

The Growth of the Christian

by Doug Hamilton

Toward the end of Luke chapter two, we find a twelve year old Jesus was accidentally left behind in Jerusalem during the annual family trip for the Passover. Instead of being panicked and confused, He was among the temple, "listening" to the scribes questions, "understanding" and giving "answers". They were quite impressed for he was quite comfortable in His Father's house. The chapter closes with an intriguing verse in Luke 2:52 *And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

The word for *increasing* is **προκόπτω** and means *to cut forward, to advance*: (NASB Dictionaries). Jesus was increasing in a way that His advancement stood out as the weeks and years went by. It was in four ways that Jesus did so.

1) Wisdom: Jesus grew in Intellectually.

The word that Luke uses for wisdom is σοφία, meaning cleverness and learning. It is applicable knowledge that one guides their life in ways of truth. Jesus grew intellectually in two ways.

- A. He grew through a natural process of bringing in knowledge into His life along the way. It was a continual motion of growth in wisdom from a young child when first returning from Egypt to Nazareth. *Luke 2:40* *The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.* He was not given all the wisdom at one time, but brought in wisdom on a daily basis like a giant sponge soaking up water, drawing it in continuously. This is why it was quite apparent to all those who knew Him.
- B. He received even greater wisdom when the Spirit of God was poured out on Him during His baptism at the inauguration of His ministry.
 - Luke 3:21-22 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."
 - It was predicted in the OT that this type of wisdom was to come. *Isaiah 11:1-4* *Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*² *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*³ *And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;*⁴ *But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.*

When you combine both types of wisdom, the results are stunning. By the time Jesus carried out His mission among the Jewish nation, His reputation of wisdom was second to none.

- Matthew 7:28-29 When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching;²⁹ for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as their scribes.
- Matthew 13:54 He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers?"

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- Mark 11:18 The chief priests and the scribes heard *this*, and *began* seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for the whole crowd was astonished at His teaching.
- John 7:15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, “How has this man become learned, having never been educated?”

2) Stature: Jesus grew in Physically.

Jesus started out as an infant, went through the toddler stage, through the stages of a child, a teen, a young man and an adult. There is a similar statement made about young Samuel in *1 Samuel 2:26* *Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men.* The word *stature* does not only refer to the physical size of a person.

Definition of Stature: There are two primary definitions of the word.

- A) natural height (as of a person) in an upright position
- B) quality or status gained by growth, development, or achievement

Jesus grew in His physical body, but also grew in His physical standing among His people. He grew into each of the stages of life that a Jewish male was expected to take. They were important stages to pass through.

- Jesus was circumcised on the eight day according to the Law (Luke 2:21).
- He was brought before the Lord for the purification ceremony age of forty days (Luke 2:22).
- Luke 2:41 tells us that His family made the regular trip to Jerusalem for the Passover. This was an important time in Jesus' life, for it added to His stature.
- As mentioned before, Jesus was well informed of the Law at age twelve prior to the important stage of His *bar mitzvah* at age thirteen. He was living up the stature of a young man.
- Luke 3:23 states *"When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age..."* This is important because a Jewish male was able to fully represent himself independently from the family which they are no longer under. It was a stature issue.
 - It was the age that Saul became king of Israel (1 Samuel 13:1).
 - It was the age that David became king. (2 Sam 5:4).
 - It was the age that a Levite could serve in the tabernacle (Numbers 4:3).
 - It was also the stage of life that Jesus would finally embark upon in His earthly ministry.

Because Jesus growing stature had easily met the expected standards of His culture, He was in a position to be effective among the people. His maturity surpassed the expectations of the Jewish nation. He grew physically in His stature.

3) "with God": Jesus grew Spiritually.

The text says that Jesus grew with God in His life. This has to do with the factor of spirituality. Jesus said in *John 4:24* *"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* God is not of this realm, therefore His followers are not of this world, but spiritual.

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Jesus saw things in life through the eyes of the Father, not the world. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus contrasted man's perception of the Law and God's perception. Some examples of this are the following:

- Matthew 5:21-22 Murder is wrong, but character assassination is just as bad in God's eyes.
- Matthew 5:27-28 Adultery is wrong, but lusting with your eyes is just as bad in God's eyes.
- Matthew 5:43-44 Loving your neighbor is good, but loving your enemy is even greater.
- Matthew 6:1-24 Giving, Praying and Fasting looks great, but to do so to be seen of men is horrible.

Jesus was spiritual in every way that He could be. He came for the cause of God, lived for the cause of God and died for the cause of God. He emptied Himself out for God with His entire being because He was a spiritual leader of a spiritual movement that bore His name, Christianity.

4) "with men": Jesus grew socially.

Jesus was an incredibly social person. There was not one person that Jesus did not reach out to.

- a) He reached out to lepers.
 - Luke 5:12
- b) Jesus reached out to the handicapped.
 - Luke 5:18 "Cripples"
- c) Jesus reached out to tax collectors.
 - Luke 5:29
- d) Jesus reached out to women.
 - Luke 8:2-3
- e) Jesus reached out to children.
 - Luke 8:16 "Little Children"
- f) Jesus reached out to the outcasts.
 - John 4:9 "Samaritan Woman at the Well"
- g) Jesus reached out to the rich and the poor.
 - Mark 8:2-3 "Starving People"
 - Luke 10:21-22 "Rich Young Ruler"

Jesus was the most social individual that ever walked the planet. He reached out to everyone in every circumstance. He was socially fully developed. He was such because He could not reach out to them unless He connected to them.

What about us? Do we also have an obligation to grow?

A) We have an obligation to grow intellectually.

- Christ is the center of our wisdom.
 - Ephesians 1:8-9 In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.
- We are to strive for this wisdom.

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- Colossians 1:9 "For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding..."
- We are to pray for this wisdom.
 - James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
- We are to live in this wisdom.
 - James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

B) We have an obligation to grow Physically.

- We "*grow in respect to salvation...*" (1 Peter 2:2) so as to best represent our God well.
- We must work hard on our jobs to be effective supporters of those in need (1 Th 4:11-12).
- We must seek to advance our stature in life to win people to the kingdom of God.
- We are to strive to be "*...a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13).
- We must grow in our stature to be in position to be salt of the earth and light to the world.

C) We have an obligation to grow Spiritually.

- We are to think spiritual thoughts (1 Cor 2:14)
- We are to pray spiritual prayers (Eph 6:18).
- We are to fight a spiritual war. (Eph 6:10).
- We live a spiritual life (Rom 12:1; 1 Pet 2:5).
- We are to be spiritual in our rescue of erring brethren (Gal 6:1).

Every moment of every day the Christian should be seeking to grow more and more spiritual in His relationship with God.

D) We have an obligation to grow Socially.

We must seek to expand our lives to people who might not be like us. The broader that circle is the more opportunities we will have to lead them to Christ. If we stay with our click-groups, we will never be able to be effective in the end.

- Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Conclusion: Be willing to be more like Jesus by growing intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially. You will be glad when you do!