

“Spirals?”

What do we need to know to go from one place to another? Many ideas might pop into our mind, but three things are necessary: We must know where we want to go; How we are going to get there; and where we are starting from. “So what?” we ask. Well, when we apply this simple truth to our relationship with God in Christ some interesting thoughts might be suggested.

What is our goal for our lives in Christ? The more specific our goal, the greater the chance of achieving that goal. This is a powerful way to grow in Christ.

Paul calls it maturing in Christ. We can also say it’s living-out our sanctification. Here we are talking about the question, “Where are we going in Christ?” We might answer generally, “I want to be more Christ-like as the Spirit leads me,” but the Spirit will most likely lead us by helping us to understand the Truth about what it means to be Christ-like.

While He points out opportunities for improvement, He always leads us towards growth in our relationship with God in Christ. This gives us specific information about where we ought to be going in Christ, thus we return to the need for a specific goal.

Next ask ourselves, “Where am I at?” This points a questioning finger at the most private part of our spiritual lives. Many people want to duck this question because it makes them feel uncomfortable as the Holy Spirit reveals the true condition of their spiritual journey. But to run from this question robs us of an essential part of our growth in Christ.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8: 32) An important part of that freedom is God’s forgiveness of our sins. Through Christ we are set free of God’s judgment. This means that the questioning finger of the Spirit of God points to our weaknesses so that we might grow above those faults. Not as a finger of judgment or blame seeking to send us on a guilt trip.

Because of this freedom we can welcome the work of the Spirit as he reveals to us our sins. Why? Well, we know that God knows everything we do, and every thought we have at any

time. We also know that God has forgiven us of all our sins. Yes, all our sins: past, present, and future sins. So, it's silly to think we can hide anything from God, or that we need to.

Also, it's self-destructive not to confess all our sins, because it leaves unresolved issues within our relationship with God. As we confess our sins, agree with God concerning them and obey Him, they are no longer barriers to our hearing, sensing, or understanding with the Holy Spirit has for us.

He guides us into the Truth God has for us in Christ, and enables us to grow in faith, thus becoming more Christ-like. His ministry helps us to understand where we ought to be going in Christ, and compares with that, "Where we are at," so we might better understand the next aspect in Christian growth.

"How are you going to get there?" Many Christians seem to have a working idea of a growth goal in Christ, and the present state of their spiritual faithfulness. What much preaching seems short of, and many of us seem confused about, is how we get from our present state of spiritual weaknesses to a faithful, Spirit-lead, Christ-like lifestyle.

This book is dedicated toward the search for a better answer to the question of "How?" Obviously, no one has all the answers, and as we sometimes struggle in our growth in Jesus, we may be tempted to think that no one has any of the answers.

Be assured Christ has not called us to follow Him and left us with a lot of empty promises. He has not dangled before us a carrot of Christ-like living just to keep us busy until we go to be with Him eternally.

Instead, He has given us a specific task of being His witnesses in a broken and hurting world. He desires us to be a light within a world of darkness. The light that shines out from us comes from the Light that lives within us, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

For us to fulfill this goal we must grow in our relationship with God through Christ. Why? Because this is not a process of us doing something for God in the way we think is right. All of this will happen in partnership with Jesus, by the leading and power of the Holy Spirit. That is why the question of "How growth occurs in Christ?", is so important.

My hope is to help us understand more about the way that we grow in Christ. These ways of growth will be presented in cyclical patterns. Let's call them "Spirals of Life in Christ".

Most of us are familiar with the concept of life cycles. Think of the cycle: birth, childhood, teenager, young adult, adult, old age, physical death, and eternity. The procreative/co-creative act allows the cycle to begin again with a new person. The life cycle for each one of us ends in our eternal existence.

Add to this concept spiritual rebirth and a new kind of Life cycle is discovered. This is our growth in Jesus, Life cycle. It exists on a different plane of Life which extends beyond the physical, and yet affects the kind of person we are during our life on Earth. Then physical death is only a gateway to a different kind of eternal Life, rather than eternal death and suffering.

We may be used to thinking of these cycles as circles. Various physical and spiritual models depict cycles of life in that manner. For our purposes here we are switching things up a bit. Rather than circles, let's use spirals.

This adds a little complexity, but it seems to me a spiral depicts the circular processes more accurately. Why? Because though these growth processes are circular, whenever one is completed we should have changed.

In other words, we don't return to the same starting point. We've either grown, or we've diminished in the areas a cycle represents. For me it helps to think of the threads on a screw or bolt.

Every time we follow those threads completely around a screw or bolt, we either end up higher or lower on the length of the threads. It all depends on which way we go around the threads.

Clockwise we go up, and counter clockwise we go down the length of the threads. We never end up back at the exact starting point.

These spirals of life are similar. Each time we complete a Spiral clockwise our spiritual strength should be stronger. If we reverse the Spiral, going counter clockwise, most likely the results will be negative.

So, the Spiral's points of progress do not change, but we change. Ultimately that's what these spirals are all about. Our positive change within our relationship with God, and as a result experiencing a positive change in our relationships with others.

As these Spirals of Life in Christ lead us toward our progressive growth in Christ, we are the only ones who can break that process of growth. If we don't break these Spirals, then our growth can continue building upon previous growth in a never-ending Spiral until our existence on Earth is over.

These Spirals are shared to help us better understand the process of our growth in Christ. They are meant to be a perspective that we can use, like a window with a different view on living.

The Holy Spirit will guide us with their application in our growth in Christ. Like most things concerning spiritual growth, this will require a significant commitment of time and effort. Please focus on talking with God in prayer while seeking the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit. May God use these spirals of life in Christ to His glory in our walk with Him!