

Growth – Part I

Introduction

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Human Growth is Normal, Expected, Healthy

- ▶ Consider a person's life.
- ▶ Growth in all of these areas is expected.
- ▶ Lack of growth may indicate a problem.
 - ▶ Unknown
 - ▶ Known, made a plan to change it
 - ▶ Known, but can't change it
 - ▶ Known, but won't change it
- ▶ Pediatrician Example



Progress Report

- How have we grown the last year?
 - Individually
 - Family
 - Church
- Successes?
- Hinderances?
- Plan for 2019?



Self-Check Principle

- ▶ 1 Cor 11:28-32 NKJV But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.
- ▶ Although context is specific, the principle of self-examination is broadly applicable
- ▶ Vs. 31 Judge ourselves first before others do it for us
- ▶ Vs. 32 When judgement is required, God's discipline follows so we will not be condemned
- ▶ Vs.30 many are weak and sick due to this deficiency

What about Spiritual Growth?

- ▶ Heb 5:12-14 NKJV For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.
- ▶ Are you prepared to teach someone the first principles of the gospel? (Sin, faith, repentance, grace, obedience...)
- ▶ 1 Pet 3:15 NKJV But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;
- ▶ Are you prepared to give a defense for our faith?
- ▶ In meekness and fear (reverence)?

What about Spiritual Growth?

- ▶ Do we really need to grow spiritually? Plateau ok?
- ▶ Isn't becoming a Christian and going to church enough?
- ▶ 2 Pet 3:16-18 as also in all his [Paul's] epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.
- ▶ Warning against deception of wicked; spiritual warfare
- ▶ Don't plateau...Grow !

What is Spiritual Growth?

- ▶ Spiritual growth is the process of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ.
- ▶ Rom 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- ▶ Col 3:10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,
- ▶ Luke 6:40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.
- ▶ Eph 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.
- ▶ 1 Cor 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.
- ▶ #499 - O to Be Like Thee!

3 Trees

- ▶ God provides a very helpful analogy to help understand how spiritual growth happens – Trees !
- ▶ Jer 17:5-8 Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. 6 For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. 7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. 8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

Jer 17:5-8 in Pictures



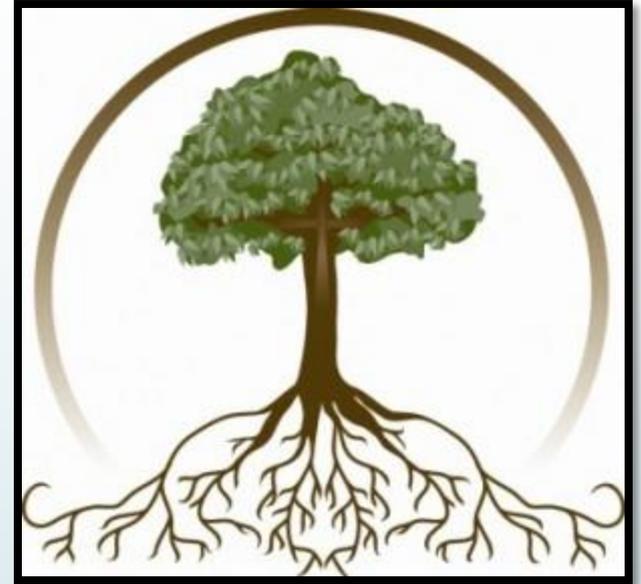
Trusts in man



Trusts in the LORD

Tree Planted by the River

- ▶ Psalm 1:1-4 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
- ▶ Contrast a tree to chaff; what's the difference?
- ▶ Tree is alive, growing, rooted, strong; chaff is dead, easily blown away



Righteous Shall Flourish

- ▶ Psalm 92:12-15 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing, 15 To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.
- ▶ Flourish - *Heb. to break forth as a bud, that is, bloom; generally to spread*
- ▶ The palm tree and the cedar symbolized permanence and strength

Righteous Shall Flourish like...



Palm Trees in Hurricane



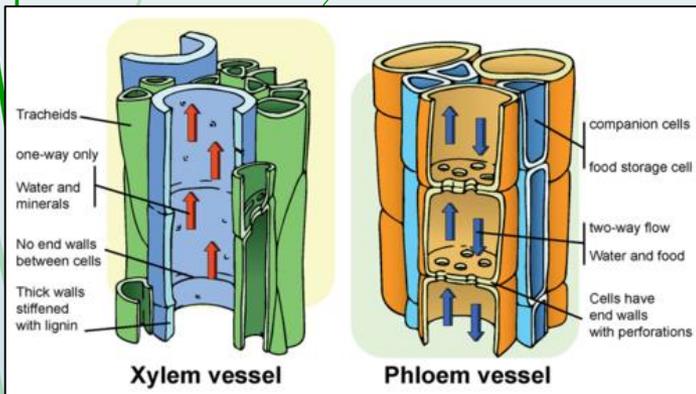
Cedar of Lebanon

Psalm 92:14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh [lit. fat, fertile] and flourishing...

► Why does God compare the righteous to trees?

How Trees Grow

- Water from the soil taken in by roots, transported upward by the Xylem fibers to the leaves and fruit.



How A Tree Grows

TREES GROW UP

Trees grow taller when new cells are produced at the tips of twigs, causing the twigs to grow longer.

TREES GROW OUT

Tree trunks and branches grow thicker as new cells are added beneath the bark. These cells make up vessels, called xylem and phloem, that carry water and food throughout the tree.

Xylem carries water and nutrients from the roots up to the leaves. Active xylem is called sapwood. Old xylem no longer carries water. It forms the heartwood of the tree and may be a different color from the sapwood.

Phloem, also called inner bark, carries food from the leaves to the branches, trunk and roots. Outside the phloem is the outer bark, which protects the tree from injury.

The cambium is found between the phloem and xylem. If you looked at a tree stump, you could not see the cambium, because it is only one cell layer thick. The cambium's job is to make new xylem and phloem cells.

TREES GROW DOWN

Tree roots grow from specialized tissue at their tips. Roots anchor a tree in the soil and absorb the water and nutrients a tree needs. Most of a tree's roots are found in the top two feet of soil, even when the tree is very large.

Root hairs near the growing tips take in water from the soil. You'd need a microscope to see these tiny, tubelike hairs; yet, in a large tree, they can absorb hundreds of gallons of water each day. Surprisingly, only a small amount of this water is used in photosynthesis. The rest is released from the leaves in a process called transpiration.



Fruit...Sign of Health and Fertility

- ▶ Psalm 1:3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither;
- ▶ Psalm 92:14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing,
- ▶ Jer 17:8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.
- ▶ God's trees bear fruit!
- ▶ Fruit is universally understood to be the results of labor
- ▶ Phil 1:22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

Rivers of Water

- ▶ Fruit is ~90% water.
- ▶ Trees draw in water from the soil, transports it to the leaves and fruit.
- ▶ Righteous are Planted by the water
- ▶ John 7:37-39 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
- ▶ Holy Spirit is our source of water, which Jesus uses to make fruit!

Holding Fast to the Head

- ▶ Col 2:6-7 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.
 - ▶ If the root is good, the fruit is good!
- ▶ Matt 7:18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

Vine and Branches

- ▶ John 15:1-8 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Summary

- ▶ Personal growth is widely expected, regarded as healthy
- ▶ However, spiritual growth is often neglected
- ▶ How have you grown? What needs attention?
- ▶ God said people are like trees
 - ▶ Ungodly like bushes planted in the desert
 - ▶ Righteous like mighty trees planted by the river
- ▶ Jesus is the river of living water, given by Holy Spirit
- ▶ Through Jesus, fruit will grow on our branches!

2 Pet 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.