**SERMON OUTLINE**

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| **SERMON TITLE:** | How to Be a Growing Christian |
| **SERMON REFERENCE:** | 1 John 2:12-14 |
| **LWF SERMON NUMBER:** | #2105 |
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1. INTRODUCTION
   1. Are you a growing Christian?
      1. Are you moving toward maturity?
         1. You can only be young once, but you can be immature for a long, long time.
      2. The problem in many of our churches is that there are people who have been born again, but they cease to grow.
   2. Fellowship in churches comes when we grow.
   3. 1 John 2:12-14
      1. Three categories of persons are mentioned in these verses:
         1. Children
         2. Young men
         3. Fathers
      2. John is talking about growing into maturity; coming from childhood into fatherhood.
   4. What are the marks of maturity?
      1. Spiritual health is not necessarily a mark of maturity.
         1. A young child can be perfectly healthy, but he’s not mature.
         2. A person can have spiritual health but not be mature.
      2. Having spiritual gifts is not necessarily a mark of maturity.
         1. A person can be greatly gifted and not be mature.
         2. Samson was a man with great gifts, but he was very immature.
         3. Paul spoke of the immaturity of the gifted Corinthian church.
            1. 1 Corinthians 1:7
            2. 1 Corinthians 3:1
      3. Maturity is not the same thing as spirituality.
         1. A person can get their heart right with God and be filled with the Holy Spirit and be instantly spiritual, but that does not make them a mature Christian.
      4. Maturity is Christ-likeness.
         1. Ephesians 4:13
            1. The word “perfect” here does not mean sinless but mature.
         2. Maturity is measured by whether we are becoming more like Jesus.
            1. This was the goal of Paul’s ministry.
            2. Colossians 1:28

The word “perfect” here also means “mature.”

* 1. Maturity is a lifelong process.
     1. No one is instantly mature.
  2. In our Scripture today, the Apostle John shows us how to move into maturity, from childhood to adolescence to fatherhood.

1. the thrilling wonders of childhood (1 john 12:1)
   1. There are joys, thrills and excitement when God brings a baby into a home.
   2. Things we know about little children and babies:
      1. They are selfish.
         1. If you take something from them, they can go into a rage.
      2. They are crude and rude.
      3. They are lazy.
         1. They lie around the house and don’t help clean or cook.
      4. They are inconsiderate.
         1. They’ll wake up their parents in the middle of the night.
      5. They are mean.
         1. They will bite one another.
   3. Have you ever heard anyone who looked at a little child say that if that’s a human being, then they didn’t want to be one?
      1. Some people look at a baby Christian and say, “If that is a Christian, then they don’t want to be one.”
      2. Baby Christians have to grow up.
         1. No one is saved full grown.
            1. Regardless of our age when we get saved, we are a babe in Christ.
   4. A great church is not a church where everybody is a mature Christian.
      1. This would be a failing church.
      2. We need to make baby Christians who come to Jesus feel at home in our churches; we need to love them.
      3. The problem is when some people stay baby Christians and don’t mature.
         1. They don’t grow, don’t serve and don’t work.
            1. Instead, they have to be served and are still selfish, unthoughtful, etc.
         2. There is a legitimate childhood, but we are to grow.
   5. 1 Corinthians 1:7, 3:1
      1. The Corinthian Christians were using spiritual gifts as toys, not tools.
         1. They did not understand what it means to be spiritual in the Lord Jesus Christ.
   6. 1 John 2:12
      1. The blessing of getting saved is that our sins are forgiven, and we are on our way to Heaven.
         1. Getting to heaven is the main thing that a little child is concerned about.
2. the triumphant warfare of manhood (1 john 2:13-14)
   1. John addresses the young men in these verses.
      1. No longer milk bottles, but now, mighty battles.
      2. These have moved to become workers and warriors.
         1. They are no longer being served, but they are servants.
   2. Some in our churches think they do God a wild favor by simply going to church.
      1. They’re not workers, they’re not warriors, and they’re not in the battle.
         1. They have been saved and are thankful that their sins are forgiven, but that’s where they stopped.
      2. 1 John 2:14
         1. When we move to the next stage, we overcome the wicked one.
            1. The question is not whether or not you are afraid of the devil, but is the devil afraid of you?
            2. Are you a threat to Satan’s kingdom?
            3. Have you overcome the wicked one?
         2. James 4:7
      3. In an average church, members are not strong, and do not know anything about the battle.
         1. Satan is having his way because it is like he is fighting against an army of children.
   3. 1 John 2:14
      1. But young men are strong, and they have overcome the wicked one.
         1. Are you a victor or a victim?
         2. Are you an overcomer, or are you overcome?
         3. Are you strong, and does the Word of God abide in you?
   4. Delayed growth is a shame to Almighty God.
3. the tested wisdom of fatherhood (1 john 2:13-14)
   1. This is the stage that the Lord is moving us to.
   2. The idea of a father is a person who has come to mature wisdom.
      1. He knows, he understands, and he has moved beyond building and battling.
      2. He has wisdom and a God-likeness.
         1. He has been with the Lord so long that his life is beginning to manifest the likeness of God.
         2. He has become a father.
            1. We speak of God as our Father.
      3. This passage is not referring to chronological age or gender.
         1. The wording in this passage is an illustration.
            1. This passage is referring to both men and women.
            2. A person can be a spiritual father and be a teenager.
         2. This passage is referring to spiritual maturity.
   3. A father is someone who has children.
      1. Do you have any spiritual children?
      2. Paul spoke of Timothy as his son in the faith.
         1. 1 Timothy 1:2
      3. Paul spoke of himself as a spiritual father to the church in Corinth.
      4. We should strive to have spiritual children and grandchildren.
         1. Those whom we have won to Jesus who have also won other people to Jesus.
         2. Are you going to Heaven empty-handed?
            1. Will you have any spiritual children there?
   4. A father is known for his wisdom and his ability to give.
      1. One of the great joys of life is to give to your children and grandchildren.
      2. When you become a spiritual father in the Lord, you will want to give to your spiritual children to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
   5. In these Scriptures, God is not saying that we should substitute fatherhood for manhood or manhood for childlikeness.
      1. A father is a composite of all of these things.
      2. Never lose the wonder of childhood.
         1. The Bible says to put away childish things, but it also says to still be childlike.
            1. 1 Corinthians 13:11
         2. Keep the wonder, excitement and the joy inside you.
         3. Never forget that your sins have been forgiven.
            1. 1 John 1:12
      3. 1 John 2:13
         1. When you become a father, you do not cease in the battle and you do not step out of the warfare.
            1. You add all these things in until you become a full-grown man.
      4. There should still be a little boy in every man and a little girl in every woman.
   6. When we think of the apostle John, who wrote the book of 1 John, we think of the beloved disciple.
      1. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved.
         1. John 13:23
         2. John 20:2
         3. John 21:7
      2. He wrote about love and told us to love one another.
         1. 1 John 3:11
         2. 1 John 4:7
      3. John was very different as a young man.
         1. His nickname was “Son of Thunder.”
            1. Mark 3:17
            2. He had a quick temper.
         2. He was selfish.
            1. He and his brother James wanted to sit on either side of Jesus in Heaven.

Mark 10:35-37

* + - * 1. When the Samaritans did not receive Jesus, John wanted to call down fire from Heaven on them.

Luke 9:51-56

* + - 1. John grew in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
         1. Later on, he was called the beloved disciple.
         2. When he went to Samaria the second time, he was the one who led revival there.

It wasn’t consuming fire but Holy Ghost fire that he brought down upon them the second time he came.

* + - * 1. John was no longer trying to be first, but he was the one who taught us to love one another.
  1. Are you a growing Christian?
     1. To fail to grow is a sin.
     2. If you don’t love Jesus Christ more today than yesterday, then you are backslidden.
  2. What are the means of growth?
     1. A growing church is healthy and a happy church.
     2. Growth requires the miracle of life.
        1. 1 John 2:12
           1. John calls them “little children.”
           2. John uses two words for “little children” in this passage.

One word means “born ones,” and the other word means “children under discipline.”

* + - 1. We must be a born one.
         1. We cannot grow up and then get born.

Some people say that they want to get some things in their life straightened out before them come to Christ.

That is like saying, “I’m going to grow up, and then I’ll get born.”

* + - * 1. Birth precedes growth.
      1. We must give our heart to Jesus Christ.
         1. We must be born from above in order to grow.

Are you saved?

* + 1. Growth requires the passage of time.
       1. We will not be instantly mature.
       2. There are no shortcuts.
    2. Growth requires the receiving of nourishment.
       1. 1 Peter 2:2
          1. Don’t take a new Christian and give him a study in Revelation, Ezekiel or Leviticus.
          2. Get them in the Gospel of John, the milk of the Word, so that they may grow thereby.
          3. The word “desire” in this passage means “to crave.”

This word is also in the imperative form.

We are commanded to crave the Word of God.

* + - 1. We have to feed day by day on the Word of God.
         1. That is where the strength comes.
      2. We must get the Word of God in our heart and life if we are going to grow.
         1. We have to be constantly feeding on the Word of God.
      3. Little babies will eat junk food and put anything in their mouths.
         1. Baby Christians will sometimes have literature from a cult in their homes.

They don’t understand; they don’t have discernment.

* + - * 1. They need to feed on the Word.
    1. Growth requires discipline and exercise.
       1. Hebrews 5:14
          1. The word here for “exercise” is the word from which we get our word “gymnasium.”
       2. We have many flabby Christians in our churches because they get saved and baptized, but then they come to church each Sunday to sit, soak and sour.
          1. They do not exercise.
          2. To go on to maturity, they need to find a place of service, something to do in the church.
       3. We need to get busy for the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. CONCLUSION
   1. Are you a growing Christian?
      1. If you’re a child, then be thankful to God that you’ve been born into the family.
      2. But you need to become a young man.
         1. There is a battle, and there’s work to be done.
   2. Are you a young man, a worker and a warrior?
      1. Then, you need to become a spiritual father.
         1. Remind others of God.
         2. Become a giving person.
         3. Be a person who has the knowledge of God so that when someone else has a problem, they can come to you.
         4. Spend so much time with God that you begin to act and look like Him.
   3. The first step is being born, becoming a little child.
      1. Are you saved?
      2. If not, you can be saved today.
         1. God will forgive your sin.
         2. Trust Him today.
   4. Pray to Him and ask Him to come into your life.
   5. Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
      1. Romans 3:23
      2. Romans 10:9-10
      3. Romans 10:13
      4. Acts 16:31
      5. John 3:16