

Note how specific a PGP needs to be. The more specific it is, the more effective it will be. You are being very intentional about growth when you do a PGP. Now you are ready to do **your** PGP. Use the following form to guide you:

My PGP (Personal Growth Plan):

1. Areas of thankfulness for past growth:

2. Areas of desired growth:

3. From the list above, the one area I have selected for my PGP is:

4. Action steps I will take in order to grow:
 - a. Prayer (always include prayer so that you remember it is ultimately God who *“works both to will and to do for His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13). Try to select a specific passage you can pray into your life.

 - b. My action steps:

5. Consider asking someone to hold you accountable and/or pray for you concerning your PGP.

Final Challenge

Far too many Christians are not living up to their spiritual potential. I do not want to get to heaven and have God say to me, “David, I had so much more for you. You could have grown so much more in Me had you just put forth more effort. Look at all of these things I had for you if you had just been more intentional about your growth.”

For too many Christians expect others to take care of their growth. I hear people say things like “I am just not being fed at that church.” Well, how about learning to feed yourself? Becoming a self-feeding Christian is one of the most important things you can do. **Completing a PGP is a great way to start becoming a self-feeding Christian.**

If this tract has been helpful or if I can help you grow in any way, please feel free to email me at: davidholt@firstfree.org

May God bless you richly as you **“grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 3:17).

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Becoming a Self-Feeder Through a Personal Growth Plan (PGP)

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God wants His people to grow. He does not want us to remain idle. He wants us to always be advancing in our relationship with Him. However, growth does not come easy. It is not a passive process. Like any other area of our life, if we want to grow and mature, we must put forth an active effort. We must be intentional about our spiritual growth. Are you growing? What are you doing to insure your spiritual growth?

This tract will motivate you to grow, provide a biblical basis for growth, expose the biblical benefits of growth, and give you a very practical plan to use in your spiritual growth. Want to grow in the Lord? Want to become a self-feeder? If so, read on.

The Importance of Spiritual Growth

The first step in spiritual growth is to be sure you have a personal relationship with God. You cannot grow in a relationship you do not actually have. Many today are “religious” without having a relationship with the living God. Being baptized, going to church, and trying to live a good life do not insure that you have a relationship with God. **In order to have a relationship with God you must repent of your sins and invite Jesus Christ to be your personal Savior and Lord.**

A relationship with God is much like a marriage. Before marriage, a man and a woman date. As they date, they get to know about one another and thus decide if they want to commit themselves to one another. Many people “date” God by reading the Bible, going to church, and reading books. A couple becomes officially “one” when they go to the altar and say “I Do.” At this point they surrender themselves to one another and commit to a life-long relationship. This relational commitment is “for richer or poorer ... in sickness and in health ... till death do us part.” In a similar way, you become a Christian, a true child of God, when you say “I Do” to God. At the moment you invite Christ into your life, you enter into a personal relationship with God and begin the life-long journey for which you were created.

Have you received Christ? If not, pray this prayer right now and Christ will come into your life: **“Jesus, You died upon a cross, and rose again to save the lost. Forgive me now of all my sin. Come be my Savior, Lord, and Friend. Change my life and make it new. And help me Lord to live for you.”**

Once you know Christ is in your life, now you are ready to grow in that relationship. Once a couple gets married, they begin the adventure of growing in their marriage with one another. Let’s do all we can, to grow as much as we can, in our relationship with the living God.

Jesus summarized it well when He said, **“Behold, I stand at the door (of your life) and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him and he with Me”** (Revelation 3:20). This one verse summarizes the entire Christian life. Jesus stands at the door and knocks on the heart of every person. He doesn’t force Himself into our life because He is a gentleman and gives us all a free will. True love never forces itself on another. True love allows the other the freedom to love back. Jesus loves us with a perfect love. He wants us to use our free will to love Him back.

If we will slow down long enough to hear His voice and open the door of our life, He will gladly come in. When He comes into our life, He forgives us of our sins and begins a relationship with us. When He says he will come in to “dine with us” this is the wonderful word picture of two individuals eating a meal together. When we eat with Jesus we talk to Him, He talks to us, and we grow in our personal relationship with Him. Nothing is more important than to grow in intimacy with Jesus.

The bible repeatedly speaks of the importance of spiritual growth. Meditate on the following verses:

“The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon.” Psalms 92:12

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” 1 Peter 2:2-3

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” 2 Peter 3:17-18

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Ephesians 4:15

“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.” Colossians 1:10

“We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.” 2 Thessalonians 1:3

It is pretty obvious from these passages that God wants us to grow in Him, to mature, to advance, to go deeper in knowledge and character. We are created for God’s glory. It glorifies God when we grow in Him.

The Blessings of Growth

When we obey God's Word He blesses us in many ways. There are many blessings to growing in our relationship with God. Here are a few of the many blessings that God tells us we will experience as we grow in Him:

1. Personal fulfillment. Knowing God and making Him known is our purpose in life. When we are growing in our relationship with God, we are fulfilling the very reason for which we were created, and this gives personal fulfillment. There is great personal satisfaction from looking back over your life and seeing steady and solid growth.

2. Stability in our life. Jesus spoke of 2 kinds of lives: the one built on sand and the one built on the rock (Mathew 7:24-27). The life built on sand falls when the storms come. The life built on the rock stands strong amidst the storms. A growing Christian is a house built on the rock that can remain strong amidst the many storms that come. As we march into the 21st century we can expect many financial, relational, emotional, and moral challenges to come our way. How stable will your house be when these storms come?

3. Improved testimony. Our witness to others increases when we are growing in our relationship with God. The world is full of Christians who are **not** growing and thus **not** setting a positive example of what it means to be a Christ-follower. One of our main reasons for being here on earth is to help others come to know Jesus. Those who do not know Christ need to see Christians who are increasingly growing. Our spiritual growth will not only provide a positive testimony to unbelievers, but it will also provide a positive example to fellow believers.

4. Eternal rewards. God promises eternal rewards to those who faithfully love and obey Him. When we grow in the Lord, our character and godliness increases. *“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come”* (1 Timothy 4:8). Randy Alcorn's writings have enlightened the body of Christ that there will be differences of reward and responsibility in heaven. Will you receive eternal rewards? You will if you grow in Him.

Who is Responsible for This Growth?

Since the Bible makes it clear that we are to grow in the Lord and that there are many benefits to spiritual growth, let us now examine who is responsible for this growth. Is it God or us? Yes! **God is responsible for our growth and so are we.** There is a supernatural and mysterious partnership between God and us that causes growth to take place. There is God's part and there is our part. We cannot do God's part, and God will not do our part.

In the same way that salvation (i.e. justification) involves God's part and our part, so does our growth (i.e. sanctification) involve God's part and our part. In justification, God is the One who elects (Ephesians 1:4), predestines (Romans 8:29), and gives us the gift of faith. At the same time, we are the one to open the door (Revelation 3:20), call upon the name of the Lord (Romans 10:9), and receive Christ (John 1:12). In case

you are wondering, I am a “Calminian”: a Calvinist when it comes to God's part and an Arminian when it comes to man's part. The bible teaches both. I believe both.

In sanctification growth, God is the One who calls us (Galatians 5:8), motivates us (Philippians 2:13), convicts us (John 16:8), and disciplines us when we get out of line (Hebrews 12:5-6). At the same time, we are the one to respond to His call, confess our sins (1 John 1:9), obey Him (1 John 3:24), and put works to our faith (James 2:12).

The verse that best describes this partnership is Philippians 2:12-13: *“Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.”* We are to continually work at growing, while trusting God to work within us the needed motivation and power to grow. He does this through the inner working of the Holy Spirit. Once again, spiritual growth involves God's part and our part.

So, what does this divine partnership look like in daily living? As for God's part, we can rest and relax knowing that God is always at work in our lives. Even when we think nothing is happening, God is at work orchestrating things to facilitate our growth. Jesus said, *“This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain - first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come”* (Mark 4:26-29). What a great picture of our growth! We are the plant growing, even when we don't realize it. Even while we are sleeping, God is at work in our lives. Be confident of this and rest in this great truth. God is more interested in your growth than you are.

As we rest in God's part, we are also to work hard at our part. *“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling”* (Philippians 2:12) means that we put forth an active effort to grow. We are called to be very intentional about our growth. Just as muscles do not get bigger without exercise, neither do we grow without spiritual exercise.

In order to spiritually grow, we must put forth a very active effort, while praying and resting in God's sovereignty!

Spiritual growth is very similar to physical growth. Physically we each went from a baby to a child to an adolescent to an adult. The Bible says we do the same spiritually. The Apostle John provides the key to spiritual growth in 1 John 2:12-14. As you meditate on this very important passage, notice the progression of growth and what is involved at each stage:

*“I write to you, **dear children**, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name. 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 evil one. I write to you, **dear children**, because you have known the Father. I write to you, **fathers**, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”*

The “spiritual child” simply knows his sins are forgiven. This is the time when someone has just received Christ and enjoys feeling clean because his sins are forgiven. The “spiritual adolescent” (ie. “young men”) is strong in the Word and has overcome the evil one. This is the stage when one encounters spiritual warfare and has to be in the Word on a regular basis. Finally, becoming a “spiritual adult” (i.e. “father”) involves *“knowing Him who has been from the beginning.”* This is the person who has trusted the Lord through thick and thin. They know God's character and hold fast to Him no matter what. In addition, to be a “father” one must have children. We produce spiritual children by leading others to Christ and helping them grow.

Where are you in your growth? Are you a child, an adolescent (young man), or an adult (father)? If you can identify at what growth stage you are at, then you can determine what it takes to go to the next level of maturity.

Another helpful passage about spiritual growth is 2 Peter 1:5-9 where Peter says we are to *“add to our faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* This passage clearly gives us ingredients in growth. This passage may also suggest stages of growth. In other words, you begin with faith, then work in increasing in knowledge, add self-control as temptations come, etc. The ultimate goal is certainly love because *“the greatest of these is love”* (1 Corinthians 13:13). As you think about your personal growth plan (PGP), you might consider where you are in this progression of qualities and the next quality you need to “add.” This can be a great way to identify the area you would choose for your PGP.

Our Personal Growth Plan (PGP)

Let's review. We have established how important it is that we grow in our personal relationship with Christ. We have also discovered that God does indeed help us grow. At the same time, we must do our part to grow. God wants each of His children to learn to be a self-feeder. *“But you, dear friends, **build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit”*** (Jude 20). If you become a self-feeder there is no limit to how much you can grow in the Lord for the remainder of your life.

You are now ready to work on your PGP. A PGP is just what it says: our plan to personally grow in the Lord. Doing a PGP is our way of saying, “I am going to do everything I can to grow in this specific area of my life.” A PGP identifies an area of desired growth, while also establishing a very specific plan to grow in that area.

In order to do a PGP, follow the steps given below.

1. Be sure you have received Christ.
2. Thank God for your salvation and the many ways He has worked in your life. Put down on paper some of the ways you have grown in your relationship with God. I would bet that many took place through difficult times. Often we grow the most during trying times.
3. List several areas in which you need to grow in your relationship with God. This could be an area of sin that you want to overcome. Or, it could be an area in which you simply want to grow more (i.e. witnessing, hearing God's voice, walking by faith, fasting, and so on). If you really want to get bold, you could ask someone close to you to suggest some areas of needed growth. It takes great humility to ask someone else where they think you should grow, but remember God says, *“He gives grace to the humble”* (James 4:6).
4. From the list in #3, select **one** area of growth that you will give attention to. I suggest a PGP for about 3 months of time. After 3 months, either plan some new steps for the same area or select an entirely new area of growth. For the sake of illustrating how to do this, let's assume that your area of desired growth is witnessing. Your PGP could read: “Improving my effectiveness in personal evangelism.”
5. Once your area of growth is decided, now you are ready to put some very specific action steps to your area of desired growth. For example, assuming your PGP has to do with witnessing, here are some possible action steps:

a. *I will pray daily for God to give me a greater heart of compassion for those who do not know Him. I suggest selecting a passage of scripture to pray into your life. For example, for compassion you could pray Colossians 3:12-14.*

b. *I will pray daily for specific people I know that are not saved. You would make a list of about 10 people you would pray for each day.*

c. *I will read 2 books about evangelism.*

d. *I will intentionally initiate a spiritual conversation with at least 1 person each week. Don't be surprised if this comes from the lost people you are praying for.*

e. *By the end of the 3 month period, I will seek to share the complete plan of salvation with at least one person.*