

Second Olivet Missionary Baptist Church

Are You
Growing?



8-PART WEDNESDAY SERIES FEATURING PASTOR CYRUS L. THORNTON

6:30PM (818 SOUTH WEST STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202)

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God's Word challenges us to grow. Spiritual growth is not an option or a "nice idea"—it is a commandment.

2 Peter 3:17–18



SEVEN STAGES OF GROWTH



As a Christian matures spiritually, there are several stages that the person goes through as he moves toward an intimate, personal relationship with the heavenly Father. These stages are a normal part of the growth process—they are a natural maturation process.



Just as a healthy baby is born physically with all of the potential to develop various adult skills and traits, we are each born spiritually with the potential for great spiritual growth, maturity, and an intimate relationship with the Lord. Not all people choose to develop all of the physical, intellectual, or emotional gifts and talents they have been given.



In like manner, not all believers choose to develop all the spiritual potential they have been given. We must choose to develop our spiritual lives, just as we must choose to develop our God-given talents and abilities.



STAGE 1:

UNBELIEF



All of us begin in a stage of unbelief. There was a time in the life of each Christian in which he did not place his trust in God, had no desire to know or keep God's commandments, and was dominated and directed by his fleshly, sinful nature. As John wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 1:8).



STAGE 2:

SALVATION



When we are in a stage of unbelief,
the Holy Spirit is nonetheless at
work in our lives convicting us of
our sinful nature and wooing us to
Jesus Christ so that we might
receive the forgiveness God
makes available through the shed
blood of His Son.



Our spiritual life truly begins when we accept Jesus as our Savior and receive God's forgiveness and His free gift of the Holy Spirit into our lives.



STAGE 3:

SERVICE



Those who are born again spiritually have an inevitable desire to serve the Lord in some way. Part of this desire is born of thanksgiving for their salvation; part of it is born of love for God; part of it no doubt is born of a desire to share with those we love the great joy, peace, and assurance about eternity that we have experienced.



Most Christians are properly taught that their service bears fruit and eternal reward (although our acts of service do not earn our salvation). Every person has a built-in desire to be of use and to have a purposeful existence.



For the Christian, this desire finds its expression in loving service to others, including an active witness about Jesus Christ as Savior. This desire to serve is not a "have to" desire, but a "want to" desire.



STAGE 4:
Frustrated
Inadequacy



As we serve the Lord to the best of our ability, we come to a place in our service where we realize that our motives are not always pure and our efforts are not always adequate. The result is a frustration at our inadequacy.



This frustration can turn quickly to discouragement if we do not come quickly to the truth of God's Word:

By yourself, you cannot accomplish anything of eternal value; but with God, you can accomplish all things and produce eternal fruit.



STAGE 5:
Spiritual
Dependency



At this stage of our growth, we are actively choosing to be filled with the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. Now, the Holy Spirit indwells us at the point of our salvation, but a daily awareness of His presence and a "filling up" of His presence to cover our own recognized lack and inability is something we must request of the Lord and receive from Him.



It is an act of our will. The daily prayer for each of us must be, "Fill me, Lord, with Your presence. Use me. Work through me. May my will be totally and completely submitted to Your will so that Your will is done on this earth today, through me."

