

# More and More

Lesson 1 in "More Like Jesus"

**Lesson Aim:** To grasp the truth that in "normal Christianity" we will deliberately move toward spiritual maturity, "little by little," in a life-long process of becoming more like Jesus.

**Key Verse:** And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. II Corinthians 3:18

## Little By Little

"Good things take time," we say. It takes a baby about nine months to grow from conception to birth. A house is built over several months. A beautiful shade tree is many years - even decades old.

As an infant we need much care. We are fed. We need our diaper changed. And we learn to crawl, walk, run - and finally, to leap obstacles. As time goes on we are taught much and we learn from experience. Finally we grow into adulthood. We can now function well and contribute to our world in a meaningful way. Still, we continue to learn and develop new skills.

So it is with the Christian life. When we are "born again," we are just that - born, again! We begin a new way of life. Becoming a mature Christian takes time, and much the same process as growing physically.

## Being Transformed

Our key verse, II Cor. 3:18, says we are being "transformed." That's the Greek word "metamorphoo," from which we get our word metamorphosis, which we use in science to describe the change of a worm into a beautiful butterfly. It means "a complete change of form, substance and structure." (Consider the fact that metamorphoo is used in Mt. 17:2, speaking of Christ on the mount of transfiguration!)

II Cor. 3:18 contains five important truths.

- 1) We are being transformed. We have begun, but it is an ongoing process. We are "under construction."
- 2) We are being transformed. Our very inner being is in the process of being *radically changed into something new!*
- 3) Into His image. Jesus is our Master, our model/example/pattern. We are becoming like *Him!*
- 4) With ever-increasing glory. *Little by little*, from one measure of Christlikeness to the next!
- 5) Which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. God is at work in us, bringing change as we cooperate with Him. As Philip. 2:13 says, God helps us want to please Him, and then when we want to, He helps us do it!

## Scriptures to Consider

Read the scriptures on page 2 and note how each is written to Christians, yet it calls them (us) to ongoing spiritual growth. Note also the sense of personal responsibility that is communicated. We can't just sit back and expect God to do it for us without commitment and effort on our part.

The one major theme in these verses is "more and more." We are *being* changed, and it is a *process*.

Mt. 28:18-20 - “go and make *disciples*”

A disciple is one who is following another and becoming like him. Discipleship is a way of life. Our initial salvation experience is only the beginning of a lifelong pilgrimage of following Christ and becoming more like Him.

Rom. 6:19 - “so now offer them (the parts of your body) in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.”

Each time we expose our eyes, ears, hands, mouths or other members of our bodies to either righteousness or unrighteousness, it makes it easier to repeat it the next time. This is true of both good and evil!

II Cor. 4:16 - “- inwardly we are *being* renewed (renovated) day by day.”

When we renovate something we tear out the old and replace it with the new. We are *being* changed, and the ongoing process involves tearing out old patterns/attitudes/values and replacing them with new!

Eph. 4:11-16 - “we will no longer be infants,” “we will *in all things grow up* into Him.”

God has provided the various ministries in the church to help us grow and become mature. We are expected to “get on with it,” and to grow up in every way! There is no room here for spiritual childishness!

Philip. 1:9-11 - Speaks of love abounding *more and more*.

Do you feel Paul’s expectation of a dynamic, ongoing Christian experience?

Col. 1:9-10 - Read it!

Note that this is speaking of things to come. We are not yet filled with the knowledge of God! There is more! The Greek word for “knowledge” here means “full knowledge,” “the knowledge of experience.” It suggests a knowledge that we gain through life experiences. (How does a child best learn the meaning of the word “hot”?) Consider that this was written to the people whom Paul so strongly complimented in vv1-8!

Col. 2:6-7 - “*having been* firmly rooted and *now being* built up in Him” (nas)

Col. 3:1-2 - “*keep seeking,*” and “*set your mind*” (nas)

We must be committed to an ongoing and deliberate walk of following our Master and becoming more like Him!

Col. 3:10 - “the new self which is *being* renewed”

I Thess. 4:1 & 10 - “do this *more and more*”  
You’re doing well, but press on!

Heb. 5:11 - 6:2 - Read it!  
It’s time to grow up!

I Peter 2:1-5 - “so that by it you may *grow up*” and, “you, - - are *being* built into a spiritual house.”

II Peter 3:18 - “but *grow* in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

These verses communicate an active, dynamic Christian experience. This is the Biblical “norm.” It is what God expects of us when we receive Jesus as Savior and confess Him as Lord.

### **Do We Have A Problem Here?**

Do you think that churches today take this truth seriously, or are we often satisfied to just get people “saved” so they don’t go to hell? Are most believers you know consciously pressing toward Christlikeness, or are they satisfied to “be a good Christian who follows the church’s rules, tries to avoid obvious evil, and hangs on ‘til Jesus takes him home.” What about you?

We quickly recognize a 20-year old, mentally handicapped person who has the capacities of a 5-year old. But don’t we

have many in our churches who have confessed Christ for years, even decades, yet they have the spiritual maturity of a child? And don't they seem "normal" to us?

In the spiritual sense, have most Christians you know learned to walk - and run;

- in the demonstration of mercy, love, acceptance and forgiveness;
- in the exercise of faith and perseverance in the midst of difficulty;
- in the practice of humility, servanthood, and showing preference to others;
- in service to the broken and needy people around us?

Aren't many believers like spoiled children; self centered and pouting when things don't go their way and expecting God and others to bow to their every wish?

What does this say about how well we have fulfilled the Great Commission's call to "make disciples," and the general New Testament expectation of an active, changing life?

### **Closing Thoughts**

It's easy to talk about Christian growth in a general way. It feels "spiritual." But repentance and change are at the very core of the growth process and they are two things most repulsive to our flesh. Pride would forbid them if humility did not welcome them.

Each little step toward Jesus means a step away from our former life. Immoral thoughts or actions are replaced by purity; impatience, by love; deception, by truthfulness; a domineering spirit, by servanthood; pride, by humility; greed, by generosity, and so forth. It is often a slow and painful process filled with doubt, fear and even failure, as we forsake the old for the new.

It is also a wonderful pilgrimage. It is a path marked by the joy and peace of

righteousness; because purity, love, truthfulness, servanthood, humility and generosity produce sweeter fruit than their predecessors!

Christian leaders must extend the call to maturity. They must also model that walk. The prestige and power of position are no substitute for humility and the ongoing pursuit of more of Jesus.

The church must respond positively to that call; even the call to "grow up" in a specific way.

A pastor who calls the flock to maturity (even in a spirit of love, humility and servanthood), and who points out specific ways the members need to grow up, often finds himself the object of the wrath of some. It is risky for a pastor to try to awaken drowsy or sleeping members! This is certainly a factor in the timidity of some pastors and the rejection of others. Courageous pastors need the prayers and support of the members who are sincere disciples of Jesus.

### **Prayer**

God my Father, I bow my heart before you. I confess that in many ways I have been a lazy Christian, and I ask you to forgive me.

Please give me a new vision for the "more and more" of the Christian life. I truly want to be a disciple of Jesus in the fullest sense.

I give myself to you in humble obedience. Please dwell within me more richly than ever before. Deepen within me an awareness of the ways in which I need to become more like Jesus, and show me the way. Show me my areas of weakness and my patterns of sinfulness, so that you and I can deal with them and I can grow.

Father, I open my heart to you. Speak to me through the scriptures; the quiet voice of your Holy Spirit; my pastor; my church family; my spouse, children, friends and

neighbors; and through the circumstances of life. I thank you that you will be with me in this life-long pilgrimage.

I thank you too, that the reward of my obedience will far outweigh the satisfactions of the ways of the old man. They will more than compensate me for the pain of forsaking the old ways. Thank you, Father - - in Jesus' Name!"

### Questions for Thought and Discussion

1) What is the meaning of the Greek word "metamorphoo," from which we get the word "metamorphosis," and which is translated "transformed" in II Cor. 3:18?

2) What does it mean that we are being transformed?

3) What does the word "renovated" mean, and how might it apply to this lesson?

4) Which verse that is used here speaks to you most clearly?

5) Have you invited God to start working in your life in a more active way?

6) Which statement best represents your response to this lesson:

a) I agree that today's church has a serious problem in this area.

b) We have some needs but we're not doing as badly as the author suggests.

c) I think that the author is just too pessimistic and that we're really doing quite fine.

7) Is it a sign of personal strength or weakness to *acknowledge* our need to grow in a certain area of life?

8) What do you think of these statements?:

A) "A healthy church will have a vision for Christian maturity. It will commit the necessary time and energy to help bring its members to maturity."

B) "Much of the reason for the ineffectiveness of today's church is that we regard as normal, a very sub-standard level of Christian maturity."

C) "Every Christian needs to be a growing Christian."

D) "A healthy growing Christian will be conscious of areas where God is changing him."

E) "Many Christians are still crawling along like a worm on the ground, loaded down with weaknesses, reoccurring failures, and fears. God wants them to fly through the air like a beautiful butterfly, soaring in the breeze of His Holy Spirit as He leads them in the paths of victory and righteousness."