



What does Growing in the Christ-life Look Like?

All believers who are faithfully growing in the Christ-life consistently bring glory to God.

See *Do All for the Glory of God*, especially points VII and VIII, pages 5-6 at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Do%20All%20For%20the%20Glory%20of%20God.pdf>

Believers faithfully growing in the Christ-life abide in God and are characterized by faithful prayer, consistent study and application of God's Word, times of praise and worship, on-going fellowship with believers, sharing the Gospel with unbelievers, and ministering to both believers and unbelievers.

See *Abiding in God . . . a Necessity for Christ-like Development* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Abiding%20in%20God%20A%20Necessity%20for%20Christ-like%20Development.pdf> and

God's Truth is Your Foundation for Life at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Gods%20Truth%20is%20Your%20Foundation%20for%20Life.pdf>

Believers growing in the Christ-life are also characterized by loving God and loving others. Jesus addressed these two love priorities in Matthew 22.

Matthew 22:35-40, "One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." ³⁸ This is the great and foremost commandment. ³⁹ The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

See *The Two Greatest Priorities of Life* at [http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Two%20Greatest%20Priorities%20of%20Life%20\(snippet\).pdf](http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Two%20Greatest%20Priorities%20of%20Life%20(snippet).pdf)

With regard to loving God, a believer demonstrates this love by faithfully obeying Scripture (1 John 5:3).

1 John 5:3, For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Similarly, a believer demonstrates his love for Jesus by obeying His teachings (John 14:15).

John 14:15, If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Love for God and love for Jesus are inseparably linked to biblical obedience.

A believer's Christ-honoring obedience to Scripture is *not* a result of increased self-efforts but is, instead, a thankful response to the unmerited love of Christ demonstrated by His death and resurrection.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

The two passages above emphasize that the Christ-life is in response to Christ's sacrificial love and will result in a purposeful death to self-oriented living. The next three verses highlight that growth in the Christ-life is also characterized by a believer's sacrificial love for others.

John 13:35 (*spoken by Jesus*), By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (*insert added*)

Ephesians 5:1-2, Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; ² and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

1 John 3:16, We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

In Matthew 22:39 (quoted earlier), Jesus said that believers are to love others as they love themselves.

The thrust of this teaching is, “love your neighbor as you *already do* love yourself.”

See *Loving Yourself – What does the Bible Say?* at

http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Loving%20Yourself_What%20does%20the%20Bible%20Say.pdf

plus . . . *Is Self-Love Biblical?* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Is%20Self-Love%20Biblical.pdf>

Specific characteristics of Christ-like love to others are listed in the “love chapter” (1 Corinthians 13).

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, “Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵ does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails . . .”

Similar characteristics of Christ-likeness are listed as the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Galatians 5:22-23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described more characteristics associated with the Christ-life.

Matthew 5:1-12, When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ² He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying, ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Additionally, in Matthew 11, Jesus noted two of His personal characteristics: gentleness and humility.

Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus said, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Believers who endeavor to grow in Christ (“*take my yoke upon you and learn from Me*”) would profit spiritually by consistently evaluating themselves with regard to being gentle (meek) and humble in heart (lowly). Being gentle (meek) indicates “power under control” and humble in heart (lowly) indicates a servant attitude.

SUMMARY

We recognize growth in the Christ-life by observing:

- the two major priorities of life (loving God and loving others),
- the characteristics of love in 1 Corinthians 13 and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23,
- personal characteristics that receive the Lord’s blessings in the Sermon on the Mount, and
- the two essential characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ: meekness and humility.

Knowing characteristics of the Christ-life is one thing . . . living them out is another thing altogether. As a starting point, believers can gain practical insight concerning personal growth in the Christ-life by examining their responses to everyday life. Are your daily responses based primarily on self-centered desires or do your words and actions portray Christ-honoring faith?

See *Living by Feelings or Living by Faith* at

<http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Living%20by%20Feelings%20or%20Living%20by%20Faith.pdf>

Biblically judging (examining) your personal growth in the Christ-life is an important practice associated with Christ-like development. This practice is also the first step in effectively helping others grow in the Christ-life, as is noted in Matthew 7:1-5.

Matthew 7:1-5, Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ² For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

Looking back over this study, there are specific areas of your life in which you can judge (examine) yourself with regard to personal growth in the Christ-life. What do you conclude about:

- your prayer life?
- your Bible study along with corresponding application of biblical truth?
- your times of praise/worship?
- your fellowship with believers?
- your sharing the Good News of the Gospel with others? and
- your ministry inside and outside the Body of Christ?

How would you evaluate yourself with regard to the following statements?

- ☞ I wholeheartedly make obedience to God's Word a priority in every aspect of my life.
- ☞ I consistently love others in the manner described in 1 Corinthians 13 . . . patiently, kindly, without jealousy, without bragging or arrogance, and without acting unbecomingly. I refuse to pursue my own way, and I refuse to be provoked or to keep count of wrongs committed against me. I do not rejoice in unrighteousness but, instead, rejoice in and with the truth. I bear up and believe and hope and endure everything with a Christ-honoring effort to exhibit biblical love in every situation.

See *Are You a Loving Person? The Love Test* at <http://wordtruth.org/PDF/Are%20you%20a%20Loving%20Person.pdf>

How is your self-examination going so far? Don't grade "on a curve" by comparing yourself with others but, instead, examine yourself in light of God's Word.

Let's continue . . . how would you evaluate yourself with regard to the following characteristics that comprise the fruit of the Spirit?

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

Finally, do you need to improve with regard to maintaining a Christ-like servant attitude? Jesus described Himself as being meek and lowly . . . are there situations in which your self-centeredness has ruled instead of your choosing to die to self in order to demonstrate Christ-like servanthood?

CONCLUSION

If you evaluate your personal Christ-likeness honestly, you know that there is room for improvement. Your personal improvement is divinely ordained and supernaturally empowered as you obediently respond each day to the truth of God's Word.

Although you will not be perfect in this life, you can continually grow in the Christ-life throughout your lifetime. As you continually grow in Christ – giving all glory to God for the progress He provides in your daily life – remember that there is a life to come.

Your eternal destiny is secured by divine grace and power. As a result, you can anticipate experiencing Christ-like perfection for all of eternity . . . because you will be in the physical presence of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

One day, you WILL be like Him.

1 John 3:1-3, See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

In the meantime, in response to divine love, prayerfully rely on God's power as you choose thoughts, words, and actions that will bring glory to the Lord and blessings to others. By doing so, you will continue to grow in the Christ-life as you faithfully demonstrate the difference Jesus makes in your life.

To God be the glory!