

Necessity and Process of Spiritual Growth

Servant's Retreat 2012

Introduction

- Necessity of spiritual growth
- Misconceptions about spiritual growth
- Process of spiritual growth
- Principles of spiritual growth



Necessity of Spiritual Growth

- Growth is a vital step in maturity
 - “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby...” (1 Peter 2:1-2)
 - Independent for spiritual nourishment
 - Like physical growth, impaired spiritual growth is concerning
 - God expects us to grow
 - “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)
 - “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4)
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Misconceptions about Spiritual Growth¹

1. Maturity develops naturally/automatically
 2. Maturity by association
 - Five wise and five foolish virgins (Matt 25)
 - “I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you...they answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “ If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.
(John 8:37-39)
 - “I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.” And they answered and said to Him, ‘Where, Lord?’ So He said to them, ‘Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.’”
(Luke 17:34-37)
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Misconceptions about Spiritual Growth²

3. Maturity comes instantaneously

- Example: St. Paul revelation
- Some people wait for this kind of revelation
- “Maturity” or “Maturing”
 - “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor 3:18)

4. Maturity is designed for the elect few

- “... beloved let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor 7:1)
 - “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality...” (1 Thes 4:3)
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Process of Spiritual Growth

- Invitation
- Detachment
- Assessing Value
- Ascending the heights



Process of Spiritual Growth: Invitation

- Abraham
 - "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you." (Gen 12:1)
- David
 - "So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the Lord said, 'Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!'" (1 Sam 16:12)
- Our invitation was when we were anointed (Baptism/Chrismation)
 - "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal 3:27)
 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor 5:17)



Process of Spiritual Growth: Detachment¹

- Abraham
 - “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3 and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.” (Acts 7:2-4)
 - Detachment of relatives
 - “So Abram said to Lot, ‘Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.’” (Gen 13:8-9)
 - Detachment of earthly possessions



Process of Spiritual Growth: Detachment²

- David
 - “Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.’” (1 Sam 17:45)
 - Detachment of physical ability
 - He learned as a shepherd to lean on God’s strength



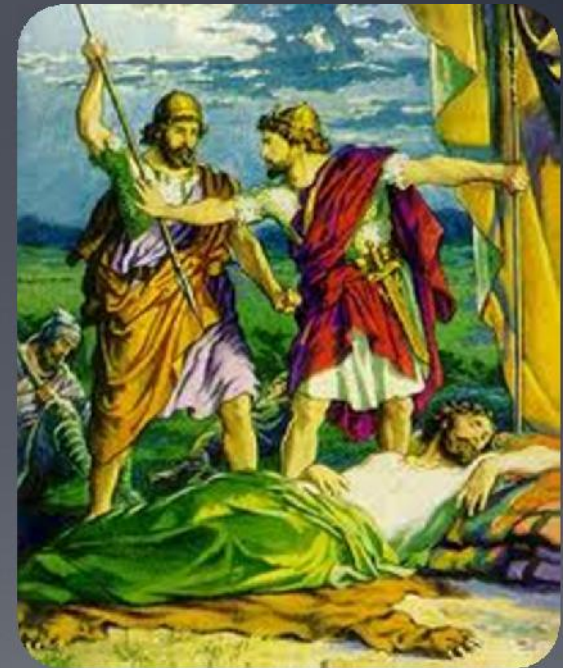
Process of Spiritual Growth: Detachment³

- St. Paul
 - "As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" (Acts 9:3-4)
 - Detachment of the ego



Process of Spiritual Growth: Assessing Value

- David
 - “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.” (1 Sam 24:6)
 - Obedience to God rather than revenge
 - If we want growth we must be prepared to make sacrifices or trade-offs



Process of Spiritual Growth: Assessing Value

- Sacrifices / Trade-offs
 1. Trade affirmation for accomplishment
 - Trade seeking other people's approval for fulfilling God's commandment and enriching your relationship with Him
 2. Trade security for significance
 - Martyrs
 - "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."
(Psa 116:15)
 - Trade our comfort for submission to God (Example: St. Paul's conversion)
 3. Trade personal pleasure for spiritual growth
 - Example: Abraham lets Lot choose his land
 4. Trade acceptable to pursue perfection
 5. Trade your **work** for God for a **walk** with God
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Process of Spiritual Growth: Ascending the Heights

- The higher we climb,
the smaller the world looks
- “Who shall ascend to the
mountain of the Lord? Who
shall stand in His holy place?”
(Psa 23:3)



Principles of Spiritual Growth

- He who does not grow will likely revert
 - Spiritual growth is unlimited because perfection is unlimited
 - Example: Like pursuing the horizon (HH Pope Shenouda)
 - "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" (Luk 17:10)
 - Growth will require seriousness and commitment
 - "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:12-14)
 - Expect growing pains
 - Example: Moses, David, Peter, Thomas, Disciples
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Summary

- Necessity of spiritual growth
 - Growth is necessary for maturing
 - God expects us to grow
 - Misconceptions about spiritual growth
 - Maturity develops naturally/automatically
 - Maturity by association
 - Maturity comes instantaneously
 - Maturity is designed for elect few
 - Process of spiritual growth
 - Invitation; Detachment; Assessing Value; Ascending the Heights
 - Principles of spiritual growth
 - He who does not grow will likely revert
 - Spiritual growth is unlimited
 - Growth requires seriousness and commitment
 - Expect growing pains
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