

REDEEMING QUALITIES:
Learning to Share Our Mission



Grow

GROW BY EXAMPLE

In order to allow time for discussion, only portions of Hebrews 11 and 12 are included here. By taking time throughout the week to read these chapters in their entirety, your study will be enhanced.

- ◆ As you read the passages below:
 - Ask God to reveal to you the connection between faith and growth;
 - Mark any words and phrases that indicate spiritual growth;
 - Note examples of God’s grace and human response.

Hebrews 11:1-12, 17-19, 23-28

¹Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. ²Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

³By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.

⁴It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel’s offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us by his example of faith.

⁵It was by faith that Enoch was taken up to heaven without dying—“he disappeared, because God took him.” For before he was taken up, he was known as a person who pleased God. ⁶And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

⁷It was by faith that Noah built a large boat to save his family from the flood. He obeyed God, who warned him about things that had never happened before. By his faith Noah condemned the rest of the world, and he received the righteousness that comes by faith.

⁸It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. ⁹And even when

he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise. ¹⁰ Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

¹¹ It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. ¹² And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

¹⁷ It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God’s promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, ¹⁸ even though God had told him, “Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.”

¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

²³ It was by faith that Moses’ parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king’s command.

²⁴ It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. ²⁵ He chose to share the oppression of God’s people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward. ²⁷ It was by faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible. ²⁸ It was by faith that Moses commanded the people of Israel to keep the Passover and to sprinkle blood on the doorposts so that the angel of death would not kill their firstborn sons.

⁷“... blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. ⁸They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.”
(Jeremiah 17:7-8)

- ◆ As you read these examples of growth in faith and think about your own growth in faith, what comes to mind?

GROW IN WAYS THAT MATTER

This week, we are exploring John 15:1-16; 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; and 1 John 1:5-10.

- ◆ As you read each of these passages:
 - Ask God to reveal to you the connection between fellowship, trust, confession and growth;
 - Mark any words and phrases that indicate welcome and spiritual growth;
 - Note examples of God’s grace and human response.

Read Jesus’ words in John 15:1-16:

¹“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.

⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

¹⁰When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ¹²This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to

Now as we move into Paul's instruction to the Corinthians, it is helpful to know that the church at Corinth was weak, and Paul was deeply concerned about their growth in the faith. His words of love and exhortation in this letter offer a clear example of his commitment to the truth of God's Word. In the passage below, Paul offers counsel to the believers to grow in their faith so that they are able to stand firm. . .
2 Corinthians 1:3-11



³All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. ⁴He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. ⁵For the more we suffer for Christ, the more God will shower us with his comfort through Christ. ⁶Even when we are weighed down with troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation! For when we ourselves are comforted, we will certainly comfort you. Then you can patiently endure the same things we suffer. ⁷We are confident that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in the comfort God gives us.

⁸We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. ⁹In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead. ¹⁰And he did rescue us from mortal danger, and he will rescue us again. We have placed our confidence in him, and he will continue to rescue us. ¹¹And you are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers for our safety.

In order to stand firm in our faith, we need to make a decision about how we will handle difficulties, struggles, suffering, and trials. Throughout his writings, Paul shares openly with his readers about his own difficult experiences. He also shares the key to dealing with such issues.

- ◆ What is the key that he presents to the Corinthians? In what way is that key relevant to you personally?

- ◆ What is your hope as you think about maturing in the faith?

- ◆ Write down some of the spiritual cravings you experience.

In Week 4, we focused on the 11th and 12th chapters of the book of Hebrews. This week, we look at a preface to those faith examples. . .

Hebrews 6:1-3

¹ So let us stop going over the basic teachings about Christ again and again. Let us go on instead and become mature in our understanding. Surely we don't need to start again with the fundamental importance of repenting from evil deeds and placing our faith in God. ² You don't need further instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³ And so, God willing, we will move forward to further understanding.

- ◆ How is God speaking to you personally, and as a congregation, in this passage?

Last week, we read the beginning of Paul's counsel to the church in Corinth regarding their spiritual growth. Now let's read the counsel he gives as he closes that letter. . .

2 Corinthians 13:5, 11

⁵ Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.

¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, I close my letter with these last words: Be joyful. Grow to maturity. Encourage each other. Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you.

⁷ "... blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. ⁸ They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit."
(Jeremiah 17:7-8)

- ◆ What challenges you personally, and your congregation, as you read Paul’s counsel? How do you plan to meet those challenges?

Throughout his writings, we see the importance Paul places on spiritual growth. Refusing to allow imprisonment to take his focus, he reflects spiritual maturity to the Philippian church – and gives us a glimpse of WELCOME blossoming into GROWTH. . .

Philippians 4:4-13

⁴ Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

⁶ Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

⁸ And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

⁹ Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰ How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn’t have the chance to help me. ¹¹Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. ¹² I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. ¹³ For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

- ◆ What characteristics of spiritual maturity are evident to you as you read Paul’s counsel to the Philippian believers?



- ✚ As we wrap up the GROW section of this study, meet with your prayer partner this week to intentionally give thanks to God for the nourishment He provides for you personally and for the congregation of Redeemer, Gastonia.

- ◆ As you think about growing by example, growing in ways that matter, and growing to maturity, write down specific ways your concept of GROWTH has changed over the past six weeks.

- ◆ Now write down the connection you are seeing between WELCOME and GROWTH – and how that connection is significant for your congregation.

It is my prayer that your craving for the nourishment that Christ offers continues to increase as your growth leads you to fulfill the mission He has given you. May you be open to God's mighty power at work within you, accomplishing more than human minds can think or hearts can imagine as you make every plan and action a genuine response to God's grace.

²⁰ Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

²¹ Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

⁷ "... blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. ⁸ They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7-8)