



Introduction to Emmanuel

Lesson 3

Growing In Your Walk With God

Two key words that are often heard around our church are “growing” and “changing.” The apostle Peter wrote, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity.” (2 Peter 3:18)

Here at Emmanuel Baptist Church, our emphasis is on progressive sanctification, believing that God has a plan for every Christian’s growth, and that He wants godly lives and families built. In this lesson we will study what God’s Word says about how you can grow in your walk with God.

I. THE HOPE FOR CHANGE

Many men and women wonder if real, lasting change is possible. Often they have tried to change an area of their life in the past without success. Some have even concluded that, at least in their case, there simply is no hope.

A. Other Christians have changed.

Please read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

1. List several of the sinful lifestyles mentioned in verses 9-10.

2. Are the sinful habits mentioned in these verses serious? Would you consider them hard to change?

3. What are the first six words of verse 11, and how do they give hope?

B. God’s Word is sufficient to help us change.

Please read Psalm 19:7 and John 17:17.

1. What means does God use to sanctify (change) people according to these verses?

2 Peter 1:3 says: “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

2. What words are used in this verse to describe what God has granted to us in His Word?

2 Timothy 3:15-17 says: “And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

3. In reference to these verses, Jay Adams wrote:

In verses 14-17, two thrusts clearly stand out, having to do with the two characteristics of Scripture:

1. *The Scriptures are able (lit., “have the power”) to make people wise about salvation.*
2. *The Scriptures are useful for teaching, for conviction, for correction and for disciplined training in righteousness.*

Because these two uses of the Scriptures correspond to the two aspects of pastoral ministry, they are said to fully equip the man of God for his work.

The two uses of Scripture represent two stages in ministering to people:

1. *People must first hear the gospel, believe, and be saved.*
2. *Believers must be built up in their faith by changing from sinful to righteous ways.*

These two stages are evangelism and edification, and the Scriptures provide all that is necessary to carry out both.

Note the order: first comes evangelism; then, if that is successful, edification. As we have seen, trying to edify unevangelized people produces Pharisees. You cannot build where there is no foundation. But the order of which Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:15-17 shows the sufficiency of the Scriptures for carrying out Christian ministry in its totality.

Jay Adams, How to Help People Change (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 12.

C. God has promised to help us change.

Christian change is not “one-dimensional.” In other words, we are not talking about human beings alone changing human habits alone. The Bible often speaks of the interplay between one’s relationship with God and relationships with others. For example, in 1 Peter 3:7, one of the reasons that is given for a husband living with his wife in “an understanding way” is that his prayers would “not be hindered.” Jesus even summarized the message of the Old Testament with these words: “And He said to him, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40).

Because our rate of change and growth affects our relationship with God (and vice versa), it is not surprising to learn that each Person of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit) is involved in helping us change.

1. The Father _____ the fruitful vine. (John 15:2)
2. The Son _____ by the water of the Word. (Ephesians 5:26)
3. The Holy Spirit _____ us as we behold Christ’s face in the mirror of His Word. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

While God has promised to help us change, this is not to say that we have no responsibility in the matter.

John Murray has written:

. . .the pilgrimage to perfection [in the eternal state] is not one of quiescence and inactivity. It is not “let go and let God.” The journey proceeds apace with the most intense exercise on our part. . . Our working is not suspended because God works, and God’s working is not suspended because we work. The one is not superseded by the other.

They are complementary. . . Our working is grounded in God’s working. Our working receives its urge, strength, incentive, and cause from God’s working in us.

John Murray, Collected Writings (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 3:266, 267.

II. THE GOAL OF CHANGE

Several years ago Jay Adams spoke at the psychiatric lecture hall of the University of Vienna in Austria. Below is an excerpt from his address entitled “Change Them - Into What?”

Christian counseling is entirely fresh; it is totally different from anything that has been offered in our generation in America. Asking the question why there has been no consensus, particularly in this field in which people are trying to change the lives of other persons, many of us came to the conclusion that it was because there has been no standard by which this was attempted. You may say that society is the standard, or you may say pragmatically that what works is the standard or that the counselee is the standard; but when you finally boil it all down and strip off the externals, what you have left is this: the individual psychotherapist determines the standard. The problem of subjectivity is enormous. Something from outside of the counselor and counselee is needed; something far more solidly grounded than any limited and biased individual is required. . . .

Why do we need a standard, a yardstick, a rule? Because we are dealing with the problem of changing human lives. What man has the right or the ability to say to another, “I know how you shall live”? What man will take it upon himself to say, “This is wrong in your life, this is right in your life, and this is how I want to change you”? Some think they can divorce themselves from the ethical issues. They think that value can be cast aside. But you can’t; you continually get involved in the realm of values when you deal with people and their lives. When you endeavor to change another human being—i.e., to change his values, his beliefs, his behavior, his attitudes, his relationships—are you willing to say, “What I think his values, his relations, his attitudes and his behavior should be like is best”—are you willing to say that? Unless you are ignorant or arrogant, you must hesitate. And yet from the very outset that has been the problem, hasn’t it? There’s been no standard, no one standard, by which to bring about consensus. . .

There is no common standard for what a human being ought to look like. We sometimes read in popular writings, of course, that “psychologists say. . .” or “psychiatrists say. . .” (but anyone who knows the confusion behind those statements can only take them humorously rather than seriously). The fact of the matter is that there is no agreement on the most basic issue of all—what sort of man is normal? And we won’t get that norm by sociological studies either, because they will only tell us what the average attitudes and behaviors that we, in a given period or place, have. And I’m not sure that you or I want to produce more of the kinds of people that do the things we read about on the front pages of our newspapers all the time, etc. Now my point is simply this: there has to be a standard and a model that conforms to it, so that we can both know and see what a human being should be like. There has to be a set of criteria. We have to have a picture of what a human should look like if we’re going to try to change people. Where are we going to get such a picture? This is the question that Christian pastors in America have been dealing with for the past fourteen years, and they say that they have an answer.

They say that human beings should look like Jesus Christ! They say that the Bible not only gives a description of what a person should be like in abstract terms, but that in Jesus Christ is a model of such a person in terms of action and speech. Indeed, in contrast to the psychotherapeutic confusion, it has been most powerfully demonstrated in America that a true consensus can be developed, when there is such a standard.

Jay Adams, Theology of Christian Counseling (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), pp. 102-103.

Please list several truths from these paragraphs that are especially noteworthy.

A. Christlikeness:

Please read Romans 8:28-29.

1. What does verse 28 say God will cause all things to work together for? _____

2. What two conditions are given in the second half of verse 28 that must be met before a person can claim the promise that God will cause all things to work together for good?
 - a. To those who _____.
 - b. To those who are called according to _____.

3. Verse 29 explains God's great purpose for His children with the phrase "conformed to the image of His Son." Please list several specific ways a person can grow in Christlikeness.

B Being pleasing to God:

Please read 2 Corinthians 5:9.

In this verse, Paul explains that the ambition (goal) of a believer should be to please God. What other ambitions might take the place of pleasing God in a believer's heart and life?

C. A key starting place:

Please read Matthew 7:3-5.

What does Jesus say a person should remove from his eye before trying to help someone else remove their "speck"?

Our Lord's point was that He wants us to focus on ways we need to change first. Christians will not grow at the rate God desires unless they are willing to honestly and specifically identify ways they are unlike Jesus Christ and displeasing to Him. We must choose to be unlike Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) who responded to their sin by running, hiding, covering, and blameshifting.

Believers instead must "walk in the light" (1 John 1:5-10), having an open attitude toward admitting their sin.

III. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

Please read Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:5-14.

God never tells us "the what" without also telling us the "how-to." These passages outline a three-step principle for growth.

A. Put Off:

Ephesians 4:22-24 describe what happened to us positionally the moment we were saved (vv. 20-21 refer to a past event and vv. 22-24 continue the description; see Col. 3:9-10). Colossians 3:8 commands us to lay aside or put off habits associated with the unsaved lifestyle. This happened at salvation (Ephesians 4) and is to continue after salvation as well (Colossians 3). After a person has identified ways he is unlike Jesus Christ, he must determine that he will stop repeating that habit (with the help of God, of course). Just like a person with dirty clothes begins the change process by taking the dirty clothes off, believers identify areas of their lives that are displeasing to God and put that sinful habit off.

List a few sinful habits that a believer might have to put off in order to be more pleasing to God.

For additional study, read Matthew 5:29-30 - where Jesus Christ explains the “radical amputation” principle. Sometimes a habit is so well established that significant steps must be taken to put it off.

B. Change your thinking.

Ephesians 4:23 explains that a critical part of the change that occurred at salvation was in our thinking. This is to continue after salvation as we seek to be more like Christ. This process involves the inner person. In order to change biblically, a believer must “grow in the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). Christian change is not simply behaviorism. God wants us to become more like Jesus Christ from the inside out.

Referring back to the list of sinful habits you made under letter “A”, what habits of thinking might a person need to change in order to progress out of the behaviors you listed?

For additional study, see Matthew 12:34, James 1:14-15, 4:1-5.

Each of these passages speak of the importance of giving attention to the heart, or the inner man.

C. Put On:

In Colossians 3:12, Paul completes the principle by instructing God’s people to “put on a heart of compassion . . .” While the first two steps we’ve studied are important in and of themselves, they are incomplete. A person does not change by simply stopping. Instead, God wants us to practice the principle of *replacement*, putting off what is wrong and replacing it with what is right.

To practice identifying “put-off’s” and “put-on’s”, please complete the following chart after reading the verses in the left column.

Verse	Put Off	Put On
Ephesians 4:26		
Ephesians 4:28		

For additional study, read:

1. Godliness Through Discipline by Jay Adams. This 25 page booklet is based on 1 Timothy 4:7 where Paul said “. . .discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”
2. How To Help People Change by Jay Adams. The first several chapters are titled:
 - 1) The Need for Inner Change
 - 2) The Four-Step Biblical Process
 - 3) The Change Producing Character of the Scriptures
 - 4) The Sufficiency of the Scriptures
 - 5) The Human and Divine Roles in Change