

LESSON 2 Jesus Christ: An Illustration of Growth

Do you remember a time when you really pleased a parent or a teacher with some evidence of growth? Have you ever seen a little boy trying to stand tall beside his father? I remember visiting one home where the two boys had marked the father's height on the wall. Below it were a variety of dates and measurements to compare the boys' progress. We have seen that our heavenly Father desires our maturity so we may fellowship with Him. We need to grow and fulfill God's purpose for creating us in His image.

Perhaps maturing as a believer seems hard to understand. "What does Christian maturity look like?" you may ask. The little boys I just mentioned had a visual goal. They knew their father. They could measure his height. It was not hard for them to picture their own progress toward his likeness.

That's our purpose in this lesson. We want to clearly define Christian maturity in terms of goals we can visualize. The Bible is an open book. Jesus often taught in parables which were word pictures taken from the people's common experiences. We will discover that the Bible's standards for growth are clear and relate to each one of us.

lesson outline

Getting a Goal to Grow Toward

Seeing How Jesus Grew

Physical Maturity

Mental Maturity

Social Maturity

Spiritual Maturity

Learning About Jesus' Image

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson, you should be able to:

- State the Bible goal for which every Christian must work.
- List four specific ways Jesus grew.
- Form habits that will help you to attain Christian physical maturity.
- Develop Christian mental maturity by filling your mind with good thoughts.
- Make progress toward Christian social maturity.
- Choose habits, thoughts, and relationships that will help you on your way toward spiritual maturity.
- Describe the servanthood of Jesus and identify yourself as His servant.

learning activities

1. Read the lesson.
2. Look up in the glossary the definitions to key words you do not understand.
3. Do the exercises in the lesson development, referring as needed to the textbook. Check your answers periodically with those given in the textbook.
4. In your notebook, divide two pages (one across from the other) into four columns. Head each column with one of the following words: 1) physical, 2) mental, 3) social, and 4) spiritual. When directed in the lesson development, write out passages of Scripture in these columns.
5. Take the self-test at the end of this lesson, and check your answers carefully. Review those items answered incorrectly.

key words

Understanding the key words we have listed at the beginning of each lesson will help you as you study. You will find key words defined in the glossary at the back of this independent-study textbook. If you are in doubt about the meaning of any of the words on the list, you may look them up now or when you come across them in your reading. Please take time to learn the definitions of any new words, since they are important to a complete understanding of this course.

adulterous

image

homosexual

lesson development

GETTING A GOAL TO GROW TOWARD

Objective 1. State the Bible goal for which every Christian must work.

We have already seen in Ephesians 4:13 that God intends us to “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” The original language of the New Testament is actually “a mature manhood” or we might say “a complete person or a fully grown person.”

Application

- 1 According to this verse what is the actual measurement of that maturity? (Circle the correct answer.)
 - a) A special spiritual gift
 - b) The mature manhood of Christ
 - c) Sinless perfection



The word *stature* means “height or quality gained by growth.” Jesus Christ did not come to us as an adult, but as a baby who had to grow like each of us.

Application

- 2 Hebrews 5:8 refers to Jesus. It begins with these words, “Although he was a son.” Write the rest of this verse here.

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- 3 Review the meaning in the glossary of the word *perfect*, which means “to complete” or “to bring to final form.” How do you think this word may be applied to Jesus?

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Since Jesus always had sinless spiritual perfection He is a perfect model for our growth in all areas (Hebrews 4:15). Although we cannot expect to reach sinless spiritual perfection, Christlikeness is a realistic goal for our spiritual growth because working toward a goal beyond what we can expect to reach will help us to accomplish more than a lesser goal.

Application

4 Read carefully Hebrews 4:14–16. Is Jesus able to identify with our problems of growing up as Christians? Explain.

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You can see why Jesus is often referred to as our brother (Hebrews 2:11–12, 17). If you have an older brother, you know the influence he has as the firstborn and thus the first one in the family to mature.

Carefully read Hebrews 2:10 and write it in your notebook. Do you see that Jesus, having grown or been made perfect, is thereby able to lead other sons into God’s full purpose? Doesn’t that encourage you in your own desire to grow up as a Christian?

SEEING HOW JESUS GREW

Objective 2. List four specific ways Jesus grew.

We have seen that Jesus Christ is to be our example, and His stature our goal. To be specific, the Bible shows that Jesus grew or matured in four basic areas.

Application

5 Read Luke 2:52. List the four areas in which Jesus grew.

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Can you relate these four areas to areas in which you must grow? Do you see why the verse we learned in 2 Peter 3:18 tells us to grow in the “knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”? As we learn about His life, we will better understand the goal and purpose of our own maturity as believers.

Physical Maturity

Objective 3. *Form habits that will help you to attain Christian physical maturity.*

The Bible teaches us that Christian maturity in the physical sense involves much more than the simple growth of the body. It involves an understanding of the purpose of the body. Physical maturity for the believer involves conducting the body in a way pleasing to God the Father. The following Scriptures will help you to understand this area and form Christian physical habits: 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8; 1 Corinthians 6:9–15, 18–19; 1 Timothy 4:8; Galatians 6:7–8. Please write these Scriptures in your notebook under the heading “*Physical.*”

Application

- 6 What does 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 say about the destiny of those who abuse their bodies in immorality?
- They will be severely punished.
 - They are to be excluded from the church.
 - They will not possess God’s kingdom.

Mental Maturity

Objective 4. *Develop Christian mental maturity by filling your mind with good thoughts.*

The human mind is a wonderful gift from God. Yet, have you ever noticed how difficult it is to keep the mind under control? It is easy to allow the mind to wander and even to think unchristian thoughts. No wonder Peter told the Christians “Prepare your minds for action” (1 Peter 1:13). Jesus teaches that the mind is really a problem area in our lives.

Application

7 Read Mark 7:18–23. According to Jesus, where do the evil things a person does come from?

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In fact, letting our minds dwell on evil things can be sinful.

Write out Matthew 5:28, Mark 7:18–23, Philippians 4:8, 2 Corinthians 10:4–5, and 1 Peter 1:13 in your notebook column titled “*Mental.*”

Application

8 In 2 Corinthians 10:4–5, Paul tells how to destroy strongholds, then lists three ways to develop Christian mental maturity. What are they?

a

b

c

9 What does Philippians 4:8 say we should think about?

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Now carefully read Romans 12:1–2. Notice the last phrase, “test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Here is that word *perfect* again, which means “mature” or “complete and whole.” We must try through our own will to know God’s will, to know how He wants us to live.

Application

10 According to Romans 12:2, how does God transform the person who has been living by the standards of this world?

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You can see how important it is to be mature in our mind.

Social Maturity

Objective 5. *Make progress toward Christian social maturity.*

Christian growth involves the social aspect of our lives as well as the physical and mental aspects. You could list many areas of your social experience: family, friends, marriage, government, neighbors, and so forth. It would be impossible to list or discuss in this course all the Scriptures in this area.

Write in your notebook column titled “*Social*,” Psalm 101, Ephesians 5, and James 4:4–5.

NOTE: *Ephesians 5* begins by exhorting us to conduct ourselves without fault (verse 1) then mentions evil things we must not do (verses 3–5). Verse 11 emphasizes how we should react to worthless things people do: “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness.” The chapter closes with instructions on godliness in the marriage relationship (verses 21–33).

Application

11 Read Psalm 101 aloud. Now, prayerfully choose one area of the psalmist’s life in this psalm which you would like to strengthen in your life. (Examples: honesty, dealings with evil, purity of life in the family, etc.)

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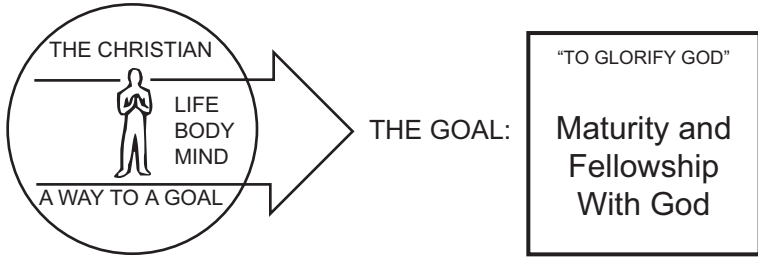
God wants to help you grow in each area of your life.

Spiritual Maturity

Objective 6. Choose habits, thoughts, and relationships that will help you on your way toward spiritual maturity.

This entire course is on this subject! Lesson 6 will discuss spiritual maturity in detail. We will not define it here. But please remember when you study Lesson 6 to write Scripture passages in your notebook column titled “*Spiritual.*”

This illustration sums up what we have studied:



Look at the illustration and you will see that the Christian’s goal is outside himself. To reach the Christian goal, we must move toward that goal.

Application

12 Does the illustration above describe a dynamic life? (Explain)

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Every decision I make concerning habits, thoughts, and relationships must be made in view of the goal of spiritual maturity.

LEARNING ABOUT JESUS' IMAGE

Objective 7. *Describe the servanthood of Jesus and identify yourself as His servant.*

Some biblical principles seem hard to understand. We have already discovered that God has set us apart to become many brothers (Romans 8:29). Perhaps you are asking, “How can I be like Jesus?” That question arises when we remember He was sinless and God in human form. Let us understand a simple but important point: It is in the role of servants that we become like Jesus.

Application

13 Read Philippians 2:5–8. According to Philippians 2:5, what attitude or mind are we to have?

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14 According to Philippians 2:6–8, what nature did Jesus willingly take on?

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This nature was expressed, according to Philippians 2:5–8, by humility and obedience. In Hebrews 10:7 Jesus said, “Here I am ... to do your will, O God.” And remember what He prayed in Gethsemane: “Not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

Application

15 What does Hebrews 10:7 point out that describes Jesus' servanthood?

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Do you understand now why Paul, James, Jude, and others identified themselves as servants of Jesus Christ? That is how we become like Jesus. We are not saved from sin for the sake of salvation only, we are saved to serve. We accept a relationship of obedience to Jesus Christ. He becomes our *Master* and we become

love-servants to His will. Salvation, with its joys, victory, and freedom, is more than an experience. Through salvation we are brought into the true understanding of our purpose. We are created to glorify God. Our goal is to be conformed to Jesus Christ and thus restored to true fellowship with God. Such a relationship fulfills man's deepest desire for purpose in life. We should all declare with Paul the apostle: "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

self-test

TRUE-FALSE. Write **T** in the blank space if the statement is true. Write **F** if it is false. Then, change the FALSE statements to make them true.

..... 1 *Stature* is a word that means “height or quality gained by growth.”

Stature is a word that means

..... 2 According to Jesus, all sorts of evil things come from within a person’s heart.

According to Jesus, all sorts of evil things come from

.....

..... 3 The Bible teaches us that the Christian is to have the mind or attitude of Moses.

The Bible teaches us that the believer is to have the mind

or attitude of

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter(s) before the correct choice(s) to each question.

4 The Bible teaches in Luke 2:52 that Jesus grew in four areas of life. Select these four areas from the words below.

- a) Spiritual
- b) Physical
- c) Emotional
- d) Mental
- e) Medical
- f) Biblical
- g) Psychological
- h) Social

5 According to 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, certain uses of our body will keep us from possessing God’s kingdom. Select those uses from this series of descriptive words.

- a) Immoral
- b) Athletic
- c) Tiring
- d) Adulterous
- e) Homosexual
- f) Thinking

- 6** Philippians 2:5–8 indicates that Jesus Christ willingly took upon himself not only a human form but also the nature of a
- a) priest.
 - b) servant.
 - c) king.
 - d) prophet.

SHORT ANSWER. Write the answer to the question on the lines provided.

- 7** In what ways does a believer mature in Christ socially?

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answers to the study questions

- 1 b) The mature manhood of Christ
- 9 Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy
- 2 “he learned obedience from what he suffered.”
- 10 By a complete change of one’s mind
- 3 To the full development of His physical and mental characteristics and work
- 11 Your answer
- 4 Yes, because He was tempted as we are and can feel sympathy for our weakness
- 12 Yes, because both dynamic life and the illustration indicate a life that moves toward a goal.
- 5 In wisdom, stature, favor with God, and favor with men
- 13 The attitude of Jesus Christ
- 6 c) They will not possess God’s kingdom.
- 14 The nature of a servant
- 7 From within his heart
- 15 His obedience
- 8 a Destroy false arguments.
b Pull down obstacles to the knowledge of God.
c Make every thought obey Christ.