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Inviting all to **COME** to Christ, **GROW** in faith, and **GO** change the world

Luke 2:52 – “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

A YEAR OF GROWTH 2022

As we enter the new year, there's undoubtedly an emphasis in individuals or companies to make a resolution, to look into whether you want to improve and grow, and how. It is a time of the year where people begin to look towards the future and plan how to grow or move forward. How am I going to grow my net worth or my retirement account? How are we going to grow our family? How are we going to fit people into the size house we've got? or the size vehicle we have? Most people have some type of growth plan in their life. But **do you have a spiritual growth plan?**

What is your spiritual growth plan for 2022?

We plan certain things in our life ... vacation, classes in school, job at work ... but what is your **spiritual** growth plan? Sadly, most of us don't give that much thought, at least in terms of planning. We may try some things, we may say we're going to read our Bible more, pray more. It certainly can't hurt. But I think God desires for us to have a spiritual growth plan for our life. Maybe you're a person that's a planner or maybe you fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants. Let's look in **Luke Chapter 2** this morning. This verse talks about the youth of Christ. We don't have a lot of information with respect to Him being a young person ...

Luke 2:52 - “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

Maybe you need a plan, a strategy to grow this year. This verse can be a simple outline for how you want to do that. Here are four practical ways:

Four areas for personal growth...

1--Grow intellectually (wisdom). Somehow we need to get smarter this year. Maybe read books, get some training for a hobby ... somehow stimulate yourself intellectually.

2--Grow physically (stature). Jesus was a young man and physically getting taller. We have been given stewardship over our bodies. Maybe we want to eat better, exercise more, rest more.

3--Grow socially (man). Grow friendships, connect with others and encourage and/or influence others.

4--Grow spiritually (God). We can let some things slide in those first 3 areas, but we can't let this one slide if we want to become all that God wants us to be. We need to take this one seriously. Look with me in the **Book of 2Peter**. Peter finishes this epistle with this verse --

2Peter 3:18 - *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."*

Our ability to glorify God with our life is intimately linked to growing in His grace and knowledge.

So Peter tells us that one of the things that we need to be doing is to be concerned with our spiritual growth. Grow in grace and knowledge. We're never going to get to the place where we've grown as far as we can grow, where we know all there is to know about Christ. The last part is related to the first part of the verse ... our ability to glorify God with our life is intimately linked to growing in His grace and knowledge.

Let's look at another one. Turn to **1Thessalonians Chapter 4**, where Paul writes to the believers at Thessalonica --

1Thessalonians 4:1 - *"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more."*

Paul is beseeching them ... begging, imploring, exhorting ... them to walk as they've been taught in order to please God. **What are we doing to live the life that pleases God?** Paul is begging them to do that so they would grow more and more. Many of you have been in church your entire life and could open the Word of God and teach it. It's not new information that we need, it's growing in what we already know, it's abounding more and more. We never get to the point where we've arrived spiritually. A person of faith never stops abounding in their walk with the Lord. What are you doing to grow your relationship with Christ? How are you intentionally striving to grow in your walk with the Lord? Let's look in the **Book of Jeremiah**. This passage parallels the teaching of **Psalms Chapter 1:1-3**.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 - *"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. 8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."*

Let's talk about this passage. There are **4 important truths as they relate to our spiritual growth** --

Spiritual growth begins with Desire.

Verse 7 – **Who** is your Hope this morning? What or Who are you trusting in? God has given us the awesome gift of being able to choose ... what we trust in, what we hope in. He finishes in **Verse 8** by talking about trees. The trees don't get to choose where they're planted, but we get the privilege of deciding where we're going to plant ourselves. We get a choice about where we receive our nutrients. Are you going to plant yourself near the rivers of water (which are representative of the Lord) or am I going to plant my roots somewhere else? The choice that we make shows our desire.

If God feels far away from you, who moved? You did! You can grow in knowledge and grace as much as you desire to grow. Ever hear the phrase "grow where you're planted"? If you're not growing, it is nobody's fault but yours. You can grow wherever you are. It begins with desire. You have to make a choice about where you're going to be watered. You're either being watered by the Lord or the world. **Who do you want to nourish you?** You've got to make a decision to plant yourself right by the rivers of the Living Water. You alone can make the choice. If you choose the Lord, you will have tremendous benefits!

Spiritual growth results in Depth.

Notice the verse talks about the root system. We have many believers in Christ that have nothing more than a superficial relationship with God. I like to say that they're dating Jesus, just in case another opportunity comes along. When we plant ourselves near the water, the natural result is that our roots go down deep. It's not the pretty leaves on the tree that everybody sees, it's what is underground. I have a tree in my yard with deep roots that have spread to 10-20 feet away from the base. That means it is looking for water. For us, are we rooted solid with a foundation that will hold?

Spiritual growth is unimpacted by times of Drought.

During times of drought, the roots of a tree go down deeper. Do you know what ought to happen in our life in times of drought? We ought to be going deeper. Circumstances shouldn't cause us to sway with every wind of doctrine, we ought to get more solid in our walk with Christ. It also teaches that there is no ideal time for spiritual growth. Guess what? There is no ideal circumstances, no perfect time for us to say when we're going to get serious with God. We need to get involved and grow, whatever our circumstances are. The devil will make sure your life is a mess and keep you in turmoil to keep you from growing. Life just puts piles on top of piles. So we can't blame the circumstances of our life on how committed we are on following Christ. I understand the circumstances of life, but if we simply wait until everything is perfect to commit and get involved, you're just going to be waiting. Plus the fact there are no guarantees on how long we've got here.

Don't allow circumstances in your life to dictate how committed you are to spiritual growth.

Spiritual growth makes you spiritually Durable.

You are fruitful; you continue to produce fruit in your life. It can take the form of many different things, but God has called us to be fruitful. How fruitful are you? How are you changing? Is your character different as you enter 2022 or are you the same as you were in 2021? What fruit are you bringing forth? Let's look at a passage in **Psalms Chapter 92**.

Psalms 92:13-14 – “Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. ¹⁴ They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;”

Maybe you're thinking you've got the 'fat and flourishing' part down! But if you plant yourself in the right spot and grow spiritually, there's a longevity in this fruit-bearing process. It's not only a young person's game. Each of us individually are responsible to grow in our faith. We have a decision to make, don't we? If we're not growing, it's not anybody else's fault. We have to take that responsibility seriously. We have to let God feed us and grow us.

It's the church's responsibility to provide an environment that is conducive to growth. It is the individual's responsibility to plug-in to that environment and grow.

We provide as many opportunities as we can to provide growth. How seriously are you taking it? Did you come ready to grow? Was your heart prepared to receive the seed of God's Word this morning? We don't come to church just because that's what we do. We come to church because God tells us to and the expectation is that we will grow. Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening ... we need to eat to grow, yes? Nobody wants to eat the same meal every day so there are different meals provided. Now what are you going to do with the meal? How are you different after you've receive the meal? You get out of it what you put into it! Plant yourself and begin sucking the nutrients where you are planted.

Our vision as a church is:

Inviting all to **COME** to Christ, **GROW** in faith, and **GO** change the world.

That's why we're here. COME = dealing with the relationship, being saved. We exist together in fellowship. GROW = growth, discipleship. GO = deals with stewardship and ambassadorship. Every member is a minister. Every member is a missionary. We are on the mission field.

Our emphasis in 2022 is emphasizing growth. Not growing financially, physically ... but growing spiritually. If you're increasing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to do the things that God wants you to do. We're going to focus on growing this year.

2022 – Emphasis on growing.

We will be offering several classes this year.

- **Membership Class.**

The first one is going to be in February. It is for people who might be interested in making GBC their church home. If after taking the class someone is not interested in becoming involved here, no problem. They will be encouraged to go *somewhere* and get involved.

- **The Cost of Discipleship.**

This is a new class. The first one will be offered in the Spring. It's for people who desire to be involved in our discipleship ministry, letting them know what is involved and expected of them.

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- **Discipleship 1.**

Many have already been through this class. Discipleship is a one-on-one learning and teaching opportunity with a set of lesson plans. Wherever you are on the spectrum of knowledge, this is recommended for everyone.

- **Discipleship 2.**

Helps believers grow in a deeper knowledge and gives more of the skills needed to grow individually.

- **Living Faith Bible Institute.**

This coming fall, we're going to start a *Living Faith Bible Institute* where there will be an opportunity to earn a 60-hour Associates Degree. It will be online and in person, covering topics such as Foundations, Bible Essentials and Leadership Preparation. Anyone can come. Our goal is to have all of these courses taught in-house by people connected right here at *Grace*. Until we get to that point, we're going to team up with Midtown Baptist. We will have more details about this as we get closer to it, but we expect it to rollout in the fall. These are actual college classes.

Discipleship is NOT simply a matter of Academia or taking a class.

All of these classes are steps on our growth path. I want to be clear: discipleship is not simply a matter of academia. This is a fallacy that many American Christians have fallen into. It's not a matter of taking a class. We need knowledge and information, but ***most growth in your life occurs through application***. We are providing more opportunities for information that you need and then you can apply it to your life. Information without application results in pride. That certainly isn't spiritual growth. ***It's not a linear process. You don't start and get to the end and you're finished. You then start again at the beginning ... to help you apply what you've learned.***

Information without application results in pride.

A universal principle across sports ... the best athletes of any sport, when they go into a slump, when they're having issues with their game ... they've forgotten a simple basic principle. The same goes for spirituality. It may just be that you need to apply some things that you already know. And it's about helping others, discipling others.

Regardless of where we fall on the growth spectrum, what are you doing for others to encourage them?

This is our emphasis for the year: We want to grow.

So what is ***your*** spiritual growth plan for 2022?

Spiritual growth begins with a relationship with Jesus. If there's anyone who doesn't know Jesus as Saviour, God has made a way for you to be saved through Jesus Christ. It requires humility. Our goal is to be able to stand before God with a clear conscience. Scripture says that every single one of us were the [enemies of God](#). Guess what God did? He loved you, He blessed you. Why? So that the goodness of God would lead us to repentance; so we could become a child of God.

The consequence of sin is death. Nothing sinful can be in God's presence. Jesus came for the purpose of making a path back to God. He is the only way to heaven. We can have eternal life through Jesus Christ. If you don't have that assurance of spending eternity in heaven, if you've never trusted Christ as your Saviour, [Click here for information on how to spend eternity in heaven](#). Jesus has the ability to breathe life into your dead soul by trusting Him as Your Saviour, by confessing, repenting and calling upon His name to save you.

† Father, we are thankful for the Lord Jesus. We pray that You would guide, direct and challenge our hearts to grow. Father, I lift up every person here this morning. We all so desperately need You today. There are people here that have known You for decades, who have been living a life pleasing to You, and I pray You would show them how to grow. Maybe those newly saved need to know their next step. I pray that we as a church would provide an environment where people can grow; that we would each take seriously our responsibility to grow and to help others to grow. Thank You for loving us so much that You want to help us grow. Please work in our hearts.

We ask all of these things in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen. †

♪ ♪ [I Love You, Lord](#) ♪ ♪

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[4 ideas for Spiritual New Year's Resolution](#) (<https://www.vbs4ever.com/post/my-resolution>)

The preceding notes were taken from a sermon by Brad Nelson, Pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Lee's Summit, Missouri. The notes are in no way endorsed by Pastor Nelson, but are shared for the benefit of furthering God's kingdom. Feel free to share with anyone you are led by the Spirit to do so. Any errors or discrepancies contained in this document, although not intended, are those of the transcriber.