. Spiritual maturity is

the point at which we begin to live the normal Christian life. By the time we reach maturity, we are able to maintain the filling of the Spirit for prolonged periods of time. Because of this we are ready to start using to the full the resources that God makes available to us. At maturity we recognize how overwhelming the tasks and opportunities God has given us are, and the question we face is this: "Am I going to be faithful in using what God has provided to accomplish the task He has given me to do?" If we say yes, we will begin to see what sacrifice is really all about.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Rom. 12:1) With the word "therefore," Paul brings everything he has taught so far in this epistle to the point of practical application. He wants us to put shoes on our doctrine. He is saying that somewhere along the line our doctrine has to relate to our lives. Oiktimos means more than "mercy." "Present," is paristemi, from histemi, meaning "to stand or set," and para, "beside." It means to make something available. In Romans 6:13, we are urged to make the members of our bodies available to God as weapons of righteousness. The issue in the Christian life is never our ability; God has resources to take care of that. The issue is our availability God has chosen to give us free will.

Now God carries on through the spiritual body of Christ the work He began in the incarnation We are instruments to accomplish the will of God on earth. In the Old Testament, all sacrifices had to be killed. But Paul says our sacrifice is to be "living" and "holy." The plan of God is that every believer be in full-time, 24-hour-a-day Christian service. "Holy" means "set apart" or "sanctified" and refers to the filling of the Holy Spirit. When we have no unconfessed sins in our life and are filled with the Spirit, we are acceptable to God. As believers, we are positionally righteous and sanctified always. We are practically righteous and sanctified only when we are walking in the Spirit.

This is our " spiritual service of worship." "Spiritual service" comes from two words, logikos, meaning

"logical," "reason) able," "sensible," and *latreia*, a word used for priestly service, but referring in ancient Greek to the work of a common day laborer. It is logical and reasonable that God would require 24 hours- day service from His servants. Christianity is a full-time job, and working at it full time is our act of worship. If you are a carpenter, the logical place for you to worship is out there where you are every day sawing boards and slamming nails. If you slop hogs for a living, you ought to have an attitude that says, "I carry in my physical body the Spirit of God. I am the sanctuary and because I carry Him with me, every single thing I do is important to Him, and I will make it an act of worship."

The first indication that we are arriving at spiritual maturity is that we worship every day, wherever we are. What does it take to have that attitude? It takes focus. We have to be able to concentrate, to fix our minds on reality, and not be sucked in to the lies all around us. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1-2) "Be conformed to" is *suschemntizo*. Schema is outward appearance.

Paul uses a present passive imperative here. The imperative is a command; the present tense tells us not to keep on being conformed. The passive voice tells us that we receive this action because we live here in this world. The world is constantly putting pressure on us, and the pressures cause us to conform. Paul says do not allow yourself to be pressed into a mold. Outward conformity is the problem here. Paul is saying, "Do not allow yourself to be molded by the trends of society. Do not allow yourself outwardly to take on the appearance of the world, the age in which you live." Instead, we are to be transformed.

It refers to a transformation or a change that is inner and involves essence. Paul is telling us to be changed on the inside. As we are transformed, the changes that begin on the inside will work their way out and ? Will affect what we look like on the outside. This passage is calling for a little bit of spiritual

nonconformity. It is a challenge to us as believers to go against the tide, to stand on our own, based on our own understanding and knowledge of the Word of God. This is exactly what Paul means when he tells us in Philippians 2:12 to work out our salvation. The principle is this: Everything of the world--the cosmic system--works from the outside in, trying to change the inner man by making the outer man look or talk or act in certain "acceptable" ways But God's plan is different. It works from the center to the outside.

Everything God does in our lives starts inside with our attitude, our thinking, and works its way outward. The change God wants will take place first in the hidden recesses of our essence, our spirit and our soul, and then will transform what is on the outside. Christian growth will be seen last of all in what we do. " The renewing of the mind means the constant improvement of the quality of our minds through the repetition of the teaching of the Word of God. Isaiah 28:10 tells us that God's plan is "order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there."

We put promise upon promise, precept upon precept and we advance step by step by the renewing of our minds. God's plan is not to change people by requiring them to wear certain clothes or talk certain ways. The plan is to have the Word taught, and wherever the Word is received, it will change the recipient from the inside out. When someone changes his activity by his own free will, as a response to the Word of Cod, there is genuine growth. That is the only kind of growth that counts. God's plan starts at salvation when we become new creatures by regeneration because of union with Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Then we move to Romans 12:2, to the renewing of the mind. The result will be that we will eventually fulfill Romans 6:4, walking in newness of life. If we renew the mind through consistent long-term study of the Word of God, we will find experiential newness of life; our life will have quality because our thinking has quality.

