

# Growing Pains



Even though we know it isn't true, we too often think of growing as passive, something that "just" happens to us without any effort or exertion on our part. And, yes, in one sense we can grow "naturally," but the result is about as effective as a 16 boy having a child while being incapable of being a father or having teeth grow in without any oral hygiene – there will be a result, but not a very good one! Proper growth entails associated growing pains!

And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with men. <sup>1Sa 2:26</sup>

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. <sup>2Pe 3:18</sup>

Samuel grew "in stature and in favor," not passively, but through great grace combined with great effort and hard work and growing disciplines. We are told to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" while, at the same time, "To him be glory both now and forever!"

Proper growing entails associated growing pains; and we need to know the disciplines of proper growing, the pains of growing and the rewards of this growing (as motivation to exercise and develop these disciplines) because, we can be sure, the world and the devil, with all their "gravitational" pull, try to focus and obsess us in ways that are temporary and fleeting, ignoring the inevitable, rapidly approaching, eternity.

Growing isn't easy. Grace isn't easy! Growing in grace is impossible – without God's help. And what are the prerequisites/conditions for receiving His grace? We are given a glimpse in the *Old Testament* and a fuller view in the *New*:

He mocks proud mockers  
but gives grace to the humble. <sup>Pr 3:34</sup>

Scripture says:

"God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble."

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. <sup>Jas 4:7-10</sup>

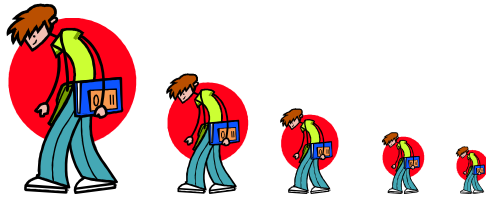
"God opposes the proud  
but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>1Pe 5:5-11</sup>

Receiving grace involves a lot of verbs on our part!



And, here is the challenge, the pain, of growing in grace – we have to keep working, for and with grace, to get smaller and smaller in the ways and things of the world to obtain and “hold” more and greater grace. And tell me if this sounds easy!

John the Baptist understood this when he said:

He must become greater; I must become less. John 3:30

A sure sign of a false and distorted “Christian” doctrine and religion is one that is directly contrary to what the Bible clearly states – those that say Christianity is a means and road to more things (“material blessings” they call them). There is a fine line between material possessions serving us and we being a slave to them – no one gets it perfectly right. But, likewise, there is little hope to grow in the grace of freedom from slavery to material possessions if we don’t know another, better, way and this as our goal!

The books of *Exodus* and *Numbers* are illustrative of what inevitably happens when people fail to grow, when they forget grace and focus on themselves – what they want, what they can do, who they can use to get what they want, etc. “Remember,” “Do not forget” . . . are the foundational disciplines for growing in grace.

I hope to consistently experience growing pains because the alternative is a slow, painful, death!

Here is grace – that this prayer is answered:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting. Ps 139:23 - 24

But, it is greater grace that we recognize our need, be aware of its source and ask for this further grace – often and consistently! And to know this spiritual growing is only accomplished with and to the extent of our physical diminishing. A great place to start – read your *Bible* everyday!