

GROWING

why growth matters, what it looks like and how it happens

“All over the world this gospel is growing.. ”
[Colossians 1.6]

‘Growth’ is the theme of this series of studies, and it’s begun with the prayer that it will prove to be a real growth point in our life, and lives, as God’s people here.

Growth is expected among God’s people, since the God who makes alive is the God who also makes things grow: and growth is exhorted upon them, as something which is neither occasional nor optional.

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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3. Psalm 23.1-6 [w/b Sunday 24th September]

'Growth and the glory of God'

This psalm may well be the best known chapter in the whole of the Bible – and quite possibly the best loved chapter also. There are all sorts of reasons why that's the case – not the least of which is the comfort that its affirmations have afforded to many through times of trial and sorrow.

Just as significantly, however, it's a psalm which also, in a few short verses, encapsulates the experience of the believer. There's a certain 'progression' to the psalm which highlights the fact that God's work in our lives issues in growth – a growth which is ultimately to the glory of God.

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1. **Read Psalm 23.1-6.** You will probably be very familiar with this psalm! Try reading it through the eyes of a new believer coming upon it for the first time.

Why do you think it has proved to be such a widely loved psalm?

How would you summarise its message in a single sentence (apart from 'with difficulty'!)?

2. **Read Psalm 23.1.** The psalm's opening statement is the foundation on which the rest of the psalm builds.

What brought you to the point in your life where the Lord was clearly and decisively *your* shepherd?

Why can you say with real conviction that with the Lord as your shepherd you will not be in want?

3. Read Psalm 23.2. The grace of God in the gospel means that we cease all our striving, rest in the finished work of Jesus, and find the deepest thirsts in our hearts at last satisfied.

Do you still find yourself *striving* to please the Lord?

Can you give examples of how in your own experience the Lord has led you "*beside quiet waters*"??

4. Read Psalm 23.3. The Lord's inward work of renewal in us by His Spirit issues in lives increasingly characterized by 'righteousness'.

Read **Ezekiel 36.22-32**: what reason does the Lord give for putting His Spirit in His people and thereby moving them to follow His decrees?

How is God glorified by our growing in right living?

5. Read Psalm 23.4. Our experience as believers often involves 'dark valleys' – and they are to be understood as part of the path of righteousness along which the Lord leads us.

What 'dark valleys' have you known in your life?

"All God's giants have been weak men (and women) who did great things because they reckoned on God being with them" (Hudson Taylor): how can you 'reckon on' God being with you in those dark valleys?

6. Read Psalm 23.5. Hostility as well as adversity will often be our experience as followers of Jesus: but the Lord has made provision for us in the face of our enemies.

Consider the phrase *"in the presence of my enemies"*: what has been your experience of such enmity as a believer? Who/what are the enemies you have to face?

To what provisions from the Lord does this verse point you? What is the 'table' He has prepared for you and to what does His anointing you with oil refer?

How do you translate the spiritual truth of this verse into a source of practical help to you in facing your 'enemies'?

7. Read Psalm 23.6. The final verse reminds us how important it is always to read to the end of the story! *His* story – and, in Christ, as part of His flock, *your* story.

In what ways have you known the Lord's goodness and love following you?

What comfort and hope does the psalmist's assurance that "*I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever*" give you?