

5 Ways to Grow

by Dean Ridings

When we become followers of Jesus, God hangs an “under construction” sign on us. As Paul puts it, He initiates a “good work” in us (Philippians 1:6). He begins to conform us to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

The apostle Peter encourages us to partner with God along the way, ensuring we are in the very best position to grow in the Christian life. He says, “make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love” (2 Peter 1:5b-7).

How can this happen? Let’s look at how Jesus invested in Peter and his fellow disciples to find five clear ways to grow ever deeper as a disciple. These are reflected in Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer (see in particular John 17:5–18). If you desire to grow as a disciple, follow Jesus’ five priorities. **Questions after each are for reflection, journaling, or personal retreat.**

1st Way to Grow—Get to Know God

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.” —John 17:6a

Jesus revealed the Father’s compassionate heart to the disciples as He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout cities and villages and observed that people were helpless, hopeless, hurting, and lost. “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (see Matthew 9:35-38).

What might it look like to make it a priority to get to know God? What other Bible passages come to mind? Why not research and reflect on God’s attributes?

2nd Way to Grow—Get into God’s Word

“For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them. . . . I have given them your word. . . . Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.” —John 17:8a, 14a, 17

Someone once asked Jesus what the greatest commandment is. Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments this way: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (see Matthew 22:34-40). Isn’t that a wonderful summary of the Bible, God’s Word, from cover to cover?

Remember the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23)? How have you experienced the seed of God’s Word growing in

your heart? Inspect the fruit in your own life. What actions are you taking (or will you take) to ensure you’re taking in God’s Word and it’s bearing fruit daily?

3rd Way to Grow—Talk to God . . . Pray

“I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.” —John 17:9

Jesus often pulled away to pray—to glorify the Father, to receive the Father’s words, and to intercede on behalf of others. He prayed through the night before calling His disciples (Luke 6:12-13). In the Lord’s Prayer, He modeled praying for God’s Kingdom to advance: “Your kingdom come . . .” (see Matthew 6:9-13). Jesus showed how prayer is essential for life and ministry.

What are the qualities of a “prayer warrior”? Do you often pull away to pray? Why not ask God what needs to happen for you to enhance your walking and talking relationship with Him?

4th Way to Grow—Walk With Jesus

“While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. . . .” —John 17:12a

As Jesus walked “with them,” His followers listened to Him teach, watched Him do miracles, and learned truths about Kingdom living. Along the way, Jesus touched and trained them; He prepared them to preach the gospel of the Kingdom. “And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal . . .” (see Luke 9:1-6).

When did you begin to walk with Jesus? Along the way, how has He touched and trained you? How is He both preparing and using you to carry on His work in the advance of the Kingdom?

5th Way to Grow—Be Aware of the Battle

“I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.” —John 17:15

In their travels, Jesus and His followers saw the impact of the enemy. They witnessed how he and his fallen-angel followers (i.e., demons) wreaked havoc in lives. Jesus opposed and exposed the evil one: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

At the outset of Jesus’ ministry, the devil tried to trip Him up (see Matthew 4:1-11). How much more would he try to trip up Jesus’ followers? How aware are you of the evil one’s tactics and influence today? How might spiritual armor help with the spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-18)?

