

Spiritual Growth Mindset

In the garage at my folk's place, there is a wall with markings. Markings with dates and names representing a timeline of growth. Each grandson and granddaughter have their own growth story captured. Each year, Grandpa marks each one's height. While Grandpa first stoops to make the mark of the young child, in a few short years, he lifts himself on his tip toes to get an accurate marking. Kids love growth. They know it comes with time.

Believers grow as children grow - over time. A growth spurt here and a growth spurt there, but mostly slow. Yet when it comes to the change we want to see in our lives, we want it now. And why shouldn't we see it? Afterall, we are born again. We are made new. Yet addiction still seems to have a hold or hate still comes more naturally than love. The Bible doesn't keep our attention and prayer remains difficult.

Everyone wants human change to occur fast. As believers, we may have more of an expectation of this than the secular man. Afterall, we have a theology for quick change. Paul writes in *2 Corinthians 5:17* "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." By God's grace, quick change is possible and not rare. Testimonies abound of the miraculous change faith in Christ brings. Addictions can be broken. Attitudes shifted. Destructive thought patterns corrected. However, just as growth spurts in the human body occur, they don't account for the overall progress in human development. For that, time will need to be a factor.

The believer in Christ who wants to grow more into Christlikeness needs to adopt this growth mindset. For example, a child born of musical parents has within their DNA musical abilities. By way of birth, they have within themselves the capacity for musical talent. Nothing can strike it from their genes. Yet, serenading a group of people with a soaring melody on a flute will not be possible without effort. To do this the youngster must have a growth mindset. The mindset of a trainee. Practice makes perfect over time. As a Christian, we are born with the divine nature and possess the hope of "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness.*" (*1 Peter 1:3*) With the same mindset the musician-in-training has, we too grow into Christlikeness by way of cooperation with the Holy Spirit and personal effort. Peter further develops this growth mindset in the verses that follow when he says that besides divine promises, we should also give diligence to training into Christlikeness. "*And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*" (*2 Peter 1:5-7*)

Many Christians find themselves disappointed in their lack of spiritual growth. "Surely I should be further along by now," we think. And perhaps so. However, too often, we are awaiting a growth spurt brought on by divine unction when we have strong enough faith or finally pray the right prayer. Such a growth spurt is possible but not likely. God grows us slowly and over time as a function of His divine Holy Spirit and our willingness to daily participate in the disciplines that form us into His likeness. As we lean into this steady, faithful spiritual growth, we rejoice in the work that God continues to do in us over time.

The grandkids are eager to have their growth etched onto the garage wall by Grandpa. They love seeing how far they have come and dream about how tall they will grow. Growth is exciting. It is filled with hope.

Reflection Questions:

- When you reflect on the last few months/years of your life, in what areas have you seen growth? What has this growth looked like? What has encouraged this growth in your life?
- Where do you find hope in the growth process? What mindset must you have to further this hope?