**More Like the Master**

In His Growth

Lesson 2

*“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men”*

*(Luke 2:52)*

**Growth Is Natural**

 After a child is born it is only natural that the child will grow. Some growth is physical by design and there is no choice in the matter. For example, we do not choose how tall we want to be while we are growing. Jesus said, *“And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life”* (Matthew 6:27). However, other areas of growth in one’s life are indeed matters of choice. We can choose how we will grow educationally, spiritually, socially, and in our character. God wants us to grow and he gives us an example of growth in the life of Jesus. What can we learn about growth from Jesus?

 After the birth of Jesus, we are told of his growth. In Luke 2:40, we read the following about Jesus: *“The child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him”.* Later, in Luke 2:52 we read a similar statement about him: *“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”* Here, Luke presents the fourfold growth of our Lord: 1) Jesus grew physically (in stature or age), 2) mentally (in wisdom), 3) spiritually (favor with God), and 4) socially (favor with men). In two short verses, Luke covers the period of Jesus’ life that spans approximately 18 years, from age 12 (Luke 2:42) to about age 30 (Luke 3:23). We are not told much about what went on in this period of Jesus’ life, but we are told that Jesus grew, advanced, and increased. What we are told about Jesus’ growth is an important example for us to follow today.

**Jesus and His Growth**

 Jesus grew mentally “*in wisdom”*. Jesus would have used his mental faculties to enable him to view things in life with wisdom. He used his mind to judge rightly and follow the sound course of action based upon knowledge, experience and understanding. The multitudes were often impressed with his wisdom (Matthew 13:54; Mark 6:2).

 Jesus grew physically *“in stature”.* At the end of Jesus’ life we know that he was not a weakling, but was able to endure physical suffering and carry his own cross for a while (John 19:17). However, there is no record of Jesus ever putting an emphasis on his own physical growth.

 Jesus grew spiritually *“in favor with God”*. From his early age in the temple (Luke 2:49) to his dying breath (Luke 23:46), Jesus maintained a close spiritually relationship with his heavenly Father. He grew *“in favor”* (literally, “in grace”) with God. He obeyed his Father, he pleased his Father, he read from his Father’s word, and he constantly communed with his Father in prayer. Subsequent lessons in this series will look at the strong spiritual relationship that Jesus had with his Father.

 Jesus grew socially *“in favor with men”.* Though Jesus was not accepted and liked by all men, he certainly had followers. We are told that the *“common people heard him gladly”* (Mark 12:37). He was able to influence many from the lowly (like the sinful woman of Luke 7:37) to those of high estate (like Nicodemus in John 3). Jesus had the ability to get along with others and be respected by his associates.

**The Christian and Growth**

 When a person is born again (John 3:3-5) and baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3-4), he is a babe in Christ with a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). God expects a new Christian to grow from being a babe to being mature in Christ. Jesus taught the importance of growth among his disciples in the parable of the sower (Mark 4:8; Luke 8:8), the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32), and the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9).

 Christians grow in wisdom. Like Jesus, we need to grow mentally *“in wisdom”.* We need to *“get a heart of wisdom”* (Psalm 90:12). Indeed, *“wisdom is the principal thing”* (Proverbs 4:7). Wisdom is better than gold (Proverbs 16:16) and physical strength (Ecclesiastes 9:16-18). Wisdom will make us truly happy (Proverbs 3:13), it will cause us to obey God’s word (Matthew 7:24), and it will make us ready and prepared for the judgment day (Matthew 25:10). To grow in wisdom, we must put our minds to work in knowing and applying God’s word. We must think soberly on God’s word as it applies to everyday life. Paul wrote about the importance of godly wisdom in the life of the Christian (Ephesians 1:17; Colossians 1:9,28; 2:3; 3:16; 4:5). James also wrote about the importance of wisdom (James 1:5; 3:13-17).

 Christians grow in stature. Like Jesus, we will grow physically *“in stature”.* There are two things to keep in mind with regard to our physical growth. First, as we grow, we must treat our body properly so that we can use our body in the Lord’s service (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Romans 12:1-2). We must not purposely destroy our body with drugs, alcohol, tobacco, cutting, or any other damaging activity. Second, as we grow, we must not put a priority on physical exercise but on godly exercise. Exercise and “working out” contains some profit and benefit for the body. There is nothing wrong with trying to stay healthy so that we can better serve the Lord and others around us. But, overall, our godly relationship with the Lord is more important than a healthy body. Paul wrote to young Timothy: *“And exercise thyself unto godliness: for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”* (1 Timothy 4:7-8). In an age where many put an emphasis on personal fitness and personal training, we must be careful not to neglect our exercise *“unto godliness”.* Exercising to discern good and evil is also more important than physical exercise (Hebrews 5:14) and being exercised with the disciple of righteousness is a greater priority than the care of the body (Hebrews 12:11).

 Christians grow spiritually. Like Jesus, we need to grow spiritually *“in favor with God”*. There is far too much spiritually immaturity in the Lord’s church today. Like the Christians at Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:1-3), many brethren today have never passed the baby stage. There are grown adults who act like immature babies. They do not cooperate. They do not teach. They do not participate as an active member in the work of the local congregation. They do not do personal work. They do not get along with other brethren in unity. They ignore or mistreat others in the local church. They form cliques. They resist the leadership. They gossip and backbite. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *“be not children in mind”* (1 Corinthians 14:20). He later told them to *“act like men”* (1 Corinthians 16:13). In a similar way, Paul wrote to the Ephesians that they were to grow into a holy temple (Ephesians 2:21), to be *“a full-grown man”* (Ephesians 4:13), and to *“grow up in all things”* (Ephesians 4:15). Like the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 10:15) and the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1:3) the faith of each Christian today needs to be growing. The author of Hebrews wrote about how some Christians were still babes and not full-grown. They needed to move past the milk, to the meat (Hebrews 5:11-14). Their lack of growth had caused some to fall away. They needed to grow up so the author encouraged them to press on to *“maturity”* (Hebrews 6:1). Like a newborn baby, we grow spiritually by desiring the sincere milk of God’s word (1 Peter 2:1-2). However, we must continue growing throughout our life by adding spiritual knowledge to our faith and applying that knowledge in our daily circumstances (2 Peter 1:5; 3:18).

 Christians grow socially. Like Jesus, we need to grow socially *“in favor with men*”. Growing socially does not mean that we live a life that sanctions everything that goes on around us. We certainly will have *“no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness”* (Ephesians 5:11). Growing socially, means that we live as much as possible in such a way as to be likeable and to be an influence to others for good. We let our light shine so that others can see our good works and glorify God (Matthew 5:13-14). We “turn the other cheek” and “go the second mile” (Matthew 5:38-42). We work to have favor *“with all the people”* (Acts 2:47). We are tenderly affectionate, we are sharing, we are not haughty, we try to live in peace with others, and we do not render evil for evil (Romans 12:9-21). We do not press our opinions on others (Romans 14:15-21). We are a good example to others in all areas of our life (1 Timothy 4:12) and we treat others of all ages properly (1 Timothy 5:1-2). We live *“peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated”* lives (James 3:17).

**More Like the Master in His Growth**

 Every Christian should want to be “More Like the Master” in his growth. Let us strive to grow like Jesus *“in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”* The Devil will try to hinder our growth, but let us be determined not to let any of his obstacles hinder us from growing into the Christian that God would have us to be. Let us all mature each day so that we may *“grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ”* (Ephesians 4:15). Let us all be “More Like the Master” in his growth!

**Questions**

1. What part of our growth is without choice and what part of our growth can we choose?

2. What two Bible verses speak of Jesus’ growth?

3. What four areas of growth did Jesus experience in life? (Be ready to give examples in each area.)

4. What does God expect of a “babe” in Christ?

5. What are some parables of Jesus that teach the importance of growth in the kingdom of God?

6. How does a Christian grow mentally in wisdom and what are some things that are detrimental to the mental growth of a Christian?

7. How should a Christian treat his body as he grows?

8. What balanced attitude should a Christian have toward his own physical growth?

9. What are some examples of how immature Christians can sometimes act in the local church?

10. How does a Christian grow spiritually in favor with God and what are some things that are detrimental to the spiritual growth of a Christian?

11. How does a Christian grow socially in favor with men and what are some things that are detrimental to the social growth of a Christian?

12. What is Paul’s goal for every Christian according to Ephesians 4:15?