

SERVING CONTENTEDLY

Week 4: Maturing Spiritually

As we consider the title of this lesson, note that we are not especially contemplating the physical aspects of maturity, but rather the spiritual. Peter instructed us to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Whether or not we have followed this admonition will be apparent.

If we claim to have the fruit of the Spirit, then our countenance and our lives should show that we do. If we are self-centered, negative, narrow-minded, or cantankerous, that will also be very evident. It is important that the example we set is one of which others can say, “I want to be like _____.” Do you really believe that your name should be there? If not, pray that the Lord will help you do what is necessary to be a shining example of a Christian.

1. Due to a variety of factors, at different stages in life, we may find we have more responsibilities or fewer, more free time or less, more physical strength and energy, or less. However, the instruction Peter gave in 2 Peter 3:18 applies to everyone. How can we apply this directive even in times when it seems our time or energy is diminished?

2. It is important to remember as we journey through life that those we come into contact with are watching us. And as they do this, they are forming opinions about us. It is essential that, as children of God, we display the image of our Father. We should not appear to the world

as grouchy, peevish, or disagreeable. How should we be presenting ourselves if we claim to have the fruit of the Spirit? See Galatians 5:22.

3. It is important for each generation within the church family to have a good rapport with the succeeding generation. Daniel was probably around the age of seventy when it was said that he had an excellent spirit and no error or fault could be found in him. How rewarding it would be to have this said of us! This would present a real challenge to the one who is to be our replacement. How did Paul encourage Timothy and show his love for this younger man, even though Paul was in prison and realized that he was soon to be executed? See 2 Timothy 1:2-5,12; 4:6-8.

4. One of the things that will be a great help in our attempts to mature gracefully is faith in God. Without faith it is impossible to please God, so it is obvious that we must have faith to be on the journey to Heaven. From comments Jesus made, we can see that some have more faith than others. Jesus said of the centurion, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Luke 7:9). And he said to Peter, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matthew 14:31). But it is possible to have our faith increased. How do later events prove that Peter’s faith expanded greatly after the Day of Pentecost?

5. No matter what our age or physical strength, we can all be active in our spiritual lives. In 2 Peter 1:5-8, the Apostle Peter tells us to increase some attributes of our Christian character. He instructs those who have faith to add virtue (general moral excellence), then knowledge—specifically scriptural knowledge. Temperance, or moderation in all things, is next. Patience is an attribute most of us would like to amplify. Godliness means observing the commands of God. Brotherly kindness would simply be obeying Christ’s exhortation to love your neighbor as yourself. The final addition is charity, which is the love of God. Obviously it would be impossible to have too much of any of the above attributes. And there is no limit to increasing the measure that we have! Describe some specific ways an increase in these attributes might bring benefit or blessing in our lives.

6. One of the things that might be a hindrance to aging gracefully is worry. The Word of God instructs us to “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made

known unto God” (Philippians 4:6). In 2 Chronicles 20, King Jehoshaphat faced a serious problem. The armies of the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites were coming to battle against Jehoshaphat. It was a great multitude that was vastly superior to the army of Judah. It brought fear to Jehoshaphat, but he did the right thing. Which five words of verse twelve shows us he did not let worry consume him, but rather put his confidence in God? How could this Scripture apply to situations which might tend to cause worry or concern in our lives?

7. We cannot overemphasize the importance of prayer in our daily lives. When we are busily occupied earning a living, buying a home, raising a family, or whatever else, we might be limited in the amount of time we can actually spend in earnest prayer. However, prayer is vital! Ask the Lord to give you a burden for lost souls. Perhaps make a list of relatives and acquaintances and really spend some time praying for them. Who does the Apostle Paul say we should pray for? See Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1,2.

Scriptures used in this session

Psalm 1:2; 2 Chronicles 20; Matthew 14:31; Luke 7:9; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:1,2; 2 Timothy 1:2- 5,12; 4:6-8; 2 Peter 1:5-8; 3:18

Supplemental Scriptures

Psalms 34:15; 92:14; Acts 2:43; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 2:15

Suggested verse for memorization

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. - Proverbs 16:31