

HOW CAN YOU GROW IN GRACE?

1. **Spiritual birth** must **precede** spiritual growth 1 Peter 1:23—2:3
 - a. Spiritual growth is all about progressive sanctification.
 - b. While there is nothing wrong with being a babe in Christ (we all begin there!), there is something definitely wrong if you remain a babe. (1 Cor. 3:1-2)
 - c. “When God wants to produce a squash, He takes six months. But when God wants to produce a solid oak tree, He takes a hundred years.” **Which one do you want to be?**
 - d. The Lord has provided everything you need to provide salvation from sin’s penalty; He has also provided everything necessary for you to grow as a child of God. **Every child of God needs to understand the ingredients that are necessary for them to achieve maturity.**

2. **Spiritual growth takes TIME.** (Hebrews 5:12)

3. **Spiritual growth takes TRUTH.** (Hebrews 5:12-13)
 - a. 1 Peter 2:2: As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.

 - b. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15,) (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

4. **Spiritual growth requires spiritual TEACHERS.** (Heb. 5:12-13)
 - a. God has given to you the Holy Spirit as your inner and ultimate teacher. (1 Cor. 2:12)
 - b. The Lord wants you to know the truth and He is willing to personally teach you through His Spirit who indwells you.
 - c. Always pray for spiritual understanding and enlightenment like the Psalmist said in Ps. 119:18
 - d. God also gave Teachers for the Students (Eph. 4:11-15 - 2 Tim. 4:2-4)
 - e. **If a church cannot present the Gospel to you clearly enough so that you can be saved, it will not provide you with the sound biblical doctrine you need to grow.** (The GFJ)
 - f. God provides “tests” for believers to give us opportunities to apply His word. Heb. 5:12-13 The word “unskillful” in verse 13 comes from the Greek word apeiros which means “without experience” or “no trial.” (Jam. 1:2-4) (1 Peter 1:3-7)
 - g. **STORY: (Tiger in your tank or Catfish)**

God allows trials in your life to keep you dependent on Him and growing in grace in order to make you more like His Son. This reminds me of the story about codfish, where, in the northeastern United States, these fish are not only delectable but are a big commercial business. At one point, the supply of such fish could not keep pace with the demand, especially the demand for fresh cod. At first, suppliers would freeze the fish and ship them to various places, but the freezing process took away much of

the flavor. So they experimented with shipping the fish alive in tanks of seawater, but this proved to be even worse since it was not only very expensive but by the time of the cod arrived, they were soft and mushy. Finally, one creative person solved the problem with an innovative idea. The codfish were placed into a tank of water along with their natural enemy—the catfish. From the time the cod left the East Coast until they arrived at their western destinations, the catfish chased the cod all over the tank so that the cod were as fresh as they were when they were first caught! There was no loss of flavor and their texture was not adversely affected. If anything, the cod were better than before. (story from GFJ)

Could it be, dear believer that God has allowed a catfish in your tank to keep you turning in faith to the Lord and growing spiritually, instead of getting soft, mushy, and flavorless? Can you name the catfish in your tank? Perhaps you live with one of them? Or is it someone you work with whose irritating presence drives you to knees your knees every day? Isn't it time to stop the griping, complaining, and pity-party, and start thanking God for the catfish in your tank and how "all things are working together for good" (Rom. 8:28) in your life? **"Someone has said that a Christian is like a teabag; he's not of much use until he's been through some hot water."**

5. **Spiritual growth requires TRUST.** (Hebrews 11:6)

- a. (Heb. 5:14) Walking by faith means putting God's word into practice.
- b. (Phil. 4:6-7) (2 Cor. 1:3-4) (1 Cor. 10:13)
- c. And He said to me, Do you know that Geico can save you 15%? Everyone knows that. **But did you know "His grace is really sufficient for you, for His strength is made perfect in weakness?" (2 Cor. 12:9-10) (Isa. 26:3-4) (Prov. 3:5-6) (Rom. 10:17) If you are not hearing, you are not growing.**

6. **Spiritual growth requires TRAINING**

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Even the child of God must be trained.

2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.