

Group Notes 9 January 2011
Growing Series #1 – Growing Up

Welcome - Ice Breaker

When I was a child I wanted to be a pilot and fly a Spitfire! What did you most want to be when you were growing up?

Word - Sermon Summary: 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

Series Introduction. We are starting a series on growth and on Sunday looked at Matthew 13:31-33 as well as the 2 Corinthians passage above. In these two mini-parables Jesus says the Kingdom of God is like a tiny seed growing into a huge tree and like yeast growing and spreading through a whole batch of dough. In other words it is natural for the kingdom to grow! God expects that we will grow. There are three dimensions to this growth:

- *Growing Up* – we grow closer to God, and as we do so, we grow to be more like Him.
- *Growing In* – we grow closer together in fellowship, love and unity
- *Growing Out* – we grow in numbers through reaching out to others in service and witness

We also have a fourth subject in the series, *Growing Pains*. Sometimes, the Scripture says, we only grow through suffering...

This week we are focussing on Growing Up. 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 tells us something about how to do this. The Apostle Paul (the author of 2 Corinthians) describes an Old Testament passage where, whenever Moses went to meet with God, he would come away with his face shining with God's glory. His shining face attracted superstitious attention from the rest of the people, so he put a veil on to hide it. But the glory would gradually fade away. You can read the full story in Exodus 34:29-35.

Paul contrasts this story with the New Covenant promise of glory that does not fade away. Instead this glory grows more and more as we go on, v.18. It doesn't mean we won't need to buy any more light bulbs! There are several secrets to this "growth in glory":

- v.16 Reconciliation with God. When we turn to the Lord the veil that separates us from Him is taken away and that is why His glory can shine through. Compare the curtain in the temple that was torn in two when Jesus died, symbolising that we are now free to go into God's holy presence through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. When we turn to the Lord we accept this sacrifice for ourselves. All true growth in Christ must be based on this – anything else is fake because it does not spring from our renewed relationship with God.
- v.17 The Holy Spirit. He is the One who guides us on our journey into the heart of God. The Spirit brings God's own presence into our lives and works in us to produce the Lord's likeness in our character.
- v.18a spending time with the Lord. With unveiled faces we are to *reflect* (or in another translation *contemplate*) His glory in a relationship of prayer, love and worship. We won't grow to be more like Him if we don't spend time with Him, gazing on His beauty and receiving His love.
- v.18b being transformed, bit by bit. God does not want our Christian life to be static but dynamic as we grow more and more in spiritual stature and Christ-like character.

In summary, God has two great goals for your life: to spend more time with Him and to grow more like Him. Think carefully about His other goals (for example, to love Him with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself) and you'll see that they are covered in these two. Why not make it your goal to grow in Christ, to spend time with Him and grow more like Him, in 2011?

Word 2 - Discussion Questions:-

- Do you think you have grown spiritually in 2010? In what ways?
- Moses didn't realise that his face was glowing – other people did. Sometimes other people see that we have grown better than we do ourselves. Why might this be?
- Do you know or have you come across anyone who "glows" with God's presence? What is their secret?
- "Growing old is compulsory, growing up is optional" - discuss! Is part of real growing up about being free to express the kid inside us?
- Do you think things in our society hinder spiritual growth? What things? How can we make sure we are not hindered by them?

Worship Ideas

Here is a simple prayer: *I wait upon you Lord. My silence is a cup for you to fill.*

You might like to have some quiet music playing for this one. Ask everyone to sit quietly with their eyes closed, perhaps cupping their hands. Then when they are ready say the prayer and ask them to picture the Lord pouring into their cup the good things He has in store for them in 2011. After a few minutes they can picture themselves drinking deeply of His cup of blessings.

When everyone is ready ask if anyone would like to share what blessings they thought God wanted to give them. Conclude by thanking God for the coming year and praying that we will indeed drink more deeply of His presence and love.

Works / Witness

We're getting on to Growing Out soon...