

# Knowing and Growing

When I was a teenager, I was inspired to follow Jesus, but I didn't really know how. I read my bible and wanted to be holy and please God. But I became very frustrated because I was trying to live up to the high standard of the bible, but by the strength of my human flesh. It was a long list of things to do and don't do that I began to feel overwhelmed by.

When I was 23, I came to understand grace for the first time! The idea that my righteousness, my rightness with God was based on what God did, not on my good deeds. Wow was that freeing! I began to walk with Jesus, and through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come.

As I start my 59<sup>th</sup> trip around the sun, I still at times struggle with what my life should look like. What do I "do" with my life? Work can be very consuming, seasons of life change, we change as we go through life too. But maybe we make that question too complicated. Sure, life is complicated and messy at times but sometimes we just need to keep it simple.

I want to share a simple diagram about the process of growing in obedience. It is a simple feedback loop.



Today's Ted talk is an opportunity to hear from Jesus, to at our lives compared to the word of God and see how we measure up and how we can obey the word so we can understand the next step in each of our lives.

*2 Pet 1:3-9 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

*For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

Knowing Jesus enables us to **participate in the divine nature** – this sounds like something wild, but what does it mean? It is when you become a follower of Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes into your heart to make you a new creation.

Now I've often read this section of Peter's letter before and would think about all of the "adding" I needed to do. So many things to do. Recently as we were studying this passage in the Hochstettler's bible study (which meets Wednesday at 6 at their house) something became apparent. That list in 2 Peter has parallels to the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians chapter 5 verse 16. So, let's read that now.

*Gal 5:16-25 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh craves what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are opposed to each other so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us walk in step with the Spirit.*

Let's look at this list side by side, and as we do ask yourself, what evidence is there of these things in my life? If there is no evidence, then you may be "nearsighted and blind" and living according to your fleshly desires, and not according to God's Spirit. Also, please be asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you about what is your next step of obedience.

<b>2 Pet 1</b>	<b>Gal 5</b>	<b>Defined</b>
Faith		Faith is placing trust, committing to following
Goodness	Goodness	Virtue and holiness in action
Knowledge		Learning about the Lord we follow
Self-control	Self-control	The ability to say NO to our baser desires and lusts
Perseverance	Faithfulness	Believing God is who he says he is and continuing in that belief no matter what
Godliness (walking in heavenly wisdom)	Joy, peace, patience	Living a fruitful, obedient life
Brotherly kindness	Kindness	Tender, benevolent, and useful to others
Love	Love	Self-sacrificial, outward looking

**Faith** is placing trust, and committing to follow Jesus no matter what. (repenting and committing)

**Goodness** is Virtue and holiness in action. For example, caring for a neighbor. Helping out a co-worker

**Knowledge** is Learning about the Lord we follow and what he has said to us. We can do that here or in a small group, but most importantly in our own personal reading and listening to God's word and in prayer.

**Self-control** is The ability to say NO to our baser desires and lusts. This one shows the state of our hearts clearly. If your life shows a lack of self-control you need to draw closer to Jesus.

**Perseverance and faithfulness** is Believing God is who he says he is and continuing in that belief no matter what. How do you respond when life throws crap at you?

**Godliness** is Living a fruitful, obedient life. I think this couples with joy, peace and patience because those are part of the feedback of living a godly life. When you are living an obedient life and responding to circumstances well, the Spirit gives you joy and peace and patience.

**Kindness** is Tender, benevolent, and useful to others. This is SO needed in today's world. Any time I'm at the store or at a restaurant I go out of my way to show kindness.

**Love** is Self-sacrificial, outward-looking care for others.

These character traits Peter talks about are fruit (beneficial results) of the spirit. In past years of my life, I would read this list in 2 Peter 1 and make a checklist of things I should be doing. I mean it says "make every effort" right?

But what kind of work is it?

*Gal 3:3 Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?*

An important point here, I think is to recognize we don't make spiritual fruit grow by human effort.

How do you make fruit grow? You tend to the tree or bush, right? You make sure the soil is good, you water it, and make sure it has good sunlight, enough water, and fertilizer. You may also prune and trim it. But you don't add fruit to the tree, you tend the tree and it bears fruit.

Apple trees do better after a harsh winter, orange trees not so much... So, God plants you where you can bear fruit. (We're not all called to the same ground.) This is a picture of an elderberry bush on our property. We did not plant it; it may be birds planted it. But it gets plenty on sun and water and it seems very happy there.

This is what Kirk has been talking about the past couple of weeks. Knowing Jesus and walking out obedience by the spirit are the food and nutrients that make us grow good fruit.

*Prov 2: 3-5 Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding.*

*Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures.*

*Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you will gain knowledge of God.*

### **Growing in Knowing**

How do we grow in that kind of practical knowledge of God that gives us everything we need for life and godliness? I want to talk about 3 simple reminders which make this possible for every one of us.

- 1. Don't neglect sitting at Jesus' feet**
- 2. After you hear don't put off obedience**
- 3. Be willing to suffer**

#### **1. Don't neglect sitting at Jesus' feet**

*Luke 10:38-42 As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."*

(I suspect Martha said similar things to their earthly father in the past.)

*But the Lord said to her, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”*

You can't obey until you hear. And it is very easy to get caught up in life, even when your making dinner for Jesus. We can't neglect this part. Make listening a habit.

1. Be in church and small groups to study God's word together.
2. Read/listen to the word of God on your own
3. Spend time in prayer and worship daily

Make habits of these first things. Never miss church under normal circumstances. Join a small group bible study and don't miss it. Build good habits like listening to the bible while you are in the car or exercising. Turn on worship music while you are working. Make your habits beneficial to your knowledge of Jesus.

2. Hear and obey - knowledge must lead to action or we may forget we've been cleansed.

In reality in America, we tend to do the first part, listening, in abundance. But we tend to neglect or ignore the second part, doing what is says.

*James 1:25 But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.*

Again, my entire point today is to recognize the Bible isn't a checklist of things we do and don't do. We could know the word of God backward and forwards but neglect the process of living it out. We do, of course need to allow God's word and the Holy Spirit to teach us but then we must ask Jesus to lead us in our next step of obedience.



### 3. Be willing to suffer

Jesus never said anywhere that following him was supposed to be easy. Yes, there is joy and blessing and goodness that follows us as we follow Jesus. But the path is also hard and involves paying a price of sacrifice. Laying down our lives, our wants to follow Jesus.

*Php 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, 11so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*

*Rom 8:17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.*

#### **Fellowship of his sufferings**

How exactly are we called to suffer with Jesus? Our minds immediately go to the punishment he took on the cross and the physical suffering he endured. But there are many ways I think we are called to join with Jesus in suffering that has nothing to do with physical suffering.

- Suffer through difficulty
  - For me, my biggest temptations to disobey Jesus come either when life is currently hard, or the thing Jesus is calling me to do will be hard.
  - We are very prone to choose comfort over difficulty. Do I want to get on the treadmill or watch TV? Do I want to help someone out, or mind my own business?
  - Choosing the difficult path that Jesus calls you to walk is the path that leads to love, joy, peace...godliness.
- Suffer with people

How many of us have people in our lives that we have to suffer with?

  - It could be someone who has physical ailments that they need help carry
  - It could be someone we love who is not saved or is backslidden and making poor choices. We suffer watching their pain as well as the spill-over that comes our way.
  - It could be when we come to understand the depth of pain some in this world are experiencing, and we realize we can't ignore it anymore. For example, how many here have seen the "Sound of Freedom" movie? The main character in that story made a decision to leave his life situation and dedicate himself to trying to save children from human trafficking.
  - Jesus said "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!"
- Suffer till the end
  - We must not give up or give in. Jesus will take care of us, he knows our limits better than we do.

My relationship with Jesus has grown most often during the hard times. Makes me want to stick with Jesus and be a part of what he is doing. (Summary – pray – Gal 6:9)