**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | How to Be a Growing Christian |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | 1 John 2:12-14 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #2484 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Are you a growing Christian?
      1. Do you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ better today than you did last year or last week?
   2. There are some people who are saved, but they’re not growing.
   3. We will never know the kind of victory and joy that we ought to know unless we learn to be growing Christians.
   4. To be a growing Christian refers to maturity.
      1. We grow on toward maturity.
      2. You can be young only once, but you can be immature for a long time.
   5. Hebrews 6:1
   6. It is possible to be spiritually healthy and not mature.
      1. A young child can be healthier than a 50-year-old man, but he is not mature.
      2. If you are a newborn babe in Christ and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus, then you are healthy, but that does not mean you are mature.
      3. You may be gifted but not mature.
         1. 1 Corinthians 1:7
   7. Maturity is Christ-likeness.
      1. Maturity is being like Jesus.
      2. Ephesians 4:13
         1. The word “perfect” here does not mean sinless but mature.
2. THE marks of maturity
   1. Maturity is a life-long process, and we actually go through three major stages.
      1. 1 John 2:12-14
         1. In these verses, the apostle John speaks of childhood, young manhood and fatherhood.
         2. Each of us are in one of those three categories.
            1. God wants to move us in progression through these stages until we come to the fatherhood stage.
   2. The thrilling wonders of childhood.
      1. This is the mark of the childlike Christian.
      2. 1 John 2:12
      3. When someone becomes a newborn babe in Christ, he is thrilled at knowing Jesus.
         1. All of his sins have been forgiven.
         2. He is all tomorrows and no yesterdays.
      4. The little child lives in the realm of his feelings.
         1. He hasn’t lost the wonder yet.
      5. Little children are wonderful, but we don’t want them to stay little children.
         1. Little children can be lazy, rude, selfish, uncooperative and mean.
      6. A failing church is a church where everyone is a mature Christian.
         1. This would mean that people are not being saved day by day.
         2. Once someone is saved, at that moment they are a child in Christ.
         3. The church should be a maternity ward for new Christians, but it is sad when some stay in the maternity ward for the rest of their lives until it becomes a nursing home and they never mature.
         4. Someone once said that to cease to be better is to cease to be good.
   3. The triumphant warfare of manhood.
      1. 1 John 2:13-14
         1. The apostle John calls those who have come from childhood to manhood workers and warriors.
      2. They are workers in the church.
         1. They no longer have to be served, but they have learned to serve.
      3. They are also warriors in the church.
         1. The Word of God has made them strong.
         2. 1 John 2:14
      4. The devil wants to keep us in the childhood stage.
         1. He doesn’t want us to be strong.
         2. He doesn’t want us to be workers or warriors.
      5. We can only be made strong by the Word of God.
   4. The tested wisdom of fatherhood.
      1. 1 John 2:13-14
      2. The father stage is maturity where we have grown on.
      3. We think of God, not as a child or as a young man, but as Father.
         1. Matthew 6:9
      4. The goal of our lives is to be Christ-like, which is really to be like God the Father.
         1. John 14:9
         2. When we spend enough time with someone, we begin to think and act like they do.
         3. When we spend time with someone, we become like that someone.
      5. What do fathers do?
         1. Fathers reproduce through soul winning and discipleship.
         2. A father not only meets his own needs, but he also provides for the needs of others.
         3. Fathers have wisdom.
            1. Do people go to you when they have a heartache, a tear, a fear or a problem?

If so, then you have come to the fatherhood stage of maturity.

* 1. As we grow up, we do not substitute fatherhood for young manhood, and we do not substitute young manhood for childhood.
     1. All three stages are legitimate, and a father is a composite of them all.
        1. In a father, there ought to be the vision and zeal of a young man.
        2. In a young man, there ought to be the wonder of childhood.
     2. We do not grow from one stage to another; we just add each stage on.
     3. If we are perfectly whole, all of these stages will be in us.
  2. The apostle John, who wrote these passages, had to grow in maturity.
     1. When John was saved, he was mean and nasty; and he stayed that way until he grew.
        1. He had a violent disposition.
           1. Mark 3:17

His nickname was “Son of Thunder.”

* + - 1. He was selfish.
         1. Mark 10:37
      2. He was prejudiced.
         1. Luke 9:54-55
      3. He was intolerant.
         1. Luke 9:49-50
    1. John grew up; and when he wrote the Gospel of John, he was the disciple who leaned upon Jesus.
       1. John never even mentioned his own name.
          1. John 13:23
       2. No longer is John seeking the chief place.
       3. John is no longer prejudiced.
          1. Acts 8:14-15

The first time John prayed, he asked for fire to come down upon the people.

The second time he prayed, he asked God to bless the people and to fill them with the Holy Spirit.

* + - 1. He is no longer intolerant.
         1. 1 John 1:7
    1. John was changed and transformed.

1. the means of maturity
   1. There must be the miracle of life.
      1. We can’t begin to grow until we have life.
      2. We must first get saved; become a Christian.
   2. There must be the passing of time.
      1. There is no instant maturity.
      2. God wants us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
      3. Secret of maturity is spending time; we’re not going to mature overnight.
   3. Growth requires nourishment.
      1. We have to feed on the Word of God.
      2. 1 Peter 2:2
         1. There is no way that we can grow without taking nourishment, and our nourishment is the Word of God.
      3. We need to feed upon the Word, not merely read the Word, but ponder over it and apply it.
         1. Jeremiah 15:16
      4. Many Christians read the Bible like it is a recipe book, then they never eat the meal.
   4. Growth demands the discipline of exercise.
      1. Hebrews 5:14
         1. This refers to full-grown Christians.
      2. Our physical bodies, when exercised, toughen and harden.
      3. Many Christians are spiritually flabby; they have no strength or vitality because they have no exercise.
         1. They go to church on Sunday morning and sit and soak and think by being in church that they’re serving God.
         2. We call going to church “the service,” but the service actually begins when we walk out of the church building.
      4. When we begin to serve God, we’re going to grow; and we’re going to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
      5. Read the Word of God, and don’t worry about what you don’t understand.
         1. Obey what you do understand, and you’ll soon be understanding what you didn’t understand.
      6. When it comes to service, don’t worry about what you can’t do; find out what you can do and begin to do it.
2. CONCLUSION
   1. Take inventory of your life.
      1. Are you a child who is thankful that your sins are forgiven?
      2. Are you a young man who’s a worker and a warrior?
         1. The church could not exist without workers and warriors.
      3. But these two stages are not the final goal.
      4. The final goal is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.
         1. John 10:30
   2. You need to be the kind of Christian who can reproduce, who has fatherly wisdom and who can meet the needs of others.
   3. If you’ve never received spiritual life, then you need to be saved.
      1. There is good news: God loves you, and He wants to save you.
      2. You don’t have to beg Him to save you; He has promised to save you if you will trust Him.
      3. Believe that Christ, the Son of God, paid your sin debt with His shed blood on the cross and that God raised Him from the dead.
         1. Ask Him to come into your heart as your Lord and Savior.
      4. Acts 16:31
   4. Ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins; acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      1. Romans 3:23
      2. Romans 10:9-10
      3. Romans 10:13
      4. John 3:16