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# Introduction

## How to Get the Most out of *Growing Faith*

Welcome to a time of spiritual growth! The Bible makes clear that a relationship with Jesus Christ is challenging, so I decided to create a guide book that would be intellectually stimulating and spiritually satisfying. I hope you will find *Growing Faith* to be such a book in your life.

As you begin to use *Growing Faith*, you will notice that each lesson begins on a relatively “light” level, but becomes more challenging as the lesson progresses. Don’t be intimidated or discouraged, because you can participate at any one of three levels.

*First*, if you are meeting with a small group, you can simply attend and gain from the discussion and Bible study during the class session. This way, even if you feel too busy to do anything else, you’ll still glean the central message of the lesson.

*Second*, you can complete all the reading and study material up to “Building Your Relationship with God.” This will allow you to do some in-depth Bible study that can increase your sense of confidence and ownership of your faith.

*Third*, you can complete the entire lesson. This will mean spending time every day reading and studying the “Daily Bible Readings” section. This will increase your spiritual sensitivity to the Lord and His presence in your life.

I urge you to make *Growing Faith* a top priority each day for the next few weeks. Completing all the lessons will not only give you a sense of accomplishment, it will provide you with a whole new perspective of Jesus Christ and your relationship to Him. I believe this can happen whether you are a new or a not-so-new believer.

If you are using this in a one-to-one or small-group setting, don’t be shy about speaking out. If you have a question or are confused, say so. If you have been experiencing a fresh onslaught of temptations or trials, say so. If you believe you have gained insight that would help someone else in your group, say so. You will gain confidence, others will be encouraged, and you will have reason to pray together with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

I can virtually guarantee that you will receive some kind of opposition during these weeks of study. That is because Satan, your spiritual enemy, works overtime when you try to build a deeper relationship with God. So be watchful. Pray. And believe that God’s Holy Spirit will give you strength and wisdom to prevail.

If you have questions or comments about your studies in *Growing Faith*, I would love to hear from you. Just write to **FaithSearch** at the address on the back cover.

I am praying that God will bless you as you use *Growing Faith*.

In His service,



Dr. Don Bierle

# Growing Faith

## Understanding Its Purpose and Nature

*Growing Faith* is primarily intended to help a Christian believer build a biblical foundation for a lifelong relationship with God. This can be done either in a one-to-one relationship with another Christian, or in a small discussion group (Christian education class, neighborhood study, office discussion group, etc.). Of course, it can also be used as a self-study book.

In addition, *Growing Faith* may be used with someone outside the Christian faith who wants to understand what it means to be a Christian. However, if such a person is skeptical, wanting to know why the Christian faith is true, another series, *FaithSearch*, would be a better starting point. *FaithSearch* is available through Faith Studies International in book, video and audio formats (described in the list of resources at the back of this book). But if that person is open and seeking, or seems unclear about what being a Christian means, *Growing Faith* will be an effective tool.

*Growing Faith* is a bit unusual.

*First*, the content is designed to be more challenging than most other discipleship materials. The student is confronted with insights by C. S. Lewis; stories about other Christians' lives (including their failures); background reading to understand the context of a New Testament letter; and reflection on the application of Scripture to one's life. This is not a rote and mechanical style of learning.

*Second*, each lesson contains a variety of activities, including:

- Major selections from *Born to Grow* by Larry Richards
- Bible-study questions that correspond to each reading selection
- Daily Bible readings with focus questions
- Special projects
- Scripture memory
- Challenges for meditation and reflection
- Prayer exercises

There will be no problem with boredom in these lessons.

*Third*, the content provides a balance between the experiential and the cognitive dimensions of the Christian faith. Persons carrying emotional baggage from bad experiences will gain insight and comfort from the lives of others recounted in the readings. On the flip side, people who want solid answers to satisfy their inquiring minds will find challenging content in the Bible studies and quotes from C.S. Lewis. These lessons, therefore, can build wholeness—the spiritual development of heart and mind.

### **Growing Faith Leader's Guide**

The companion *Growing Faith Leader's Guide* is available to help anyone desiring to lead another person or a small group in discipleship. This is a valuable and indispensable tool and is highly recommended. Its content includes:

- A. A General Plan of Action
  1. Why have a disciple-making strategy?
  2. Principles and guideline for leadership
  3. Memory verses for duplication
- B. Lesson Plans to guide you through all eight lessons
- C. Answer key to every question in *Growing Faith*

To order, call **FaithSearch** at 952-401-4501 or 1-800-964-1447

# Growing Faith

## Understanding Its Structure

LESSON	THEMES & MAIN POINTS	WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT..	DAILY READINGS	SCRIPTURE MEMORY
<b>1</b>	What's new? Becoming a Christian. "Newness" vs. "Niceness."	...what's new	Selections from Luke & John	2 Corinthians 5:17
<b>2</b>	What's true? The new source of authority in a Christian's life. How to experience stability in the Christian life.	...what's true	Mark 1-6	1 John 5:13
<b>3</b>	Blueprint for spiritual growth. God's resources and Satan's obstacles. Understanding the battlefield of the will.	...spiritual growth	Mark 7-11	Ephesians 6:10-11
<b>4</b>	Prayer: talking and listening to God. The basis for specialness.	...prayer	Mark 12-16	John 16:24 Phillipians 4:6-7
<b>5</b>	Forgiveness: God's answer to sin and guilt. Maintaining newness in our relationship with God. Hindrances to growth: sin and guilt.	...sin and repentance  ...forgiveness	Phillipians	1 John 1:9 Psalm 119:11
<b>6</b>	The Holy Spirit within: guidance and power for change. Abiding (daily relationship): the key to spiritual growth.	...the Holy Spirit	1 John	1 Corinthians 6:19-20
<b>7</b>	Hindrances to growth: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The redemptive nature of trials and temptations. "Newness" vs. "Niceness."	...the devil, Satan  ...temptations/trials	Selections on the second coming of Christ	1 Corinthians 10:13
<b>8</b>	Body life: spiritual strength in fellowship. The Church: body, builder, bridge.	...the Body of Christ God's Church	Ephesians	Ephesians 4:15, 16