

Time to Grow! – Part 1

What do you think about New Year's resolutions? Do you make them? Do you resist them? Whatever you think about them, we know that good things can come from making a commitment to grow and improve our lives. This is especially true in our walk with God. God is honoured when we make commitments to grow closer to Him. In this two week study, we'll explore the value of commitment. We'll look at the call God gives us to commit to following Him, and at a practical tool we can use to commit to growth in our walk with God this year. Are you ready to grow? Let's go for it!

Icebreaker

Here are some of the top resolutions people are making for 2020 (according to the *Internet*). If you could choose just one thing to pursue this year, which one would you choose? What is it about this resolution that draws you to it?

- Take control of the device that is stealing my time
- Get healthier (diet, exercise, weight)
- Improve my finances
- Manage my stress
- Improve a relationship
- Set aside time for myself
- Stop procrastinating
- Quit a bad habit
- Get a new job
- Learn a new skill

Video

<https://www.lifegroupleaders.ca/studies/time-to-grow/>

Study

At Creekside, our mission is to help people **Follow Jesus, Love God, and Love People**. This is the high commitment God calls us to.

Here are two key teachings Jesus gave:

1. The Great Commandment

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied, ““Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” Matthew 22:35–37 NIV

2. The Cost of Following Jesus

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Matthew 16:24 NIV

- Based on these two teachings, as a group, try to come up with a one sentence mission of what it means to follow Jesus.

FOLLOW JESUS: 3 REALITIES

There’s no doubt about it, Jesus gives us a clear and compelling call to follow Him. But how do we do that, and how do we know if we’re making progress?

1. OUR REALITY: None of us measure up

How do you feel about your walk with Jesus these days? Have you arrived? Do you have it all nailed down? John Ortberg says the normal experience of spiritual growth is we are “caught between disappointment and hope.” We’re not where we want to be. We know we fall short, yet we have this hope that God is at work in us. He’s not finished with us yet.

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 NLT

- What does it mean to you to be God’s “masterpiece”?
- To be honest, most days I feel like anything *but* a masterpiece. I can identify more with being an old can of paint in the basement. How does this verse encourage you?

When it comes to following Jesus, the reality is, all of us fall short. Our sin, life’s distractions, a lack of willpower, and just plain laziness can keep us stuck. When we look inside and evaluate how we’re doing with following Jesus, it’s natural and normal to feel disappointed with ourselves. But our experience doesn’t end there. God offers us His power—our hope for becoming the person He has called us to be.

2. OUR HOPE: To be transformed

Planted deep in each of our hearts is a desire to change and grow. This desire is given to us by God and is part of His amazing plan for you.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God **transform** you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:1-2 NLT

The word "transform" or "morph" comes from the Greek word *morpho*, which means "the inward and real formation of the essential nature of a person." The term was used to describe the formation and growth of an embryo in a mother's body.

- In Romans 12:2 we read, Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God *transform* you into a new person. As a group, try to come up with three practical examples of what it might look like to no longer copy the behaviour and customs of our world, but instead be transformed by God.

Behaviour/custom of the world	Transformed outlook or response
Example: I compare myself to others for my identity.	I look to God for my identity as his child.
1	
2	
3	

"God is in the business of transforming ordinary people like us so that we express his character and goodness in our whole being. This is real transformation from the inside out – learning to think as Jesus would think, to feel what he'd feel, to perceive what he'd perceive, and therefore to do what he would do." John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*

3. OUR GOAL: To train wisely

"Spiritual transformation is not a matter of trying harder but of training wisely." John Ortberg

Think about how freeing that statement is. Following Jesus is not about trying harder. Too often we make it just that. When is the last time you’ve thought, “I need to try to be more loving” or, “This week I’m going to try to be more self-controlled” or, “I need to try to be more like Jesus!” Following Jesus isn’t about trying harder. It’s about *training wisely*.

Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their **training**. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadow boxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, **training** it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:24-26 NLT

- Have you ever trained for a sporting event? What was that training like? What did you learn from it?
- How might we apply this training principle to our commitment to follow Jesus?

What is the difference between trying and training? Take a look at some of the differences in the chart below, then talk about them as a group.

Trying	Vs. Training
I can do it	Christ will help me do it
A one-time event	An ongoing process
Address the fruit	Address the root
Focus is on action	Focus is on the heart
Failure makes me a loser	Failure helps me learn a lesson

- Why is *trying* so appealing to us?
- What examples can you give of *training* rather than *trying*?
- What is a key takeaway for you from this study?
- What next steps might you take to train in your walk with God?

Pray

Spend some time with God asking Him to teach you more about what it looks like to train wisely. Ask Him to do His transforming work in your life this week.