

MY JOURNEY TO LIFE

# GROWING IN CHRIST

*What keeps us free from fear of evil powers,  
darkness, and anxiety?*

**STEP 17 OF 28**



## **My Journey to Life, Step 17**

### **Foreword**

*My Journey to Life* will give you the keys for finding peace of mind, harmony of body, and success in relationships. Every step will transform your outlook as you unpack each lesson. We pray they will help you to fall in love with the greatest Teacher this world has ever known. So together, let's walk the pathway step-by-step to a new life in Jesus.

### **Preface**

Professing faith in Christ provides not only a future reward, but also a wonderful experience that we can have right now. Living by faith in Jesus provides transformative power and daily spiritual growth if we actively follow what God has revealed to us in His Holy Word.

## **Step Seventeen—Growing in Christ**

***What keeps us free from fear of evil powers, darkness, and anxiety?*** “By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus’ victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us and empowers us.

Continually committed to Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are set free from the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ’s example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience.”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 151

**Bible Discovery:** 1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12; Matthew 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Romans 8:38, 39; 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Philippians 3:7-14; Colossians 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, 23; Hebrews 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 71.2

**1. How is it possible to grow in our walk with Jesus?** Growth in our Christian experience begins with death. First, the death of Christ on the cross makes our new life possible—free from

Satan's dominion, free from sin's condemnation and its penalty of death. Best of all, Christ's death brings reconciliation between God and humanity.

Second, the death of self makes it possible for us to take up the life that Christ offers, to walk in newness of life. When we participate with Christ in His sacrificial death, Satan's power is defeated. Without the cross there could be no forgiveness of sins, no eternal life, no victory over Satan and no growth in Christ.

**Bible Discovery:** John 3:16; Romans 6:23; 8:1; Colossians 1:13, 14; 3:3; 1 John 1:7

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.2

**2. What does it mean to die to self?** Dying to self means a radical, deliberate, cutting away of our old way of thinking and reacting. The apostle Paul underscores both death to sin and resurrection to a new life through the experience of water baptism. Baptism symbolically opens the door to new life and bids us to grow in Christ.

When we accept Jesus as Savior and Master, our old life is buried, and new life immerses! In Christ, our weaknesses become our strengths. Cowardice gives way to courage. Unbelief gives way to faith. Anger gives way to gentleness. Impatience gives way to self-control.

In our Christian life, the death of self is a necessity. This choice to die to self must happen daily, hourly, moment by moment. Death to self will be exhibited in loving service to our fellow man, and introducing them to Jesus, the source of salvation.

**Bible Discovery:** John 12:24; Romans 6:3, 4; 6-11; 1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:9, 10

**Further Reading:** *The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.1

**3. What else does Jesus' death on the cross have to do with our spiritual growth in a post-modern world?** Today society largely denies or is indifferent to the reality of sin. But at the cross we are confronted with the diabolical nature of sin, which is ugly, real, and costly. It can be removed only by that blood "poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). If there were no sin, it would not have been necessary for Jesus to shed His blood on sinner's behalf.

At Jesus' death, Satan was stripped of all his demonic power over God's people, if they placed their trust in the One who brought about that victory. By giving up His life on the cross, Christ crushed the power of Satan and triumphed over the powers of darkness. The one who once boasted that he would "be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14) is now made a cosmic spectacle of shame and defeat. Evil no longer holds power over believers, who have passed from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Thus, the cross ensures final eschatological victory over Satan, sin, and death.

Every believer must affirm and proclaim the “once for all” (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:27; 10:10) sacrificial and substitutionary nature of the death of Christ. We are saved to grow in grace by the Christ of the cross.

**Bible Discovery:** John 3:16; Romans 6:12; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:13, 15; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 21:1

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 758.1, 762.1

**4. How does newness and growth in the Christian’s life begin?** Jesus told Nicodemus, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Without the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian life cannot even begin! We need the Spirit to “create in us a new heart” (Psalm 51:10) and teach us what is truth.

It is the Spirit that convicts us of sin and our need of a Savior. He helps us understand that there is a judgment to come and points out the consequences of our actions if we are not covered by Christ’s righteousness.

The transforming power of the Spirit in our lives teaches us what it means to be sons and daughters of God, to belong to His family by His choice and ours. It is also through the Spirit that Christ abides in us and give us new life in Him, where we grow day by day in righteousness.

But it is the blood of Christ that assures us of forgiveness from sin, freedom from guilt, and casts the seed for newness of growth. One of the first benefits of acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice at the cross in our behalf is reconciliation with God. Because of what Jesus did on the cross for us, we are able to stand before God without sin and without fear. That which separated and estranged us from God has been dealt with. Jesus has provided a new way for us to come into the very presence of God! In His presence we cannot remain the same.

**Bible Discovery:** John 14:17; 16:7, 8; Romans 8:1-16; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 John 3:24

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.1

**5. How can we tell if there is spiritual growth in our lives?** The best test of spiritual growth is to see if we are bearing the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These fruits will be evident when we are born again by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that guides us into all truth, convicts us of sin, and enables us to live out the principles of the kingdom of God.

Paul goes on to list what will NOT be in our lives if we are growing in the Spirit: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like (Galatians 5:19-21).

Jesus loved His Father and therefore willingly did His Father’s will on earth. Likewise, Jesus anticipates a love foundation for His own disciples. “Abide in me,” He says, “as I abide in you.

Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me” (John 15:4). Fruit-bearing, obedience, and living in accordance with God’s will as a response to His grace, are essential signs of spiritual growth. The absence of fruit indicates the absence of abiding in Christ.

**Bible Discovery:** John 3:5; 14:17; 16:13; Galatians 5:22, 23

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.1; 676.4

**6. How does this growth in Christ impact our human relationships?** Reconciliation with God opens the second phase of the redemptive growth process: reconciliation with our fellow humans. When we accept Christ as Lord, not only will we seek to restore estranged relationships in our family and friendships, but we will also understand that, as sinners, we are all one melded humanity at the foot of the cross.

No longer will we seek to divide people by caste, education, wealth, gender, hierarchy, politics, or race; instead, we will seek a new brotherhood characterized by respect, caring, and a desire to proclaim to the entire world the offer of redemption through Christ alone. The new life Christ brings breaks down walls of pride, prejudice, elitism, and racial tension. In these practical ways, the cross of Christ initiates victory over Satan and sin in our personal interactions with others for whom Christ also died. There is no Christian growth without love, unity, and forgiveness. In fact, there is no real reconciliation with God if we still have enmity toward another person.

**Bible Discovery:** Leviticus 19:33, 34; John 17:20, 21; Acts 17:26; Romans 2:11; 1 Corinthians 6:1-20; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 2:14-16; James 2:1-9

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, 7LtMs, *Manuscript 6*, 1891, pars. 12-15

**7. What does the expression “cheap grace” mean in the context of growth in Christ?** Put simply, cheap grace is living like a Christian without any attempt to follow Jesus and his teachings. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism or without church discipline. Communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, satisfied living with our sinful carnal nature. It’s true that “we have redemption through Jesus’ blood from His death on Calvary’s cross, and complete forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). However, it’s also true that when Jesus calls a man or women, He offers them His cross to carry. There is no shortcut to being a Christian, living as a disciple of Jesus!

To the Corinthians, Paul writes forcefully of the obligations of grace. First, he speaks of his own experience: “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them [the apostles], though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul here explains to us that he didn’t receive grace in order to lead a vain, empty or unsanctified life; but rather a life filled with the fruits of the Spirit. To be a genuine follower of Christ requires repentance, confession, baptism, and

bearing the fruits of God's love through the power of His amazing grace.

In Matthew 12, Jesus tells a parable of an empty house. When a demon has gone out of a person, it looks for a new person. When it finds none, it comes back to the original house. (one's heart). If the person has not replaced the demon with new thoughts, new activities, and a new lifestyle, the demon comes back with a vengeance—and brings seven more demons! This illustrates the importance of a new Christian making better lifestyle choices that benefit the kingdom of heaven rather than Satan's fiefdom.

**Bible Discovery:** Matthew 12:35-37, 43-45; 16:24-26; Mark 16:16; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Galatians 5:22, 23; James 2:20; Revelation 22:12-15

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 144.2; *Life Sketches*, p. 237.1

**8. How can we ensure that we are growing in worship, witness, hope, and unity?** If we are growing in Jesus, it will show through in these Christian essentials. Every living organism requires adequate and continuous nutrition. Spiritual food for the Christian is found through the study of God's Word, through cultivating a life of prayer, and in seeking the indwelling of the Spirit of God.

The growing Christian will be open to new reception of truth received by divine enlightenment, if that new truth is based upon the Bible. The believer will use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12) to cut through every obstacle that prevents spiritual growth, as well as to discern right from wrong, truth from error. There is no better way to know God's will, experience His victory and grow in grace than to study the Word of God every day in an attitude of prayer.

Prayer gives life and energy to the soul. If God's Word is the bread that nourishes our soul, prayer is the breath that keeps it healthy and growing. Prayer is speaking with God, listening to His voice, kneeling in surrender, and rising in the full empowerment of God's strength. Prayer is not for show, or simply to ask for things for oneself. Real prayer is self-denying and will include intercession for others. Real prayer includes waiting for God's still small voice to show us our duty and then asking for courage to respond in obedience to whatever God reveals.

The Holy Spirit is the efficiency and power of every Christian. The Spirit is the highest of all gifts that Jesus could ask from His Father for the growth of His people. He is the regenerating, transforming Agent that brings all other blessings in His wake.

**Bible Discovery:** Psalm 46:10; 119:12; Matthew 4:4; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 6:18; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 Peter 1:2

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 1915 ed., p. 297.2; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 312.2; *Our High Calling*, p. 152.3



**9. What is the relationship between a Christian's spiritual growth and salvation?** Salvation by grace is often misunderstood as denial of obedience and fruit-bearing. Nothing could be further from biblical truth! It is true that we are saved freely by faith in what God's grace has done through Christ, and we have nothing of which to boast in ourselves. But we are not saved to do what we please; we are saved to live in accordance with God's will. This is not legalism or salvation "by works." Good works and obedience are the natural outgrowth of living in Christ's amazing grace.

Jesus helps us to understand this contrast in John 14 and 15 where He describes the closeness of His relationship with the Father. Jesus' obedience to the Father was not a forced legalistic compliance but an outgrowth of His abiding in the Father's love. This relation-based sacrificial obedience is what God longs our obedience to be!

**Bible Discovery:** John 3:16; 14:15, 31; 15:10; Ephesians 2:7, 8; James 2:17

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, October 5, 1886, par. 20; *Faith and Works*, p. 18.3

**10. In what ways do supernatural forces seek to retard our growth in grace?** We are engaged in a warfare that is real and dangerous because "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Therefore, to combat these powers of darkness we must "take up the whole armor of God, that [we] may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

Though supernatural forces are arraigned against us, we do not fight in our own strength. The angels of the Lord deliver us from evil and guide us with the Spirit into spiritual growth. The Bible warns us that Satan and his angels are in rage against the followers of Jesus who keep His commandments. His rage accelerates because he knows "his time is short" (Revelation 12:12). Jesus triumphed on the cross over all the forces of evil to give us victory! His power surpasses all the darkness of Satan's kingdom.

**Bible Discovery:** Psalm 34:7; 91:11, 12; Acts 5:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Hebrews 1:14; 12:22; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; Revelation 12:17

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 453.2-3

**11. What is the whole armor of God that Paul says we must take up to fight off the powers of darkness?** The believer fights valiantly against evil using the protective armor described in Ephesians 6:11-18. God provides each piece of equipment that enables us to fight the cunning attacks of Satan at our weakest points.

The girdle with which the soldier binds himself is truth, not just personal honesty but the truth about God and His character. This truth must not only lodge in our hearts, but we must act on it! The breastplate represents the righteousness of Jesus which preserves the spiritual life of the believer, and without which we can never see God. The footwear represents the sandals of

the soldier which enables him to stand his ground with sure footing. Because he has the “gospel of peace” (v. 15), representing the assurance of salvation through Christ, the soldier can stand firmly in peace during a spiritual conflict, but also be prepared to carry the Good News of salvation through Christ (Romans 10:15).

The shield represents faith, which “is the victory that overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4). It’s faith that stops the arrows of temptation before they become sin. The “fiery darts” (v.16) can be fear, discouragement, anger, unholy thoughts, envy, jealousy, or any other temptation of Satan. The “helmet of salvation” (v.17) protects the assurance of redemption in the mind and intellect of the believer. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God that cuts through every deception with which Satan tries to ensnare us.

**Bible Discovery:** Matthew 4:1-11; 22:1-14; Romans 1:17; 8:38, 39; Hebrews 4:12; 11:6; 1 Peter 2:11; 5:8

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 502.2

**12. What is the relationship between Christian growth and community?** God’s ideal for Christian growth takes place in the community of faith. Fellow believers organize together for service, for evangelism, encouragement, outreach, and witness. Jesus instructed the early church to fellowship together to receive a special outpouring of the Spirit to enable and strengthen their sharing of the Good News.

Christian growth calls for growth in service. Certainly, we can and should engage individually in acts of caring for others and in prayer, study, and worship. But God also intended His people to grow in Christian maturity together. Without corporate worship, we miss the identity and arena of our fellowship, and it is in this fellowship and interpersonal relationship with others that we mature and grow.

**Bible Discovery:** Matthew 20:25-28; Acts 1:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:24, 25

**Further Reading:** Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 491.1

### **Reflection...**

Growing in Christ entails daily maturing in His love and holiness, in addition to serving as His living witness. We have a blessed hope and anticipation in the soon-coming redemptive experience at Christ’s second coming. When Jesus returns to take His faithful home to heaven with Him.

### **Next Step...**

Have you ever examined your own life and wondered if you were growing in Christ? In our next step, we will discover the divine mirror that gives us insight into our personal spiritual growth.



### ***Discussion Questions***

1. Are you closer to Jesus than you were last year at this time? Explain your answer.
2. In what specific ways do we die to self?
3. What are the obligations of grace?

### ***Further Reading***

Official Adventist Website: <https://adventist.org/growing-in-christ>

### ***Contact Information***

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Request a personal Bible study: <https://www.bibleschools.com/en/personal-studies>

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