

Growing Up

*I'm growing older, but not up
My metabolic rate is pleasantly stuck
Let those winds of time roll over my head
I'd rather die while I'm living than live while I'm dead*

Jimmy Buffett, "Growing Older But Not Up"

It's an interesting idea, the notion that the mere passage of time and gathering of experiences do not necessarily lead to maturity. On the other hand, we have the old saying "live and learn" to tell us that we can't help but get something out of our experiences over time. It's what we do with those experiences that matter, I suppose. Are we growing toward God or away from him?

This week we will see that God cares very much about our maturity and wants us to grow in him. He desires us to mature through studying his word, following the example of Jesus Christ, and interacting with our fellow members of his family. Let's spend this week learning what it means to grow in God as we grow up with each other.

Monday – Submitting

"Yield to divine power." Latin proverb

1. Please read 1 Peter 5:5-14. What is your first impression of this part of Peter's letter? How might the instructions in verses 1-4 apply "in the same way" to the young believers in verse 5?
2. According to Ephesians 5:19-21, what should motivate us to submit to one another? What does that mean (i.e. "out of reverence for Christ")?
3. Read Philippians 2:3-8 and consider the example Jesus set for you. In what practical ways should his example direct you in your relationships with those around you?

Digging Deeper (optional): Have any of the circumstances in Romans 12:9-21 have ever applied to you? What tips do you find there for submitting to others out of reverence for God?

Tuesday – Humble

"And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

1. Please read 1 Peter 5:5-6 along with James 4:10. We have a part in our humility. How are we to go about humbling ourselves in practical ways? What can we anticipate receiving from God when we do?
2. Peter paraphrased Proverbs 3:34. What practical examples do you find in Proverbs 3:27-35 for living humbly in your relations with others?

Making it Personal: Of the various examples given in today's passages, which can you put into practice now? Ask God to guide you in pursuing the opportunities he gives you to do so.

Wednesday – At Peace

"To be of a peaceable spirit brings peace along with it." Thomas Watson, 17th c. English pastor

1. Please read 1 Peter 5:7. What sorts of anxieties do you feel in your life? What is Peter's suggestion for anxiety? Why do you think God wants you to talk to him about them?
2. Take a look at Philippians 4:4-9. How does it tell you that you can obtain God's peace (v.7) and enter the presence of the God of peace (v.9)?

Digging Deeper: Read Psalm 40:1-17 and describe the anxieties the writer felt, how he viewed the people around him, and how he trusted God. How did he describe God's hand on him in verses 1-3?

Thursday – Standing Firm

"The greatest firmness is the greatest mercy." Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 19th C. American poet

1. Please read 1 Peter 5:8-10. In what areas of your life do you need to take care to stand firm?
2. Consider Jesus' experience in Matthew 4:1-11 alongside his brother's instructions in James 4:7-8. When do you find it most difficult to resist temptation? How do Jesus' words and James' help you?
3. In Luke 6:46-49, Jesus gives us wisdom as to what leads to standing firm in the face of temptation and difficulty? How would you say it in your own words?

Making it Personal: Ask the Lord to guide you in spending time studying the Bible, learning the words of Jesus, and putting them into practice so that you will stand firm in him.

Friday – In Our Father's Family

"A family is a place where principles are hammered and honed on the anvil of everyday living." Charles Swindoll, 20th-21st c. American pastor and author

1. Please read 1 Peter 5:11-14. What do these verses tell you about who God is, who you are, and how you should look upon fellow Christians?
2. According to Ephesians 3:14-15, where is the family of God located today?
3. Continue with Ephesians 3:16-21. What is God doing in the lives of those who belong to his family?

Making it Personal: Ask God to help you grow you in your relationships with other believers.

For the Weekend: Re-read 1 Peter 5:5-14. Which concepts are areas where you need to mature: submitting, humility, finding God's peace, standing firm, growing as a member of God's family? Spend time in prayer asking God to work in you to carry out his will for you.