

Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5

◆Intro: Have you ever been to Disney World? I remember being there when I was still too short to reach the drinking fountains. And I remember taking my kids there when they were that same size. And I remember the track where a little kid was allowed to drive a car! All you had to do was be as tall as the pelican by the gate, and wait in line for nearly an hour and you could get behind a wheel! Not a big car. Small, with stripes. Heavy on the rumble, light on muffler it gave a kid a sense of power at the pedals. You could drive the predetermined road all by yourself because, (do you remember why?) there was this little metal rail down the center of your lane. The car could not go off the road. You were free to drive smoothly around the course, or as most youngsters would, you were free to drive back and forth in your lane, banging into the rail every so many yards and then trying to straighten out again. Do it enough times, and maybe you'd make it around without ever touching the rail.

◆Let me draw a comparison. That rail is like the sovereign love of God for his kids. When you accept God as God for you and become one of his kids, he sets you on a course leading to his kingdom. You are his and he will not let you drive off the road. Your future is secure. But he also lets you do some steering which can greatly affect how much you enjoy the drive! Our text captures this idea.

◆*"...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." Philippians 2:12, 13, NIV.*

◆*We're up to action step 4 in Life on Mission. 1) connect: create friendships with people who need God's love and power. 2) serve: love them,*

Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5

help them 3) share: tell your story of how Jesus helps you. 4) Grow. That's today.

◆1. My spiritual growth is not optional. It is normal.

◆A. I want to clear up some misconceptions about spiritual growth. But first a bit of definition. We use all kinds of words for this. Discipleship. Maturity. Spiritual growth. Sanctification, which is the theological word for “becoming holy” (a sanctuary is a “holy” place, a sanctified person is a “holy” person). We’ll talk about it in terms of spiritual growth so its easier to remember our action point of “GROW”. To grow up as a Christian is to mature in becoming like Christ.

◆“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:” Philipians 2:5, NIV.

◆“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” John 13:15, NIV.

◆In the Great Commission Jesus sent his followers not just to witness, but to go and “make disciples” and to “teach them to obey all I have commanded.” Now discipleship isn’t consenting to do things we don’t like because they are good for us, kinda like eating your vegetables. People think sometimes that becoming more godly is becoming more grumpy, or against more things, or being self-flagellating. Was Jesus grumpy? Was Jesus distinguished by what he was against or by what and who he was for? No, to be a disciple is to become like your teacher. Another term for disciple is APPRENTICE. An APPRENTICE is someone who is supposed to be learning from someone else who knows what they need to know. An apprentice, or

Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5

disciple, is not someone who buys the textbook and puts in on his bookshelf. It's someone who learns to do what the teacher can do.

◆ So then, if we are really a disciple of Jesus, if we truly believe his is our God and Savior, then our lives *will* change. Sometimes we change very quickly. Sometimes very slowly. But anyone who belongs to God will change and become new, more like him. It's not an option. Here's how the Heidelberg Catechism put it over 500 years ago:

◆ *“What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion? Two things: the dying away of the old self, and the coming-to-life of the new.” (Q/A88)*

◆ All of our lives on this earth we are in the process of converting, killing off what does not fit with God's goodness and feeding that which does. When we become followers of the true God, he alters our destiny and aims us at heaven, and holiness, and peace, and beauty.

◆ *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV.*

◆ And then we live into it! If you are a God-follower, a disciple, God is out to change you into the satisfyingly holy person he intended you to be. If that isn't happening you should wonder, because discipleship is part of the process of conversion.

◆ *“he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6, NIV.*

◆ **2. My spiritual growth is not automatic. It takes training.**

◆ Here's another thing people think: “Hey if God is going to make me holy, it's up to him. I don't have to concern myself with that. I'm on the road to

Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5

heaven and that's all that matters." But that's not so. Our text Paul urges us to "work out our salvation". Remember, we do not "work for" our salvation. Salvation is a gift. But we can "work it out". Yes we are destined to eternal life. But we can experience God here too and we have a part in that. I have a part in my spiritual maturity. I can cooperate with God. That also means we can fail to cooperate with God, doesn't it? We can "put out the Spirit's fire" as Paul warns us not to. We can get "out-of-step" with the Spirit, according to the book of Galatians.

◆B. Converting takes effort.

◆*"Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important, for it promises a reward in both this life and the next."*

1 Timothy 4:7, 8, NLT.

◆"Take the time that trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit." 1Tim4:7

◆God's holiness is always the best road. You and I can learn to drive on it. When Jesus saved us, he pulled us out of the ditch. Put us in the car of salvation, set us on the track to his perfect kingdom, with the rail of his preservation down the center. But we still get to drive!

◆Any athlete or musician will tell you, training take effort and time. It may feel like prison, but training sets you free. Free to make that ally-
oop. Free to chip right up to the pin. Free to play that Mozart varia-
tion. Free to shred on that drum set. Sometimes it seems boring and
pointless. Remember "wax on; wax off" from Ka-
rate Kid? Mr Miyagi was supposed to be training
him to fight. Instead he had to wash and wax a



Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5



whole yard full of cars in precise movements. Later that night he complained. Miyagi says “show me wax on” while he throws a punch at Daniel’s face.

Likewise, the more we train ourselves in godliness, the better we are at deflecting the blows of temptation to sin, to choose poorly, etc. We become better fighters. What are you doing to train yourself to be like Christ?

◆ Conversion, or converting, is a life long process of training more and more of our selves to be like God and his good ways. It is a daily battle against sin, and darkness, and for holiness and light. It is hating sin more and more and running away from it (be careful here, it’s not running away from “sinners”). It is joy in God and delight in every kind of good(HC.89-90).

◆ But people often think that since our justification in God’s eyes is a pure and free gift of God through Jesus, and since we have nothing to do with it except to accept his grace and love –that then our sanctification (spiritual growth) is also completely God’s job and we have nothing to worry about. But what does our text say?

◆ Yes it is “*God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*” But also you are to “*continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling*”. The Bible also makes it clear that our experience of Heaven will be affected by our degree of spiritual growth here, so it’s a significant concern.

◆ **3. My spiritual growth is not individual. Its communal. It is always better in community.**

Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5

◆ *Two old guys are pushing their carts around Wal-Mart when they collide. The first one says to the second one, "Sorry about that. I'm looking for my wife, and I guess I wasn't paying attention to where I was going." The second old guy says, "That's OK, It's a coincidence. I'm looking for my wife, too. I can't find her and I'm getting a little desperate." The first guy says, "Well, maybe we can work together. What does your wife look like?" The second guy says: "Well, you probably won't believe this, but she is 32 yrs old, blonde hair, blue eyes, great figure. What does your wife look like?" To which the first guy says, "Doesn't matter, --- let's look for yours.*

◆ Well, working together is a good idea anyway. One secret to spiritual growth is to include other people in your own discipleship. Lots of folks think that they can grow in being like Christ all by themselves. So they stay all by themselves. But it doesn't happen because we were not designed to mature alone. We were designed to mature in community with other followers of God. Listen, don't be a spiritual Lone Ranger. That's why we emphasize Life Groups around here, because while babies in the animal world might possibly grow up on their own, it's not that way with human babies. We need nurture from other people. For example,

◆ a) Correction happened better in community. Have you ever wondered why pro golfers, and pro tennis players still have a coach? You'd think they knew how to play the game by now, right? But we don't see ourselves. We need other people's eyes and insights.

◆ b) Creativity and discovery happens better in community. It's like having a whole bunch of computers working on a problem. One can only do so much. We have a whole team of us that plan our worship times, for instance. One person comes up with a perfect song, or a fitting drama, or a perfect passage for the theme that the rest of us

Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5

never thought of. I have some bad news friend; you're really not all that smart all by yourself. None of us are. That goes for spiritual wisdom also. God doesn't even give all his gifts to everyone. I've pointed this out before. God spreads them out on purpose, so that we live in community. If you want to become more like God, stop trying to do it alone.

◆4. My spiritual growth is part of the Mission

◆Take a look back at Paul's letter to the Philippians.

◆“Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life--in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing.” Philippians 2:14-16, NIV.

◆Follow his line of thought. Live a blameless life, like you are part of God's family and what happens? You shine like a star in the dark. Nobody sees stars during the day. They haven't gone anywhere. But when there's a lot of dark around, a growing, maturing person shines bright. And then what happens? People have light. Same thing Jesus said.

◆*In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Mt 5:16niv*

◆Live an exemplary life among the natives so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they'll be won over to God's side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives. 1 pet 2:12 msg

Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5

◆As we grow up and become like Jesus, people will want to know him too. Jesus said, “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself.” Our non-Christlike behavior will not point anyone toward God, or in the right direction. But our Christlike behavior can.

◆**Conclusion:** So where are you in your discipleship? Your spiritual growth? Is anybody falling in love with Jesus because they see you? That’s the mission, folks. Jesus is who they need. But how are they gonna see him? Who’s gonna show them the ropes? Our physical kids learn from us. And our spiritual kids learn from us too. Pay attention to what you’re passing on. In this past year we’ve been trying to share something each month to point at making better marriages. This month’s fits in with what we’ve been talking about. (Take a look at this...)

◆[Fankhauser skit on marriage...]

◆You might recognize each of their points as something the Bible teaches. God’s word, which verse 16 says we “hold out” to the world, changes life. If the gospel of Jesus, if the teachings of God don’t work in my life, how can I recommend them to anyone else? This is why GROW is part of the Life on Mission. Show others what has worked for you.

◆There’s one extra opportunity to do that. We have a one week left in our series Life on Mission and then we’re going to have a Celebration Day. Nov.22, the Sunday after our 20th Anniversary Banquet, we’re going to re-view our series and share some stories. Like they say, “It’s testimony time!” We want to celebrate any experiences you might have had over this campaign. What has God shown you? What has happened? You can help us out by going to our webpage and jotting a paragraph that shares

Grow -The Maturity Principle, Phil.2:12-18

Life on Mission #5

your LOM experiences. Please help us learn and celebrate what God's been doing for you. How have you been changed in connecting and serving and sharing with others? No story is too small.

◆And maybe you feel God moving you to your next step. Maybe it's time for you to join this church and commit your life to publicly following Jesus. Our Discover Sunrise class can help you do that. Maybe it's time to set some spiritual disciplines in your life, like time with God, time in the word, life in community, learning to pray. Our Discover Spiritual Maturity class is for just that. Maybe it's time for you to learn your spiritual gifts and start serving God with them. We are forming a class for that too. Just come talk with me. Lets pray about it right now.