Every one of us starts off at the same place physically. All of us start off at the same place both physically and spiritually. We all start off as babies - and all have the opportunity to grow into greatness. But unfortunately, some of us never develop past the infant stage. Or if we progress through that stage into infancy, childhood, or teenage stage, we come to a complete stop.

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he was frustrated with their immaturity, he wrote: 1 Corinthians 3:2 - “I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren’t ready for anything stronger. And you still aren’t ready.” (NLT)

When the Hebrew writer wrote to his audience, he was critical about their progress, he wrote: Hebrews 5:11-14 - “11 There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don’t seem to listen. 12 You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God’s word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. 13 For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn’t know how to do what is right. 14 Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.” (NLT)

In reality, some should be more mature spiritually than they are. Some in that Hebrew audience should have been mature enough to be teachers, but they need to be taught the most elementary things all over again. Honestly, we could all be further advanced spiritually than we are. But tragically, some of us chose to stay behind, still in the kindergarten level, and not move up.  And God finds that to be very disappointing.

God’s word is very important in the development of a believer toward maturity. It is the constant attention to the Word of God that has trained the mature to think and act like God. When we cooperate with the Holy Spirit within us and allow the Spirit to work through the Word, then we grow.

A good basketball team is not made up of a few stars and a bunch of benchwarmers. No, a good, strong team may have some exceptional players, but it’s mostly made up of a group of average players all striving for excellence. When I assess where we are as a church, I see many good things, but I also see a lot of room for growth. We must all, each and every one of us, make a commitment and put forth the effort to grow in Christ if we are to become a truly mature and great church.

Ephesians 4:11-16 - “11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (NLT)

**THREE AREAS THAT WE SHOULD AIM TO GROW:**

**WORSHIPING**

In John 4, we find Jesus talking with a woman of Samaria. John 4:21-24 - “21 Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. 22 You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. 23 But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. 24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.” (NLT)

Jesus makes it very clear that God is seeking worshipers, but not just any kind of worshipers. God is looking for a special kind of worshiper - one who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. I want to be sure that I am that kind of worshiper. I want to be the kind of worshiper that God is seeking. How would you answer the question: Do you worship the Lord in spirit and in truth?

When we use the word “worshiping”, think of what we do when we gather for worship on Sunday mornings, and also think of worship in broader terms than that. We know we are pleasing to God when we pray together, because that’s what God commands. We know we are pleasing to God when we sing and make music in our hearts. But as we do all things (praying, singing, partaking communion, preaching and learning), we need to do them not just in truth, but also in spirit, doing it with all our hearts and minds. If we are not consistent enough in our worshiping, then it can really stunt your growth and the growth of the entire church.

You see, we really do need each other! Look at the illustration of what happens when a charcoal is removed from a fire. Can the coal continue burning on its own away from the fire? Not very long. Left by itself, the coal will eventually stop burning. And that’s what happens when a Christian stops being regularly involved with the church, the fire of their Christian life goes out. Our Sunday morning gatherings for worship and LIFE group meetings are so important to our growth, and I hope each of us will do our very best to always be present to minister to the church and to be ministered to by the church as we worship.

Paul wrote to the Romans: Romans 12:1 - “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” (NIV)

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How does Paul define our spiritual act of worship? Paul says our spiritual act of worship is the giving of our whole being as a living sacrifice to God. So growing in our worshiping has to do with loving God with our whole heart, mind, spirit and body. It includes our daily desire to walk with God, worshiping Him in prayer and Scripture reading and meditation. It includes our daily desire to be God’s representative to do good in God’s name wherever we are or wherever we go.

**WITNESSING**

Evangelism is not only a privilege, but the responsibility of every Christian? Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-16, “14 “You are the light of the world…16 …let your light shine before others… (NIV).” Jesus didn’t say, “If you have the gift of evangelism, then you are the light of the world.” Every Christian is to be a light in this dark world. Jesus also gave the great commission to every Christian. Unfortunately,  some people think the great commission is only applicable to pastors, missionaries, and evangelists.

Evangelism is not primarily a program, or a technique, rather it is a lifestyle. Look at Paul’s instruction to the Colossians: Colossians 4:5-6 - “5 Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be gracious and attractive[a] so that you will have the right response for everyone.(NLT)” To whom did Paul write those words? To the young evangelist Timothy? No, he wrote them to all the Christians at Colosse. Effective witnessing involves people wisely using their interactions with others, injecting Christ into their conversation when possible.

Paul did all he could to build relationship bridges with people of all kinds in order to bring them to Jesus. Sometimes the people we are trying to reach share the same interests as us and so bridge building is much easier – for instance if we are both interested in sports or cooking or k-drama, then building relational bridges will be easier. But other times, when we can find no common interests, we may have to show interest in what they are interested in, in order to build bridges. Paul had a passion and willingness to do anything needed to build bridges, will we?

**WORKING**

Ephesians 4:16 - “He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (NLT)”  How does Paul say the church grows and builds itself up in love? It happens when each part does its work. We cannot and will not grow effectively until every part of the body of Christ does its work.

To please God iGod wants to reach people, and He wants to reach them through us. In this area of our lives, every Christian must be working in God’s kingdom. We must assess our abilities and gifts and employ them to the benefit of God and others. Ephesians 4:11-12 - “11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (NIV)

Church leaders are to serve as God has called and gifted them, but their job is not to do all the church’s work. The main responsibility of the leadership is to prepare all of the church’s members to do their part. One way to start working is to start looking for little ways to serve God each day. Great opportunities to serve God in a grand way are rare, but little and simple ones are all around us every day. Some of the Lord’s service is unpleasant and exhausting, but most of it will put a smile on your face, and all of it will put a glow of satisfaction in your heart. Let me express my thanks for the many people in our church family who work very hard in God’s kingdom. God knows who you are and He is pleased with your serving. Keep up the good work.

**LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:**

1) Where are you now in your spiritual journey? What step/s do you need to take to move closer to God?

2) Do you find it difficult to become closer to God? What challenges are you facing in your walk with God?