



Message **Transcript** Continued Growth

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With that let's go before the Lord and let's pray today. Lord Jesus, thanks for the privilege of worshiping your great name. Thanks for the privilege of prayer, where we can seek you and to be able to hear you and Lord, thanks for your living and active word. Lord, we praise you every time your word is opened and faithfully proclaimed, Lord, that you have your way with us. And so Lord, our prayer this morning on both campuses is, speak, Lord, for we are listening. Our desire is to become who you say that we are and to put in practice the very things that you show us. And for that in advance, we give you all praise, glory, and honor, in the mighty and matchless name of Jesus. And all God's people who are ready to receive His word agreed by saying, amen. Amen [crosstalk 00:00:43]

Amen.

I've been a Christian for nearly 30 years and I've been in ministry for about 25. I've had the privilege of traveling and speaking in many different places, seeing many different churches, many different kinds of ministry and done many types of ministry with many different kinds of people. And one thing that I find is very consistent no matter what my location, the geography, the demographic of the people are, that many people who become Christians get to a place in their Christian growth, where they plateau and they never grow anymore. And they get to a place where some of them get very frustrated and they wonder why is it that other people seem to grow in Christ and seem to have different levels and seem to talk about how exciting it is and yet I can't?

Other people don't get frustrated about it, other people, and I would say a majority of Christians really just settle in. And they say to themselves, "I'm better than I used to be. I'm fairly content with who I am. I don't really can think about growing that much and I'm just comfortable." And wherever you're at, I got news for you. This is not where God wants you to stay. God wants you to grow in your faith no matter where you are. There is no person listening to me today that could stand before the Lord and say, "I am the fullness of everything you intended me to be and there's nowhere for me to grow." All of us can grow. The question is, how? I mean, how do I do that?

And we see this happen in other areas of life. I mean, it can happen in a marriage, where a marriage can go along for a while and you can get frustrated that things aren't working out, but then you can just kind of settle in and ooze. And if people ask you if you have a good marriage, you'll say, "Yeah, it's a good marriage." But deep down you're like, "It's not great. It's not thriving but it's just going to be what it is. We're just kind of, 'I'm comfortable.' There we are." It can happen that way when you work out, you get to a certain place and you're like, "I'll probably never shed that pound. I'll probably never feel healthier. I'm just comfortable." Some people are frustrated about their comfort. Some people are comfortable with their comfort, but however you are, we tend to stay there.

Spiritually, you don't have that option. God wants you to go row, no matter where you are. The question is how, and that's what God's going to tell us about this morning. So if you find yourself in that place where you're either complacent or frustrated, God has a word for you.

And I invite you to open your Bibles this morning to 1 Peter 1, we're going to start in verse 22 and we'll get through 2:3, and because it's just a few verses, I'd like to read them and then we'll unpack them together. He says this, "Since you have in obedience to the truth, purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart. For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable that is through the living and enduring word of God. For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls off but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word of the Lord that was preached to you. Therefore, putting aside all malice, and all deceit, and hypocrisy, and envy, and all slander, like newborn babies long for the pure milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

And here, what God's going to tell us this morning is four ways that we can grow in our faith and what continued growth will require for us. Now, let me just be clear before we talk about how to grow in your faith, you have to be in the faith. And I don't want to make the assumption that everybody here is in the faith, just because you walked into the church, doesn't make you a Christian. What makes you a believer in Christ is to recognize this, that God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him would not perish, but have eternal life. This does not mean, "Oh yeah. I believe that. I've heard that." It means that at some point in your life, you have repented of your sins and trusted Jesus Christ alone to forgive you.

That's the good news of the gospel. There's no way for you to get to God. God came to you. He came in a person as a man, Jesus Christ, who laid down His life on a cross. He died for all your sins. No matter who you are today, you need to hear from the onset, even if you got dragged to church and you didn't even want to be here, that God wants you to know He loves you. He loves you unconditionally. He demonstrated His love by having His Son slaughtered on a cross to forgive all your sins. He rose from the dead. He's as alive to ever and through Christ and Christ alone, you can have access to God.

Yeah.

And simply where you are this morning, if you just say, "Lord, I know I'm a sinner. That's easy for me. I believe that, and now I hear that you died for me and rose, and by just trusting in you, that's what I've been looking for." That's the answer and looking for your whole life. The eternal life, God's eternal Son, Jesus Christ. And that's what Peter has been spelling out in these first 21 verses of this letter that he's written showing how great it is that we've been chosen by God, how loved we are by God, and how we're to respond to God and be ready to live for God, because of all that He's for us. And so we say amen to that, and now we're ready to go.

"But how do I get out of the rut? How do I get out of the complacency? I mean, I know I'm a believer now. I know that I trust Christ, but it just doesn't... The Bible is tough for me to read prayer life is hard. It just doesn't seem like I'm growing in my faith. What do I do?" That's why God writes this to us. And continued growth requires

four things that Peter's going to tell us. And the first is this continued growth requires faith coupled with obedience. Faith coupled is obedience.

He says, "Since you have, in obedience to the truth, purified your souls." Okay now, realistically, we didn't purify anything. God is the one who has purified everything in us. But because you've aligned yourself with God's grace, therefore you are pure. Because Jesus Christ is pure, and He now lives on the inside, and because you've trusted in Christ, here's how God sees you. Your identity is purity. It's who you are. [crosstalk 00:06:45] You are pure in heart. That's who God says you are. And here's what He says. He says this, "Since you have in obedience to the truth."

Now in verse 14, we talked about last week as obedient children, we spend a lot of time what it means to be obedient so I don't want to spend too much time there. But as Paul is writing, I'm sorry, as Peter is writing to people who are under crisis and going through trials, we've talked about how trials refine or strengthen your faith. We went through why trials are actually good. All the benefits of trials. Let me tell you about what obedience does. Obedience refines or strengthens your character, okay? While trials refine and strengthen your faith, obedience refines or strengthens your character. When you're obedient to what the Lord shows you, and you begin to take steps in what God tell you, that's how you begin to grow your character.

Now just listen here, because this may or may not apply specifically to you but at some point, if it doesn't apply to you, somebody's going to come and ask you a question. Something like this, "Should I marry this guy or not? Should I marry this girl or not? Should I take the job over here or should I take the job over here?" I mean,

they're going to come and ask you for wisdom questions. And most of the time where we go on questions like that is we start to size it all up and think very worldly. Here's your best answer to all those questions. What would take the greatest step of obedience of faith? What would it cause you to have to trust God more? What would be most aligned with His will? What would that look like in your life? You tell me.

Because, many times, we want to take the easy road to get things done rather than taking the faithful road. And I find that as I walk with the Lord, many times through His word, God shows me steps to take that require obedience. I don't want to take those.

Come on.

I still trust Jesus. I just don't want to do what Jesus wants me to do. Now keep in mind, the living word on the inside of me, the written word is stimulating the living word that's on the inside of me telling me to be obedient. As I'm obedient, I will continue in my growth. Let me be clear on something. Every person in here, every time you take a step of faith, you grow in Christ.

Amen.

Because faith is not what you're doing for God, faith is taking the step God would want you to take so that He's the one taking the step in and through you. That's how we grow. That's why if you're 12 years old, listening to this message, you can experience and grow more in Christ than somebody who's been the Christian for 50 years, if you're taking steps of faith with obedience and they're not. It's not just saying,

"I believe this," it's putting it into practice. I mean, saying I believe something doesn't change who I am. I can stand here and say, "I think it'd be good for me to eat a little better exercise a little more. I believe that if I did that, it would be beneficial." That doesn't change anything about me.

I could stand here and say, "I think it would be beneficial for me to spend less than I make and to save more than what I'm doing." That would be beneficial. It doesn't change anything. It's like you can watch infomercials all you want. You can take financial courses all you want. If you don't put into practice, the things that you say you believe, guess what? You really don't believe them.

Right.

It means this. You demonstrate your faith by what you do.

That's good, yeah.

It's why James in James 2:17 says, "Faith without works is dead. It doesn't mean you're not a Christian, it just means you're not continuing to grow, it's worthless. And here's what we think. The North American lying Christianity is, "Hey, once you're in the kingdom, you're in. I mean, what else is there? Just you're in. It's God's job to grow you." And I would say yeah, it's God's job to grow you, and here's how God grows you. When you take steps of faith with obedience, then God has the opportunity to grow you.

Now here's the point. What's the hardest step of faith? I'm fond of saying this. The hardest step of faith that you will ever take is the next one. It always is. And what

we like to do is tell the Lord our resume of faith stepping. Like when we get to a place we don't want to take the next one, we give Him the resume. "Well, look at all I've done. I mean, I went into ministry and I've done this and I've been lovely to my wife, and lovely to my kids, and I've done this and this, but I'm not forgiving them." No, that's the next step of faith. You see?

And so God always shows us in the Word. Have you ever noticed when you read the Word, it doesn't matter what chapter or book you're in? If God wants to get your attention, the Word of God is living and active, He'll speak to you about something that you didn't even want to be spoken to about?

Yeah.

That's how God works. If you want to grow in your faith, when God shows you what to do, do it and don't wait.

That's good.

James says, "He who knows the good he ought to do and does not do it, sins." Procrastination is sin. In the kingdom, when you know what to do, do it.

Yeah.

Super important. And obedience is what unleashes the power of Christ to be delivered through you. And many of us stop growing, not because we don't love Jesus, not because we're not worshipping in a church, not because we're not reading our Bible, it's because God begins to speak to us clearly about something, and we say to ourselves, "That wasn't God. God doesn't really speak about that. God doesn't really

talk about what I watch. God doesn't talk about what I eat. God, doesn't talk..." God talks about everything. God knows you down to the atoms inside your body. He knows exactly what He wants you to do.

And many times, the further on you go in your walk, God is going to speak to you about things He doesn't speak to anybody else about, and there's going to be something that goes off in your heart that says, "How come nobody else is doing this? I mean, that seems really fundamental as God that you would have me this choice. How come I have to love like this? How come I have to act like this? How come I need to relinquish this?" Here's why. Because God is growing you. You're growing in your holiness.

Here's how you stunt your growth. Here's how you stunt your growth. Ready? When God shows you what to do, don't do it. Don't do it. And then you'll wonder over time, "I'm just not hearing the Lord much anymore. I mean, Bible reading's getting stale to me. I don't really like praying. I don't have much time for that. I see people at church worshiping with their hands and they're clapping, but I'm not really into that." Why? Because God showed you something to do and you didn't do it more.

Come on. Yep.

Here's the other thing we think, we think this. I'll do what God shows me to do, if it's a really, really big deal and it's really, really going to help me. And if it's like a ginormous step, like if God calls me in Africa, I'm ready. But if God calls me to walk across the street and serve my neighbor, I'm not up for that one. And it's usually the

little things that God's calling us to do that are hard.

That's right.

It's easy to take the big step. It's hard to take the little steps and it's the little step overtime and overtime and overtime, consistently, day by day, that grow you. It's consistent obedience. So if I were to ask you this question, "Hey, what's God asked you to do this week that you did as a result of what He told you?" You should be able to tell me five things. I should be able to tell you five things, and I can't.

The times in my life where I've stunted in my growth and I'm just like everybody else in here. I'm a sinner saved by grace. I am nothing. I'm boasting in what the Lord's done in my life. But the times in my life where I know I don't take steps of obedient are the times in my life where I've been complacent and plateaued. I can't grow if I'm not taking steps of obedience.

If I think that I've arrived, it's done. It's over. So here's the question. What steps of obedience are you taking? Hey, what's the thing that the Lord's been telling you for the last 90 days that you need to do that you haven't been doing and how come it is every time you open up your Bible, no matter where you are, He keeps telling you the same thing. Hey, maybe God's trying to get your attention. Let me tell you. He is getting your attention. You're just not listening. You don't need to form a prayer group and pray about what God shows you. You can seek wisdom. But when you know, that you know, that you know it's the Lord, here's the thing. Just do it. That's how you grow consistently overtime, faithful obedience. Faith being put into practice.

Now, listen. There's no quick fix to this. We live in a society where if I want to get healthy, I just want to pop pills and then that's going to make me better. We live in a society if I want to be rich, I just want to win the lottery. I want to do something quick. There's no such thing in the Christian life as a quick fix. It's only diligent daily pursuit of the Lord over time and as you do that, He will grow your heart.

Amen.

That's the way that it works. There's no shortcuts. There's no shortcuts. You can't just go to this conference and get this word or this revelation and now you're on a... It doesn't work that way. It works daily and steady.

And let me tell you something else about your faith. You tell me about your faith, I'll show you your faith by what you do. "Man, I'm a great husband, I love my wife." I'll tell you what you believe about loving your wife by the way that you love your wife. That's your theology. I'll tell you how you love your kids by the way that you love your kids. I'll tell you about your belief about money by the way that you steward the resources that God has. That's what you believe. You believe what you do, not what you say. Does that make sense?

Yeah.

And so God's saying, "Hey, now that you're a believer, this doesn't change who you are as a believer, but if you're going to continue to grow, put your faith into action when you couple it with obedience." And then He says this, well, we'll spend a little time. "Continue growth requires authentically, and eagerly, loving other believers."

Authentically and eagerly loving other believers. He says, "Since you have in obedience to the truth, purified your soul, since you are pure, because you've aligned with God's grace, for a since..." Why have you been that way? Here's why, "For a sincere love of the brethren." That's why. "Fervently love one another from the heart." Okay? It means that you authentically and eagerly love other believers.

You want to grow in your faith? If you're going to take steps of obedience, here's how it's always going to happen. It's always going to happen in community. It's authentic and eagerly, loving other believers. It's pursuing other believers. It's going after other believers. It's being intentional about your love for other believers. Now here's the problem. Here's the problem. Even in a marriage, we want to be authentically and eagerly pursued. And if our spouse eagerly and authentically pursues us, we can respond well to that. That's not what the Bible's saying. The Bible's saying you start by eagerly and authentically pursuing your spouse. You start by authentically and eagerly pursuing your kids. You start by eagerly and authentically pursuing others there.

Now what's that mean? Authentically means this. It means it's from the heart. It means at the deepest level of who I am, you can see who I am. It doesn't mean that I air my dirty laundry to everybody that comes along, you've met people like that. How's it going? Well, let me tell you about 30 problems that I have. That's not what I mean. I mean when you're authentic, people can see your strengths, people can see your weaknesses and it doesn't matter to you because you know whose you belong to. You belong to the Lord.

And I would tell you this, from my experience, I've grown the most by people sharing their weaknesses with me than I have by people sharing their strengths. I can see your strengths. I can see what you're good at. Have you struggled with anything? Has this always been easy street for you? And when someone's authentic with me and loves me enough to say, "No. Let me tell you why I'm this way. Because this is what God had to redeem in my life in order for me to live that way." Well, show me how to do that. It's authentic. It's real. Authentic means I get to see the whole piece of you. I don't just get to see part of you. Just the part that you want me to see. Just the part that's really clean and well, it means you can see the good, the bad, the ugly. I love you no matter what. You can see all of me, it doesn't matter. That's authentic.

And where do you get this word? Eagerly? That's what the Word fervent means. He tells us this, "Fervently love one another." Fervent means eagerly, continuously. It means with failing intensity. It's the idea of a muscle that's being stretched to its fullest capacity. Picture yourself on the bench press when you're putting up the last rep and somebody's yelling, "You can do one more. Come on. Just one more. You can push this out." It can be like going towards the finish line of a race where somebody's like, "You can finish. Give it your best." It's straining. That's how we're called to love other people within the body of Christ.

And before, you used to give yourself too high of marks and say, "Well, I already do that." Okay. Here's what I want to know. Who are the five people you did that for this week? What are their names? Because we like to generically love people. "Well, that person came. I was nice to them and I was not..." Who are you eagerly pursue...

What are their names? Who are they? Who are the people in your community that you're spending time with? That you know God has called you to pursue. You say, "Well, I don't have any of those people." I got great news for you. That's why we're a church of small groups. That's why we're a church of community because in community, that's how you grow.

Now, you can come to church on the weekend and you can hear me preach or whoever else is up here preaching and you can celebrate and you can worship and that will stimulate your heart for Christ. But here's how you're going to grow. Getting in a community with people that you wouldn't have picked and love them intentionally. That's how you'll grow.

And here's the point. If you only hang out with the people that you're like, the people that vote like you do, the people that look like you do, the people that live where you live, the people that make the money that you make, you're not really loving people, you're picking people that you want to have time with. Loving people involves people you would've never picked, that you would've never chosen, that vote different than you, that look different than you, that see the world different than you and now you're with them and God says, "Now love them the way I love them." That is a challenge. And that's how you grow.

I have found in my life, I have not grown outside of being part of a small group of people. I have not grown in my life outside of being part of a diverse group of people. People of different skin color, people of different nationalities, people of different

socioeconomic backgrounds, because everybody brings their own lens to the Bible and when you start having relationship, and love is the foundation of that relationship, God begins to stimulate things in your heart that would have never, ever grown. Let me tell you at Brave Church, if this is your home church, you need to be in a group here.

Amen.

This needs to be your home. If this isn't your church, at your church, where you're at, make that your home and get into community there. Now let me tell you reasons people don't get into groups. A lot of people we talk to will say, "I'm just not ready to get into group. My life's falling apart right now. It couldn't be worse seasons for me. I don't want to be the person in there that's the needy drain on everybody. I'll just wait until I get my life fixed. I'm not ready for a small group yet. We just don't have the time."

Or you're over here. "Listen, my life is fine just the way it is. I pick my own community. I pick my own people and I just don't have time for needy people like that." Here's what I find in the kingdom. Circumstances change all the time. And the person that's over here saying everything in my life's fine, their dad dies, their wife goes South or this or that. And now they're in this needy group and now they're like, "Hey Pastor, how come nobody at Brave Church loves me?" "Hey, are you in a group?" "Nope." That's why. Because you don't have a community of people that have been intentional, and oh, by the way, if you fall into this camp over here and say, "I pick my own community outside the church, that's what I do." Here's what you're saying, "Jesus, I don't care about the people at my church enough to pursue them, and be authentic with

them, and be intentional with them. I'll pick my community." Let me tell you what that's called sin. It's sin. That's what it is.

Now, if you're not in a small group, this is not just like run out and sign up. But after church you can run out and sign up and we can get you in one. And here's why, because the reason that God's brought you here is not just to receive, it's to give. It's to be in a group because you have something that God's built in your life to pursue other people. And if you authentically, and eagerly, say, "I'm in, not to get in a group so somebody will do something for me, I'm in a group here to give to people at Brave Church because I want to see Brave Church thrive and I want to see it multiply. And I want to see more kingdom disciples. And this is where God's called me. And He cares about His church. And this is the church God has. Then why wouldn't I be in one?" That's what Peter... You want to grow. That's how you grow.

Now, here's what most people say when they get placed in a group, "Ain't the group I would've chose. Those aren't the people I would've picked." And here would be the response, but they won't tell you, "We wouldn't have picked you either." But God did. God picked it. God selected. I've been in several small groups since we started our church and each one has brought its own unique challenges and own unique things. And in some groups we've had people that have gotten sick, in other groups I've been the one that's needed the attention, in other groups there's just doctrinal things that I get shaped by. I mean, there's been all sorts of things that happen when I'm with people that don't think and act and behave like me. Which is a good thing.

And what God wants for you. If you want to grow, get in a group. I mean, that's as simple as I can say it. That's how you form community. And that's how you eagerly love. And here's the deal. I mean, isn't love the whole litmus test of what the Christian faith is all about? I mean, notice what we went through the book of 1 John. 1 John 3:14 says it like this, "We know that we have passed out of death into life." Why? "Because we love the brethren. He who does not abide and love abides in death." He who does not love abides in death. How do we know we passed out of death to life? How do we really know that we're saved? Because the way we love one another. Do you know in the book of Acts, the reason the church blew up? Do you know the reason this disciples were being added day by day? Because they looked on and saw this community of completely diverse people that didn't even understand how they could even connect.

You had all these different races of people. You had all different socioeconomic backgrounds and they're all coming together under one umbrella, which is the Lordship of Jesus Christ and their incredible love for one another. And people looked on from the outside and like, "How can you love him? And how can she love her? And how can this go on?" Because of Jesus, and He changed us, and we love everybody now. And they would say, "We want to be part of that. We've never seen anything like that on planet earth." That's what the church is. If we say we're a church that loves God and loves one another, here's what the world will say, "Let me see demonstrations of that." And let me tell as you Pastor, there's several demonstrations of that in our church, and I love hearing about them all. When people that would never get together start loving

one another in a way that they've been changed and they've grown and they've grown in Christ, because they've been exhorted and encouraged, that's what it's all about.

And in case you're wondering and you thought like, "Hey, I thought everybody at Brave Church was just like me." Let me just inform you. They're not. They're not. We have every different socioeconomic level people that can't even afford to pay bills and people that are multi-millionaires. And we have people here who have struggled with massive, massive, public sin and people that have kind of grown up in the church and their biggest sin was their own pride that they didn't believe in Jesus. We have all of the gamut. So as you get involved with people that you think are just like you, let me tell you what they're not like. They're nothing like you. And God wants to build that relationship. And that's what the church is all about. Because when you see a group of people that authentically, and eagerly, love one another, and their desire is to exhort one another, to live for Christ, that's when God does all the work.

Everything in the Bible happens in community. It's all relational. And the more you're involved in the community, the more you're going to grow. Now you may ask, "Well, how can I do that?" And God's going to answer that in verse 23. Here's why. "For you have been born again, not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable. That is, through the living and enduring word of God." He's going to quote Isaiah 40:6, 8, "For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of the grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall off but the Word of the Lord endures forever, and this is the Word which was preached to you."

So Peter says, "Here's what I, and all the apostles, have been preaching, that you've been born again. And here's not what it means when you've been born again. When you've trusted Christ, you've been born again from the inside out. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell you and live His life in and through you. You are not the same as you used to be. And as you were born with corruptible seed..." Seed is where everything starts from. Everything starts from a seed. All of us are going to die because we were born of corruptible seed. We'll all die.

Just this week I had the privilege of going back to Illinois, visiting with my 104 year old grandmother, on Wednesday and Thursday. And it was awesome. And for the most part, she's there and we got to talk, and I was asking if she remembered me, she remembered me. We sang some hymns together. We prayed together. We read the Bible. It was awesome. I know in all likelihood, it's the last time I will ever see my grandmother. She's 104. I mean, if my dad called me today and said, "Hey, grandma passed away." I wouldn't say, "Well, how did she die?" She's 104.

We're all passing away. But here's the truth. Because you've been born again of imperishable seed, you will live forever. You are not the same. As a believer, when you close your eyes for the last time on this planet and breathe your last breath, you will be as alive as you've ever been in your entire life. And that's who you already are right now. And if that's who you are right now, then we should be living in such a way, to show love to God's people.

In other words, here's what Peter's saying. Here's what the Lord is telling us,

"You don't have to wait to get to heaven, to love God's people." I mean, many of us and Christians, we faction because we don't love all God's people. And I'm not just talking, we've been talking about the people of Brave Church, because that's where we go. But let me tell you about... Do you know there's other churches in Denver besides us? We're called to love every one of them if they're believers in Christ. "Yeah. But that pastor preaches like this and they have that kind of worship and you know they believe over there?" Yeah. And we're called to love them. They should know more about how we love them than how we disagree with them. Does that make sense?

Yeah.

That's what unity looks like in the body of Christ because we're going to spend eternity with them. You want to grow, get to know people to go to other denominations. I think the way the Lord built my background and being an attendant evangelist is I've been in every kind of church possible. I always say, except for snake biting churches. I haven't been to a snake biting churches yet. Don't really have any desire to go. I mean, I've been in Pentecostal churches where people are falling down all over the place. I've been in Independent Fundamental Baptist churches that say, "That can't even happen." I've been in small churches of 20. I've been in large churches of 1000s. I preached everywhere. Here's what I know. Jesus Christ is at work in this church and people.

Yeah. Yeah.

And we're called to love all the people. Don't ever say, "Well, I go to Brave

Church and you go to that cruddy church down the road." I mean, don't ever say that. Let me tell you something. When you get to heaven, don't look for the Brave Church signs, they won't be there. There is no Brave Church. This is for time and space. It's the church of the Lordship of Jesus Christ that we are serving. Amen?

Amen.

That's how we love. You want to grow in your faith? Love the brethren. Love Christians. Now, when you become a Christian, you think that's an easy task until you spend time with them. And then you realize, "Well, I thought all Christians were really loving." And they thought the same thing about you. We think that we're completely sanctified when we get saved and we're not. I'm not. You're not. And the problem we have is we put expectations on Christians to act just like Jesus, 100% of the time and nobody does it. The reason we're called to love other people is so that we can exhort them to live for Jesus in a way that grows their faith. Amen.

I mean, you want to grow in your? I mean, those two things are enough to put in practice for a long, long time. I mean, if you start genuinely loving other believers, and you start genuinely listening to the Lord and putting into practice, the things that He shows you, you will grow in your faith, which will give you this third step. Peter tells us this. To have continued growth, we need to have a willingness to eliminate all personal sins. A willingness to eliminate all personal sins.

He says, "Therefore, putting aside all malice, and all deceit, and hypocrisy, and envy, and all slander." Willingness to eliminate all personal sins. As you grow in Christ,

we talked about, last week, the way we high sins and cover sins and coddle sins and do all those different things. If you're going to live that way, it hinders your growth. You can't grow when you have known sin in your life. And I'm not asking you to naval-gaze and say, "Lord, is there any sin in my life that I haven't even thought about it, Lord? Where is it? What am I doing wrong? Show me all these bad things." I'm saying, if you ask the Holy Spirit, who's holy, saying, "Lord, is there anything that's not aligned with you?" If there's something He wants you to know, He'll tell you.

And God is gracious enough that at the moment of conversion, He doesn't pour all that out on us at once, and show us every way that we don't measure up. That would be too much to take. But what He does is He gradually takes us through this process, that's called sanctification, where moment by moment, day by day, He shows us areas in our life that don't align with Him so that we can grow in holiness. And there can be moments in your walk, I've had them, where you grow with Christ to a place where you think, and rightly so, "I think I'm in a good place. I mean, I can't think of any known sin in my life and I'm giving God everything I know that I have." And that can last for like a week. And then God begins to show deeper things in your life than aren't right. And other ways that He wants to grow you and it never ever ends. And is there a willingness in your life to relinquish sin, and put it aside, and eliminate it, and say, "God, you take this. I don't want this anymore."?

Now, one thing about sin, let me just talk about sin real quick. Most of us, when we think sin, we think grievous ones that the public doesn't like. So we think about fornication, or adultery, or homosexuality, or abortion, or drunkenness, or drugs.

Something that somebody sees and be like, "Oh, church wouldn't want that." But do you know some of the greatest sins in the Bible they're all relational? They're all how you treat other people sins. Those are bigger sins to God. Why? Because God created all people and He saved those in His church, and if you can't love His church as His own brothers and sisters, those are some of the greatest sins. And that's why he points these out here. This is not an exhaustive list of sins, but he points out five. He said, "Get rid of all malice."

Malice is wanting or desiring harm to someone else. It's desiring the harm of another person. And you would say, "Well, I would never feel that." It's when you have evil thoughts, grudges. I need to get revenge. Malice is, in general, wickedness of all kind. That's what malice is. It might not be like, "Well, I don't want them to get hit by a bus, but it'd be nice if they got fired next week." That's malice. It's when you wish ill upon another person. That's malice. And if you have that in your heart, that would be the Holy Spirit telling you, "Relinquish that. It doesn't matter if they're a believer or not a believer, you should pray for their best. Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. If you can't do that, you have malice in your heart." He said, "Get rid of all of it."

He says this, "Get rid of all deceit." Deceit is really any form of dishonesty. It involves trickery often. The way it plays itself out in our culture is cheating. Not telling the whole truth. Little white lies where somebody had asked you a question and you're not completely honest. You lie a little here and you lie a little... You're deceiving. It's when I don't get to see the whole picture. It's what Satan did in the garden with Adam

and Eve. He didn't necessarily... He did flat out lie to them at the end and say, "You'll search, not die." But early on, he was doing what? He was deceiving them.

He says, "The reason God doesn't want you to eat this fruit is because if you eat this fruit, you will be like God knowing both good and evil." Kind of a half truth. Because at the time, all Adam and Eve knew was good. And if they ate the fruit, they would know both good and evil. So he was kind of telling the truth, but he was deceiving them. And he was deceiving them in such a way, because he knew if they ate it, sin would enter and yeah, they would know good and evil, but they would also die. It's deceit. Deceit is setting other people up. Deceit is cheating on your taxes. Deceit is little white lies and not telling your neighbor the whole truth. It's doing things for your advantage at the expense of someone else. That's deceit. So if you have that in your life, you need to pray and get rid of that.

And then He says this, and he says, "And hypocrisy and envy." It doesn't mean... Now, he says, "All malice and all deceit," and later He says, "All slander." It doesn't mean some of your hypocrisy and some of your envy, the Word all for deceit is covering deceit, hypocrisy and envy, just so you know. So get rid of hypocrisy. What's hypocrisy? It's really insincerity. It's a pretense. It's a sham. It's inconsistent behavior. It's when you say this but you act like this. Or you're a chameleon Christian where with certain people, you act like this and other Christians, you act like this, and then in your non-Christian secular environment, you act like this. And at school you act like this. It's just completely inconsistent all the time. You're a hypocrite. You say you believe this, but your life doesn't reflect what you believe. You have these value statements that you

would write down and say, "I totally believe that." But your life would reflect that you believe something different.

If you say you love the Lord Jesus Christ, every part of your life should reflect that you love the Lord Jesus Christ. And if there's areas in your life that don't, then you repent of those and you ask the Lord to change you so that your life aligns with him. Get rid of all hypocrisy. Have you noticed all these are relational, how you act in front of others, how you treat others, what you wish for others.

And then how about this? All envy. Envy is this. It's resenting others' prosperity. Resenting others' prosperity. It's when you are displeased when you hear about another person's success. Simply put, I'd say it this way, you can't celebrate other people. You just can't celebrate them. It's when you're in a conversation with someone and they start talking about somebody who's been really, really successful and deep down in your heart like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You shall know him. And how come that wasn't me? How come He got the promotion and I didn't? How come everybody celebrates her cooking and not mine? How come she has a position in the church and I don't? Doesn't anybody ever or notice me?" When you can't celebrate someone else, you have envy in your heart. And you know people that are envious when you're around them, because you can't be authentically you. Because you know if you told them your successes they'd have a hard time with it. You know if you told them your tragedies, they'd be like, "Well yeah, it's totally true of a person like you."

I mean, it's envy. It's envy and it's sin. We should be as Christians, the most

celebratory people of everybody. And how about this final one. Get rid of all gossip, or slander. And slander is really gossip, backbiting, defamation of character. It really looks kind of like this. Like when you're in a situation where you say to someone... somebody talks about somebody and they're like, "Yeah. I know they're a really good person, but did you know... Yeah. I know you really like them, but there's probably something you should hear." In other words, "I'm going to take the opportunity to put them down, so I look better." That's slander. That's what it looks like. Okay.

Gossips, when we talk about other people in a way that we wouldn't talk about them if they were standing right in front of us, that's slander. That's what it looks like in our lives. And this is how it plays out sometimes in church. How it plays out sometimes in church is we do it hyper-spiritual like. Like, "Hey, I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I know you're a prayer warrior. I just want you to be praying about this. Let me tell you about Joe. Man, you just need to know that." It's my way of leaking truth and putting other people down. You notice all five of these are relational. They come out of community. They come out about how you treat those that are around you. The Bible makes it pretty clear when you're around a gossip, get the heck away from them. Because of they're gossiping about somebody else in front of you guess what they're doing when you ain't there? You're the target.

Yeah.

Get rid of all that. Here's the grace. I mean, here's the beauty of the scripture. It's not just a rebuke. Jesus Christ, the living one inside of you, will forgive all of those things so that He can live His life in and through you. Because here's the truth about the

Jesus Christ that's in you. He has no malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, or slander. So He doesn't desire to live that way. And when you live that way, you hinder His work in your life. All He wants to do is work in and through you. When you start speaking good of others, when you start caring for others, when you start loving others, when you don't care anymore if you get the credit, guess what happens in your life? The Spirit and power of the living God overwhelm you with joy. Who cares what they have.

That's right.

Think back to 150 years ago about who's the best looking person you ever heard about. Who's the smartest person you ever heard about? And who's the person that made the most money? Hey, who is the person that was the most gifted order? Here's your answer? I don't know. It was 150 years ago. Who cares? That's exactly what people are going to think about you 150 years from now. It doesn't matter. What matters is how you're honoring God in the present, to glorify Him in a way that when you meet Him, He says, "Well done, good and faithful servants. This is how you treated others."

And you see this all over the New Testament. I mean, this is just one place in Ephesians 4:22-24. You see this putting off and putting on you. You see this old self we used to be and this new self. Paul says it in Ephesians 4:22, "That in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new self, which is in the likeness of God and has been created in

righteousness and holiness and truth."

Put off the old, put on the new. That's what you can do as a believer in Christ. That's how you grow. So you grow by growing in your faith, by putting it with obedience, authentically loving other believers and being willing to eliminate the personal sins in your life for how you're treating others. When you start loving believers, authentically, and eagerly, and getting rid of sin so you can do that, I promise you, you'll grow. And then He gives us this final one. He says the final way that we get to grow, and have continued growth in our faith is craving more and more of God's word. Here's what He says, "Like newborn babies," he gives us a simile, "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word.

How do babies long for pure milk? You know what babies do? They make a noise. They cry. When they're presented a bottle or their mother, they root around and get that. They need that milk. They need it now. The world needs to stop for them, in the moment. "I need this. I'm craving this. I'm dependent upon this." When you start getting to a place where you crave the Word, that's when your life will really begin to accelerate.

Now, let me tell you how you can do this. If the only time you hear God's word is on a Sunday, that's not good enough. You need to read it. You can study it. You can meditate on it. I think a great thing to do is memorize it. Just feed your appetite with the Word. Why? Because the living word inside of you gets fed through the written

word. And when you feed yourself the written word, the living word comes alive.

Now here's the truth. Confessions of a pastor. I remember hearing sermons on, "Hey man, read more of the Bible. Love the Word. Love the Word." I could say those things, but deep down, I don't enjoy reading all that much. Never used to, I do now, but I didn't really enjoy reading that much. So when people told me that, I was like, "I don't want to read. I just don't feel like reading." If you're not a reader, good news. Go to places like biblegateway.com or something else, and listen to it on audio for free. It takes about three minutes to listen to a chapter. You can listen to it while you drive. I mean, you can hear the Word. I mean, that's what you can do. But here's the truth. Here's how you crave the Word.

We get it backward sometimes in our culture. We think, "Hey, if you read the Word and you read the Word and you read, it change your whole life." No, if you don't do those first three things I told you, it won't. If you don't put into practice, the thing Jesus told you it won't. I know a lot of people that have read the Word for 20 years that aren't even Christians reading the Word is not enough. Putting into practice the things God shows you when you read the Word will, which is what? Adding obedience to your faith. Genuinely loving other believers. Getting rid of sin. If you're going to read the Word, let the Word read you, then you'll begin to crave it.

Because here's what I find in my life. I know enough about the Word, and I've read the Word so many times and I know where to go, and I know how to answer you if you asked me questions on many things, that it would be very easy for me to coast.

Here's how I grow. When I'm growing in my obedience, when I'm growing in my love for the saints and when I'm allowing God to shine His light on my life and show me sins that I need to repent of, then I need His word. Then I need God to show up. Then I need God to do those things. Put those three things into practice.

What are the things you need to be obedient to? What are the people that you need to love? And how do you let the Lord's shine is light on your sin and let it go? I mean, the Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. There's no place you can go in this book and not hear the Lord. And it's the foundation of spiritual growth. It's a hunger for the Word. Psalm 34:8 says this, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." If you begin your day in the Word, if you feed yourself on the Word throughout the day, if you feed yourself on the Word before you go to bed, the Word of God will begin to transform and take over your life.

And that's what God wants for each and every one of us. He wants us to crave His word. He wants us to go after him. He wants us to need Him so that He can do in and through us what He wants us to do. And here's just a word about the Word, because a lot of people will hear a message like this and say, "Okay, I'm doing it. I've always been thinking about it. I'm going to go home and read the Bible in a year." You can, there's nothing wrong with that.

Let me just tell you something. When you read the Word, let the Word read you. If you have a three chapter a day plan to get through the Bible and on verse number two, the day that you're reading that you get stopped and you're like, "Man, that's

incredible. I've never even thought about that before." Stop. Get out of pen and paper. Start journaling and praying because God is illuminating that verse specifically for you in the moment, you don't get any points for getting it done. "Well, God was speaking to me, but I didn't want to listen to him. I got through all three chapters today." That is not a good way to do Bible study. A good way to do Bible study is read it. There're certain days that God will jump all over the Word. There's other days you're reading it and feeding yourself on the Word. But when you have that moment, where God shows you something in the Word, that is so personal and profound, you stop what you're doing and you respond to God in that moment, no matter what. That's how you grow in the Word.

Amen.

All Right. Growing in the Word is not just knowledge. Growing in the Word is a love for God and a love for other people. And the reason that many of us don't grow is because we're chained to our old self. We kind of think that, "Man, this is just as good as it gets. I'm bound by this. This is as good as it's going to get. I'm complacent. I'm good." God wants to break all those changes in your life.

Come on.

God wants you to accelerate and soar. There's nobody here, or in Broomfield, or on the radio, that's listening to my voice right now, that can't grow further in their faith by doing these things. By being more obedient and faithful, by loving other people, by getting rid of sins and craving the Word. You do those four things. Yeah, they can be

painstaking at times, but you do those four things, and I promise you, you will be on a different level with the Lord Jesus Christ and in your power to be able to serve him. He's the Lord. It's His name that is above every name. It's His name that breaks all the chains. It's His name that wants to release you from wherever you're at because wherever you're at today, even if you're growing, it's not your final resting spot. God wants you to continue to grow.

And so the way that we're going to end today on both campuses is to sit a song that was very familiar with us to remind us of the truth that we've been singing. So if you'd stand with me on both campuses, as we pray. Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we ask, as we sing the words of these songs that you'd remind us of where we've been and Lord that we wouldn't just take a formula and go home. But specifically the way you spoke to us this morning about that one area in our life that needs to change, Lord, we give to you. And Lord here's our prayer, grow us in Christ. Grow us in Christ. Grow us in Christ we pray. In Jesus name. Amen.