

### 1-2-3 John, Part 5 – Know God – Grow Spiritually

The third test that we know God is, “Are you growing spiritually?” It is initially not clear if John was speaking of different age groups or spiritual stages. Due to his choice of words, it would be easy to think he was addressing different age groups. As you consider the context of the verses, it becomes obvious that he is speaking to three spiritual stages of growth. Many of us have known individuals that were mature beyond their age. We also know some who never seem to grow up.

**1 John 2:12–14 NKJV** I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. <sup>13</sup>I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

The three spiritual stages of growth are little children, young men, and fathers. He writes each of them twice. This dual address is given to strengthen the message and increase their spiritual growth and relationship with the Father. Regardless of the degree of personal spiritual maturity, John is driving home the necessity for spiritual growth. We all go through stages of growth in Christ. It is necessary in our walk with God to confirm our relationship and knowledge of God over and over again.

- **John is saying:** *“I am writing this so that you will grow and grow in Christ.”*
- **Then he reemphasizes this:** *“I have written the first part of the letter so that you grow and grow in Christ.”*

#### **Let’s combine both encouragements for each stage of spiritual growth.**

- To the **little children** or the newborn Christians...
  - Your sins are forgiven for His name’s sake
  - You have known the Father
- To the **young men** or mature believers
  - You have overcome the wicked one.
  - You are strong.
  - You have the Word of God in you.
- To **spiritual fathers** or the spiritually mature
  - You have known God and have been faithful from the beginning.
  - You have a deep and rich knowledge of God

How do you know that you really know God? Are you growing spiritually? Can you see personal progress and growth in Christ? What does that mean? Have you grown in the knowledge of the Lord? Are you growing spiritually or are you still spiritually immature? Is your faith stronger? Has there been changes in your character and attitude? What has God done that has caused growth, maturity, and development in Christ?

When you really know Christ, you will have some spiritual growth. You will develop and mature stage by stage. There will be progress. This is not just sanctification, it is also growing in the power and knowledge of Jesus Christ and His word. Have you grown in Christ since you were saved? Some families have a growth chart for their children. They evaluate how much they weigh and how tall they are. They keep records of education and accomplishments. If you have grown in Christ, you will know that you know God. You will

become convinced that you are a child of God. If you have not grown in Christ, you do not know God. Everyone who is truly converted will grow in Christ. Conversion means: *to change over; to become a new person; to be born again; to exchange the old life without Christ for the new life with Christ.*

You will have a testimony of your salvation and faith. Everyone that is truly born again in Christ, begins to live and walk in newness of life in Christ. You did not live and walk in Christ before your salvation. You start following Christ, growing spiritually and focusing upon Him. You grow in Christ, in faith, and in the word of God. Spiritual growth is a natural process of knowing God. Take a closer look at these stages of spiritual growth. This applies to every stage of a believer's growth. This message is for all believers regardless of their maturity, strength, or weakness.

### **First, there are the little children.**

The little children have just received Jesus Christ and start following Him. They simply know that their sins are forgiven. If you are a newborn Christian, you need to remember that your sins are forgiven. You are no longer guilty of your past sins. The condemnation for sin has been laid on Christ.

**Romans 8:1 NKJV** There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

The punishment for sin has been laid upon Jesus Christ. He has taken away your sins, and has borne the condemnation and punishment for them. You have been cleansed of sin and you are forgiven. John says: "We are forgiven for His name's sake." God has forgiven our sins for Christ's sake. We are not worthy to receive forgiveness, but God cleanses us for Christ's sake or on the account of Christ.

### **Your sins are forgiven "For Christ's sake."**

You have entered a new covering and blessing in Christ. This blessing and covering is available no other way. God does this for Christ's sake. Young believers must remember that their sins are forgiven. When Satan tries to bring the condemnation of your old life before you, just remember what Jesus Christ has done for you. Keep your mind and heart focused on the fact that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins. Guard against returning to the world and its enticements.

**Ephesians 1:7 AMP** In Him we have redemption (deliverance and salvation) through His blood, the remission (forgiveness) of our offenses (shortcomings and trespasses), in accordance with the riches and the generosity of His gracious favor, which He lavished upon us...

### **Second, John addressed "young men" or maturing believers in the church.**

#### **Remember how far you have come and remember your victories.**

- They fought and have overcome the wicked one.
- They have a testimony of victories attained.
- They came out of every imaginable sin.
- They had evil and immoral thoughts and practices.
- They were looking and lusting.
- They were gossiping and backbiting.
- They were full of hate, stealing, lying, cheating, pride, arrogance, covetousness, hoarding, and anger.

They have overcome many temptations. Temptations may not strike as often now. It has

been a difficult struggle and sometimes a fierce battle, but you have become an overcomer.

### **Do you remember how you have overcome?**

Just because you have grown spiritually does not mean that the enemy has stopped attacking. Satan does not want to lose, and he will not stop. He wants to cause you as much pain as possible. The attacks will come in various ways. They are not the same as when you were a child. You have to stay strong and not be caught off guard. Remain strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

### **How do believers overcome Satan?**

● They overcome by drawing near to God, by praying and asking for wisdom.

**James 4:7 ESV** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

**2 Peter 2:9 NKJV** The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations

● They overcome by using God's Word, quoting it over and over in their minds to conquer the temptation.

**Luke 4:8 NKJV** Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written."

To overcome, you need to know what God's word says.

● They overcome by learning and knowing that God allows temptation to teach endurance.

**James 1:2-3 NKJV** My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

● They overcome by not yielding to sin.

**Romans 6:13 NKJV** Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

● They overcome by being clothed with the armor of God.

**Ephesians 6:13 NKJV** Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

● They overcome by being on guard and watching for the tempter's schemes.

**1 Peter 5:8 NKJV** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

**2 Peter 3:17 NKJV** ...beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.

● They overcome by not giving place to the devil.

**Ephesians 4:26-27 NKJV** "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

● They overcome by not giving in to the enticement of sinners.

**Proverbs 1:10 NKJV** If sinners entice you, Do not consent.

● They overcome by not entering into the path of the wicked.

**Proverbs 4:14 NKJV** Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.

● They overcome by Christ's blood and their confession.

**Revelation 12:11 NKJV** And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

### **Third, John spoke to spiritual fathers.**

These are believers who are spiritually mature. These are believers with a deep and rich knowledge of God. This was written to those who have walked faithfully for many years. You

have a long history with God and have faithfully and diligently served Him. You have stayed in the Word of God and have learned to walk in prayer. You fellowship and commune with God and know the fullness of the Spirit and the joy of the Lord. You have committed your life to minister to the needs of those around you. You have a living testimony of faithfulness. You have given all you are and have to Christ.

If you are spiritually mature you must never forget where you came from. Never forget how you came up in Christ. Remember that you did not know it all. Remember that the race is not over. Keep on growing in the knowledge of God.

**When we become more spiritually mature, we need to keep remembering our relationship to God.**

**1 John 2:14 NKJV** I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

This has been written to stir up our relationship with the Father. No matter what stage of spiritual growth, you must never forget what you know and what you have. You have the greatest privilege of knowing God Himself. You have been adopted into God's family and are His son or daughter.

**God is our Father.**

Don't forget that God is your Father.

- Bring your needs to Him and trust Him to look after you
- Depend upon Him to teach you and trust His discipline
- Study Him and His Word
- Listen and do what He says
- Fellowship and commune with Him in prayer and worship
- Love Him and receive His love
- Do nothing that would shame Him
- Share with others what a wonderful Father He is

**Romans 8:16-17 NKJV** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

No matter how deep and rich your knowledge of God is, there is so much more to know. Keep on going on.

**Ephesians 4:13 NKJV** Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

**2 Peter 3:18 NKJV** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

**There are three things we must remember.**

- **Remember you are strong.** You are not what you were before you came to Christ. Know your strength and be assured in Christ. Have confidence in the strength you have gained in Christ.
- **Remember where your strength comes from.** The God Who made the universe and all that is in it is on your side. In Christ, you are mighty through God
- **Remember how you became spiritually strong.** Don't forget all of your victories. You are an overcomer through Christ.

**"My strength is in the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:5 NKJV** Our sufficiency is from God...