

Growing Pains

Opening Question

- In what area of your life do you need to grow the most?
- How are you responding to God urging you to grow?
- Do you believe that Christianity is a growth religion? Why or why not?

Bible Study

The Easy Road

Exodus 13:17-18 (VOICE)

17 After Pharaoh sent the people out, God did not take them by the coastal road that runs through the land of the Philistines, even though that was the nearest and easiest route. Instead, God said, “For if they see battle with those contentious Philistines, they might regret their decision and then return to Egypt.” 18 So God chose a different, longer path that led the community of His people through the desert toward the Red Sea. The Israelites marched out of the land of Egypt like an army ready for battle.

- What would have happened to the Israelites if God led them through the easy road?
- Can you identify moments in your life where you were chasing the easy road? How did that affect your character?
- Do you believe that the easy road is the enemy of growth and anything great?

Believe God’s Intentions

Psalm 32:6-8 (NLT)

6 Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment. 7 For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory. 8 The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.

- Do you believe God is guiding you along the best pathway for your life? Why or why not?
- Do you ever make the mistake of believing that difficulty and pain is a sign that God is against you? Where did this belief originate from?
- Are you willing to refute this belief as false and unbiblical?

Embrace God’s Training as My Friend

Hebrews 12:10-11 (NIRV)

10 Our parents trained us for a little while. They did what they thought was best. But God trains us for our good. He does this so we may share in his holiness. 11 No training seems pleasant at the time. In fact, it seems painful. But later on it produces a harvest of godliness and peace. It does this for those who have been trained by it.

- How is God currently training you?
- What is the process we must embrace?
 - *Recognize God's training as wholistic*
 - *Admit that it is painful for us*
 - *Learn from the pain instead of wasting the opportunity*
 - *Believe that the process transforms you for the better*

Learn to Grow Through Prayer

Hebrews 5:7-9 (NCV)

While Jesus lived on earth, he prayed to God and asked God for help. He prayed with loud cries and tears to the One who could save him from death, and his prayer was heard because he trusted God. Even though Jesus was the Son of God, he learned obedience by what he suffered. And because his obedience was perfect, he was able to give eternal salvation to all who obey him.

- If your prayer life was displayed at “Times Square”, would the observers be inspired or lulled to sleep?
- Why do you think Jesus prayed so intensely and with so much emotion?
- What made his prayer life so powerful?
- How can you imitate his prayer life?

Change Your Focus to Move Forward

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NCV)

We are surrounded by a great cloud of people whose lives tell us what faith means. So let us run the race that is before us and never give up. We should remove from our lives anything that would get in the way and the sin that so easily holds us back. Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect. He suffered death on the cross. But he accepted the shame as if it were nothing because of the joy that God put before him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God's throne.

- What is the greatest obstacle and the sins hindering you from growing?
- Who or what are you looking to for help to move forward?
- How much would your character and faith grow if you imitated Jesus's faith?



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