

First published in *The Guardian* (Charlottetown, PE), Aug. 2012.

Growing Believers

Dr. Jack C. Whytock

Immaturity is a tragic thing. Farmers instinctively want to see their planted fields mature and develop. If they do not, there is disappointment and a deep sense that this is directly going to impact their lives. So it is in the Christian life. Believers were meant to grow and mature in the ways of the Lord. We can ask the question, “How do Christians grow?”, and our answer can be several-fold, but there is one verse of Scripture which has been a constant answer to that questions for generations. It is Acts 2:42, **“And they devoted themselves to the apostolic teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”**

Growing believers are feeding Christians. They are filling their minds and souls with the scriptures. Good worship emphasizes good preaching. Good worship emphasizes stretching believers in knowing and applying the scriptures. Please note the context of Acts 2:42. This follows on after many have been initiated into the fellowship of the church through baptism. Initiation does not end the growth process! Rather, it should be followed by continuous instruction in scriptural truth. Growing believers gather together for teaching and preaching which will bring about growth and maturity by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses means to help you grow—the word taught to you. Are you availing yourself as a Christian of this means of maturing?

Secondly, growing believers are fellowshiping believers. What is fellowship? It is rooted in the idea of a common partnership. I live in partnership with other Christians. I do not exist by myself. Others help me to grow. They help me to mature. They help me to have my rough edges smoothed out. The Holy Spirit works in the family of believers, and I am blessed through this family. The temptation is always to abandon other believers and go it alone. Yes, we all get frustrated at times with of our families – nuclear or spiritual! Always remember someone else has to be patient with us as well. The testimony of Acts 2:42 is clear. The believers in Jerusalem devoted themselves to spending time with fellows believers maybe through meals, visits, travels, or smaller gatherings. Failure to fellowship leads to immaturity and stunted growth, no matter what excuse you may make.

Thirdly, growing believers break bread together. The Scripture is likely speaking here of the special meal Christians celebrate (also known sometimes as the Lord’s Supper or Communion). There are a variety of scriptural names for it. Communion logically follows on from fellowship because it speaks of what believers share in common. The essence of the Lord’s Supper is a testimony and proclamation that Jesus Christ died on the cross. It brings our lives back to a Christ-centredness. It is easy to lose sight of that Christ-centredness. The Jerusalem believers devoted themselves to being Christ-centred and proclaiming together what they held in common – Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord. Are you clear on what is the centre of the Christian faith and are you seeking unity with other believers? This special meal will bring you closer to Christ and His family.

Fourthly, growing believers pray. This includes those times of formal prayer, such as in worship services. When others are leading in public prayer, engage yourself in those prayers. Good worship is prayer oriented and saturated. Private prayer is also part of your spiritual growth as prayer is the great testimony of our spiritual dependence. Growing believers find the whole variety of prayer transforms their spiritual state – prayers of confession, thanksgiving, praise and intercession. May the Lord bless you in the way of growing through prayer.

The Lord is not finished with us. Our desire should be growth and maturity. Scripture, fellowship, communion and prayer are constants for your growth as a believer. Hold them together. May God bless you as you grow!

Rev. Jack Whytock is the director of Haddington House Trust, Charlottetown and a professor in theological colleges in Africa.

