



Kingdom Values - 2 PERSONAL GROWTH

PERSONAL GROWTH - *Leading our members in growing and becoming like Jesus in character without guilt or pressure.*

After a person is saved (forgiven, born-again, given a new spirit, given eternal life), God can now work on him to restore him to His original purpose for humankind. The question of his legal status is already a settled issue. He is now a full-pledged royal child of God and he has been qualified for the next phase of God's Kingdom life process – training for reigning. This work of preparation, growth and maturity now takes place within the secure environment of the Kingdom – inside it, and not outside.

Theologians call this growth process *sanctification* – a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives (**Rom. 6:19; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10**). True repentance and justification lead to sanctification. Justification and sanctification are closely related, distinct but never separate. They designate two phases of salvation: Justification is what God does *for* us, while sanctification is what God does *in* us. Neither justification nor sanctification is the result of meritorious works. Both are solely due to Christ's grace and righteousness.

Sanctification is primarily God's work (**Phil. 2:13**), since He is the one who gives us the desire and the power to do His will. Our role is to trust God, to pray and to surrender (**Rom. 6:13; 8:13; 12:1**). We are to cooperate by striving to obey and to be holy (**Heb. 12:14; 1 John 3:3; 2 Pet. 1:5-6**). Sanctification is usually a corporate process, which means that we grow in a spiritual community (**Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Eph. 4:2-3,16; 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Gal. 6:1-2**).

Jesus defined discipleship as loving God "*with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength*" and loving "*your neighbor as yourself*" (**Mark 12:30-31**). To become like Christ is God's destiny for all followers of Christ (**Rom. 8:29**). A disciple is one who is learning to become like Christ in three ways: (1) To become like Him in character; (2) To work like Him in ministry; and (3) To depend upon the Holy Spirit like He did.

The process of becoming like Christ can be described as a five-phase journey. **First**, it begins when a sinner becomes a saint (one who is set apart to become like Christ) by simply believing in Jesus Christ. At this beginning phase, he receives eternal life (a gift he does not earn at the end) and the Holy Spirit, who gives him a new spirit to replace the dead one he was born with. This rebirth enables him to undertake the journey to Christlikeness.

Second, the new believer enters the discovery phase. Now that has a new spirit, the Holy Spirit helps him to explore God's Word and learn more about God's character of love. This creates in him a growing desire to become like Jesus.

Third, the believer learns to follow the Holy Spirit's leading in his life as he is transformed, bit by bit, to the image of Christ. He grows as he is edified, nurtured and encouraged by spiritual friends in a loving, close-knit spiritual community.

Fourth, the believer develops intimacy with Christ as he spends more time in personally worshiping and adoring Him. He learns to honor Christ everyday and everywhere in everything he does. Worship and praise of God is no longer merely a formal weekend affair; it becomes a lifestyle for him.

And **fifth**, the believer learns to live a Christ-centered life. At this point, his life becomes all about Christ. Christ is all he wants. Christ is all he has. Christ is all he needs. Christ is all he shares. Like the apostle Paul, he can say, "*For me to live is Christ*" (**Phil. 1:21**) and "*Not I, but Christ lives in me.*" (**Gal. 2:20**)

The mission of Gospel Life Community is to help people in their individual journey to Christ. Everything that we do here in our church community should help people in taking the next step forward in whatever phase of the journey that they are in. Over the years, we have discovered in our small group Bible study and disciple-making that what works best is the "**grace and truth**" approach that Jesus demonstrated in His earthly ministry (**John 1:17**).

Instead of pressuring or manipulating people through rules and guilt trips, we lead by teaching and modeling *truth* and *grace*. When we teach Bible truth (*truth*), we try to communicate it in our cultural context (*grace*). While we model our core values (*truth*), we accept people as they are (*grace*). We ask for high commitment (*truth*), but we give people time to grow into their commitment (*grace*).

I know that sometimes we get impatient with ourselves and others and it can be very frustrating. But at Gospel Life, we have made a commitment to sanctification under grace because we are no longer under law. We are convinced that the law will never transform sinful people. Grace and truth will. For it is through grace and truth that the glory of Jesus Christ will be seen in its fullness (**John 1:14**).