

GATECITY CHURCH
WE GROW TOGETHER PT. 2 - GROWING IN OUR PERSONAL WALK
MARCH 3, 2024 — HANNAH STEVENS

I. Introduction

- A. Review: Last week, Dustin opened our new series “We Grow Together” with an invitation to grow in freedom.
- B. This week we will look at another aspect of this journey as we examine some grounding principles in how we can grow in our personal walk.
- C. Our framing passage from Ephesians 5 and 6 for this message is:

Ephesians 5:15-17 – “¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

- 1. “Circumspectly” means in a way that is careful and avoids risks.
- 2. To “redeem something” means to buy it back, to regain possession of it.
 - a. To redeem the time is to intentionally walk in wisdom and in submission to God, seeking His will.
- D. To grow in our personal walk, we must have **a growing awareness of God in our day-to-day lives, a growing discernment of His will that guides and leads our actions and choices.**
 - 1. As we grow in our walk, we will discover a deeper revelation of God as a loving Father who wants to connect and a wise Leader who wants to shepherd and guide.
 - 2. These are not just ideas or philosophies to intellectually assent to. They are skills that must be learned! If we want to live empowered, effective, and connected in the Kingdom of God, these two points are very practical keys to keep us on the growing edges of our faith.

II. A Growing Awareness of God in the day-to-day (Loving Father who wants to connect)

- A. We can’t interact with what we are not aware of.
- B. God is attentive to you!

Proverbs 15:3 – “The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.”

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Psalm 14:2 – “The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.”

1. God is looking for the one who seeks him.

C. A loving Father versus a vigilant Cop

Isaiah 30:18 – “Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.”

Psalm 139:4-6 ⁴ Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, Lord, You know it all. ⁵ You have encircled me behind and in front and placed Your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is too high; I cannot comprehend it!”

1. What would it be like to walk continually in the knowledge that His hand of blessing is on you?

2. The example of Brother Lawrence

“I have abandoned all particular forms of devotion, all prayer techniques. My only prayer practice is attention. I carry on a habitual, silent, and secret conversation with God that fills me with overwhelming joy.”

“He does not ask much of us, merely a thought of Him from time to time, a little act of adoration, sometimes to ask for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, at other times to thank Him for the graces, past and present, He has bestowed on you, in the midst of your troubles to take solace in Him as often as you can. Lift up your heart to Him during your meals and in company; the least little remembrance will always be the most pleasing to Him. One need not cry out very loudly; He is nearer to us than we think.”

D. How do we have a growing awareness of God?

1. Look up! Take our eyes off of ourselves, others, and our circumstances.

a. This involves intentionally breaking with the hurriedness and drive of our busy lives and slowing ourselves to remember and connect with the Lord who is always with us, covering us and loving us.

b. Turn inwardly to God throughout the day in the midst of activities, accessing His presence and His grace.

“Men invent means and methods of coming at God's love, they learn rules and set up devices to remind them of that love, and it seems like a world of trouble to bring oneself into the consciousness of God's presence. Yet it

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might be so simple. Is it not quicker and easier just to do our common business wholly for the love of him?"

c. Examples:

- i. Get an app on your phone or set a reminder that returns you to an awareness of God, a mindfulness of Him. Take breaks in your day. Go for a walk in nature. Recenter yourself in His presence and love. Pick an activity that you regularly do and connect returning to an awareness of God to that activity.

III. **A Growing Discernment of His will** (A wise Leader who knows our path and wants to shepherd and guide)

A. God's heavenly wisdom is supreme.

Isaiah 55:9 – "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Romans 11:33 – "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

1. Jesus is the fullest expression of the wisdom of God!

Colossians 2:2-3 – "2 My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

B. Our natural wisdom is insufficient.

1. Worldly wisdom teaches us to confront challenges logically and with our best judgment instead of leaning into God's judgment.

1 Corinthians 3:18-20 – "18 Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; 20 and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."

2. "Wisdom does have goodness to it; it is not without value. It is certainly far better than foolishness, but it is not the ultimate source of reliance. One cannot put his trust in his worldly wisdom." - John W. Ritenbaugh

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3. Historical Example: Thomas Aquinas

“The end of my labors has come. All that I have written appears to be as so much straw after the things that have been revealed to me.”

C. God wants to offer wisdom to us!

1 Corinthians 2:10-12 – “¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”

Psalms 32:8 – “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”

Isaiah 30:21 – “Whenever you are tempted to turn to the right or to the left, you will hear his voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way. Walk in it.’”

1. There is no limit to the degree that God will input heavenly wisdom into the affairs of our life. To the degree we want to be instructed by His counsel, He will fill us with His wisdom.
2. Heavenly wisdom looks like foolishness to the human mind. 1 Corinthians 1:25 (NASB) says, “The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” When Paul speaks of God’s “foolishness,” he does not state that God is foolish. Instead, he is saying that since God’s way of reasoning is in line with things of the spirit, it confounds the logic of this world. It is wiser than human reasoning because spiritual things are wiser than carnal ones.

D. How do we grow in wisdom?

1. Admit that our knowledge is insufficient.
 - a. “Real faith is rooted in being willing to acknowledge our fundamental inability to know much about ultimate things.” - David Benner
2. Pray for wisdom!

Colossians 1:9-10 – “⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

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Proverbs 2:3-6 – “3 Cry out for wisdom, and beg for understanding. 4 Search for it like silver, and hunt for it like hidden treasure. 5 Then you will understand respect for the Lord, and you will find that you know God. 6 Only the Lord gives wisdom; he gives knowledge and understanding.”

3. Surrender our understanding

Proverbs 3:5-7 – “5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil.”

4. Open our spirits to attend and wait on the Lord. He will give heavenly wisdom to the one who asks and waits!

James 1:5 – “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

Psalm 130:5-6 – “5 I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. 6 I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.”

5. How do we know we are walking in heavenly wisdom? By the fruits of our lives.

James 3:13 – “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.”

- E. As we engage in a growing awareness of God in the day-to-day and a growing discernment of His will that guides our choices, we will experience a growing dependence on His strength and power.

IV. Final Invitation

- A. Imitate Jesus

John 5:19 – “Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in the same way.”

1. We are invited to imitate Jesus in the way He lived. Living in an awareness of a Loving Father, living dependent on guiding will in every facet of life, whether sacred or secular.