# Growing in the Lord

*The purpose of this sermon is to encourage the listener to grow in the Lord by imitating Jesus, growing closer to the goal of perfect emulation though self-realization and achieving goals are keys to long term growth.*

1. INTRODUCTION
   * + - 1. Ever noticed how different two people can be?

One can be driven, unfaltering, purposeful

Another can be carefree, flippant, erratic

Reminds me of the Animaniacs, Pinky and the Brain skits

Every show was the same:  
Pinky “What are we going to do tonight?  
The Brain “The same thing we do every night, Pinky. Try to take over the world.”

While that is just a silly show, what would God have us be in relation to our service to him?

God: What are you going to do today?

Us: The same thing I do every day, keep your commandments and do what is pleasing in your sight. (1 John 3:22)

Unlike the Brain who was always thwarted at the brink of success, I want each of us to be successful in keeping God’s commandments and being pleasing in his sight.

So we can live in full confidence knowing that we abide in God and he in us – 1 John 3:24  
“Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.” ESV

That we will see Him face to face after this life is over (Matthew 5:8; Revelation 22:3-4; Psalm 17:15)

Nathan’s sermon last week on the topic keeping the commandments and seeking to be pleasing to God left us with a tall order

* + - * 1. I want to focus on effective methods to accomplish this goal

When we think of examples in the Bible of individuals who were purpose driven, who better to look at than Jesus?

1. Jesus
   1. Purpose
      * + 1. Jesus came to this earth with a simple purpose: “…to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)
          2. This was what his Father, who sent him, desired him to do: “For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” (John 3:17 ESV)
   2. Jesus always did what was pleasing to his Father (John 8:29), even when difficult:
      * + 1. Jesus’s message in John 10 was hard for people to except

Jesus was the Good Shepherd who was willing to lay down his life for his sheep

Jesus was recognized by His Father because of his willingness to die (John 10:17)  
“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.” ESV

Jesus was charged from His Father to do so (John 10:18)  
“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” ESV

This message confused the people

How/why would the Son of God die for His sheep?

Some said he was insane, crazy, even demon possessed

* + - * 1. Jesus submission to God’s will confused his closest disciples, those who knew him best – Matthew 16:(13-20)21-23  
           “From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” ESV

Peter’s mind was not focused on the things of God

It was focused on the things of Man

Was this easy for Jesus to do?

* + - * 1. Jesus was not a drone, mindlessly implementing God’s will

It was a choice (John 5:30)  
“I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” ESV

God’s will was difficult at times – Matthew 26:36-39  
“Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” ESV

John 17, Jesus’ prayer on unity was made during this same time frame

Jesus was submissive to God’s will, humble though he was God even to the point of death (Philippians 2:6-8)

He was tempted and tested in every way fulfilling His Father’s will so He could help us fulfill our Father’s will (Hebrews 2:18;4:15-16)  
“For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.” ESV  
“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” ESV

* 1. What are we to do with Jesus Example? We are to imitate him!
     + - 1. Philippians 2:1-11 (from HCSB)

We are to have the same mindset or attitude as Jesus

Jesus was equal with God but did not use it to his advantage

Assumed the form of a slave

Humbled himself to the point of death

As a result, God lifted him up

Similarly if we humble ourselves God will lift us up (John 4:10)  
“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” NKJV

God gave us several examples of people emulating Jesus, perhaps none better documented than Paul’s efforts

* + - * 1. Paul:

Paul imitated Christ – 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1  
“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for God’s glory. Give no offense to the Jews or the Greeks or the church of God, just as I also try to please all people in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, so that they may be saved. Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.” HCSB

Galatians 2:20 – Paul had crucified his own interests *(How?!?)*  
“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” ESV

Worked diligently with clear intent – 1 Corinthians 9:24-27  
“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” ESV

The goal does not come without focused effort

The goal can be lost without continued focused effort

We know this physically do we not? Which of us can train for some type event then sit on the couch all day long for months and then be ready for that event even if we were ready months ago?

How do we train so we can obtain the goal?

1. Putting on the Mind of Christ
   1. Starts with your thoughts
      * + 1. Proverbs 23:7 “…as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he.” NKJV
          2. 2 Corinthians 10:5-6 “…bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ…” NKJV
   2. Which changes your actions
      * + 1. Romans 13:11-14 – Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on Christ, making no provision for the flesh  
             “Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” ESV
          2. Ephesians 4:22-24 – “…put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” ESV
          3. Galatians 3:27 – “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ like a garment.” HCSB

This can be an overwhelming goal, especially when we think of simply changing clothes, one day I am carnal the next I am dead and only Christ lives in me?

While there is an instant change made when putting on Christ, your sins are instantly washed away, your transformation to become Christ like is a work in progress.

* 1. Growth

You have to grow into your new clothes, into being Christ like

* + - * 1. Paul:

As strong as he was, was still growing – Philippians 3:8b-12  
(ESV “press on” HCSB “make every effort”)  
“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” ESV

He grew because he was always looking forward – Philippians 3:13  
“Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead…” ESV

He kept his eye on the prize – Philippians 3:14  
(ESV “press on” HCSB “pursure”)  
“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” ESV

* + - * 1. Peter admonishes us of the need to grow – 2 Peter 3:18  
           “…grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” ESV
        2. 2 Peter 1:5-11

Peter tells us things to grow into and focus on

If we focus on these things, we will have an eternity with our Savior

The desire to grow alone is insufficient

1. Goals
   * + - 1. Have you grown in the Lord since this time last week? Last month? Last Year? Last decade?
         2. How do you know? Without effort you could be backsliding or stagnant – Hebrews 5:12-6:2  
            “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.  
            Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.” ESV
   1. Start with Humility (Introspection)
      * + 1. 2 Timothy 2:15  
             “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” ESV

KJV – “Study to shew thyself approved” – I think either the meaning is lost or it is insufficient

Yes, study is clearly involved, but also knowing yourself to know where you are weak

* + - * 1. If you do not know where you are, how will you get to where you need to go?
        2. If you will not take time to be honest and then be honest with yourself?

How will you present yourself to God? (2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 14:12; Matthew 12:36-37)

How will you ask for help of God? (Hebrews 4:16)

How will you ask for help of your brothers and sisters? (James 5:16)  
“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” ESV

* + - * 1. James 4:10 – “Humbles yourself in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up.” NKJV
  1. We can set goals to accomplish our needed growth in the Lord

Accomplish many tasks with the same action, work smarter not harder

* + - * 1. Goal – Know Jesus, Love Jesus and Love God’s Children

Know Jesus – 1 John 2:3  
“And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.” ESV

Love Jesus – John 14:15  
“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” ESV

Love God’s Children – 1 John 5:2  
“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.” ESV

* + - * 1. Keep His commandments!

What are the commandments?

Which ones? – 2 Timothy 3:16-17  
“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” ESV

Which ones? “Study to shew thyself approved” 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV

1. Conclusion
   * + - 1. Exercise the body profits a little, exercise toward Godliness is good in all things (1 Timothy 4:8)  
            “…while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.” ESV

My phone can tell you everything I ate for the past 3 weeks

It can tell you exactly what exercises I did for the past several months

Why?

I have set weight loss and physical fitness as goals

I need to know where I was, where I am, and where I will be to see if my actions are sufficient or if I need to change my patterns

What does my phone or anything say about the more important thing, my Spiritual growth?

* + - * 1. I urge you to make tangible goals for growth

Start with an honest evaluation of yourself

This evaluation should not depress you or overwhelm you

It is not to compare yourself to others – just you!

Make specific goals with planned actions to facilitate growth

For each person these goals will be different

Be SMART in your goal making, do not set a goal you cannot accomplish or if you miss a single action will not be able to recover

Be willing to change the actions to meet the overall goal

Share your goals and actions with someone so they can help you (this includes God – Hebrews 4:15-16)

Philippians 4:13 – “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” ESV

* + - * 1. We can keep God’s commandments and be pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:22)
        2. Where are you in your spiritual journey? Are you closer today than yesterday to be able to say:  
           “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 ESV
      1. 2015/02/15 Church w/ simple PowerPoint