



CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Authors: Maureen Pruitt, Doris Stuber Moose

Illustrator: Vernon Henkel

Proofreaders: Audrey Brubaker, Elnior Rogers, Barry and Jean Keiser, Sharon Neal

PowerPoint Presentation, Interface and Download: LaRue and Mark Bowser

Typesetting and Layout: Patricia Pope

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Phone: (717) 859-1131 www.biblevisuals.org

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Lesson 1

FAITH AND VIRTUE

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

Every book in the Bible is important. Each one contains truths which should affect our lives. (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17.) The letters written by Peter are no exception. From this first epistle we learn how the Christian life develops: (1) It begins with *salvation* (1 Peter 1:1-12). (2) After salvation, the new-born child of God must grow. He must live a pure life because he is set apart by God for Himself. This is *sanctification* (1 Peter 1:13-2:12). (3) *Submission*, one of the important disciplines of Christian living, is next discussed in detail (1 Peter 2:13-3:12). (4) Peter further explains that *suffering* is part of growing up in Christ (1 Peter 3:13-5:14). These truths will be discussed in the first three lessons. We will explore Peter's second letter in the fourth study.

The Christians to whom Peter wrote were scattered and needed encouragement. Many were suffering for their faith in Christ. Their neighbors, perhaps their employers, hated the Gospel which the Christians believed. So the believers were persecuted. False teachers denied the very teachings for which the Christians were suffering. Peter's letters, therefore, brought comfort, hope, and advice to the believers.

In Second Peter 1:5-7, the Holy Spirit lists eight qualities of Christian birth and growth. These are the subjects of this series. Much of Peter's life seems to underline these truths. Therefore, we shall study his life and letters together.

If possible, your students should read aloud the verses referred to in Peter's letters.

Scripture to be studied: 1 Peter 1:1-12; 2 Peter 1:5-8; John 1:35-42

The aim of the lesson: To help students understand that in order to become a fully developed Christian, certain qualities must be added to faith.

What your students should know: Their faith in Christ will be tested.

What your students should feel: A desire to be strong and courageous when testings come.

What your students should do:

Unsaved: Turn to Christ for salvation from sin.

Saved: Ask for courage to introduce others to Christ.

Assignments: Read 1 Peter 1:1-12 every day until the next meeting. In the margins of their Bibles, mark a cross at each verse that speaks of the blood of Christ or salvation.

Lesson outline (for the teacher's and students' notebooks):

1. There must be faith in Christ before growth (1 Peter 1:2-3, 8-9).
2. Faith in Christ is followed by service (Luke 5:1-11).
3. Faith is tested (Matthew 14:22-33).
4. Virtue must be added to faith (Matthew 16:13-19).

The verse to be memorized:

Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18a)

THE LESSON

Have you ever watched a baby grow? At first he lies in one place. He may move his arms and legs a great deal (especially if he's hungry!). But by himself he never gets anywhere. (*Teacher:* Encourage discussion of a baby's development: reaching for objects, crawling, standing, learning to walk, climbing stairs, running.) A normal child stretches himself. He tries new things. Sometimes he succeeds. Often he fails—and tries again. So he grows and develops.

In the Christian life, there must also be growth and development. A born-again person, who does not grow spiritually, is not a normal Christian. What must a child of God do in order to grow? Will he always succeed? What happens if he fails? Listen carefully!

1. THERE MUST BE FAITH IN CHRIST BEFORE GROWTH

1 Peter 1:2-3, 8-9

Simon lived a long time ago. Like all who have been born into this world, he was a sinner. He was selfish. He was proud and boastful. He used bad language, even swearing sometimes. It was his nature to sin just as it is the nature of a dog to bark.

Simon was a Jew. He, like other Jews, looked forward to the coming of the Messiah—the Anointed One whom God would send to be their King. One day Simon's brother, Andrew, rushed