

**Journey With Hope Series**

**Overcoming Obstacles to Spiritual Growth**

**1 Peter 1:22-2:3**

Wednesday, March 12, 2003 • Dr. David McKinley

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Well, my goodness, he's going to school to be a preacher, he's a singer and a preacher, he doesn't need anybody he can just take the whole service and do it himself. I'm tellin you that is wonderful and Chris Kuba I'm so proud of you and thankful for you tonight and a... Chris has been a great blessing to our life and ministry here. He works with a..., me he works with Pastor Graham and a... together a... we work with Chris as Chris is growing in Christ and supporting the work of the ministry here and helping in our pastoral area and I am so proud of him and grateful for him. Also here with him tonight is his wonderful, very beautiful wife, Hillary, they've been married about 9 months, if my calculations are correct, Hillary right down here and so a..., it's just a great young couple, very gifted of the Lord and I'm excited to see what the Lord is going to do in and through their lives together. In fact just a few days ago I had the opportunity of being over on the campus a..., at South Western, a..., actually a... Chris is a student at Dallas Theological Seminary but I had the opportunity of being on the campus at South Western Baptist Theological Seminary. We had about 20, 25 of our interns and students who were there, who met with us and I'm tellin you we've just got some of the greatest young people coming along who are committed to serving Christ and making a difference and I am very encouraged and I'm very thankful for a ministry that's making the difference in that area in the lives of so many young men and women and that's something for us to rejoice about and for us to give glory and thanks to God for a..., as a part of the Prestonwood Ministry. I'm sure glad you're here tonight. So many people, because of a..., Prestonwood Christian Academy and Plano School System are on spring break and of course even tonight our Awanna Program is taking a break and so a..., I really had no idea if anybody'd be here but I sure am glad that you came and thankful that we're here and that we're together and we do always have a great time when we get together in The Connection Service each week and this day has been one fabulous day. I have to admit, being a guy who lived in Florida for 10 years and skipped winter it was nice to finally feel the warmth of springtime and a..., I love spring and I think spring is in the air. I'm starting to notice some of the pear trees and other things that are having blooms and blossoms and that is something that is great and it tells me that it is time for things to start growing and a..., one of the most

exciting times of life is when we're watching things grow and I love the springtime of the year because I really believe that the springtime is such a vivid picture of what the Christian life is and is to be about. It's to be about the life of Christ that is being born through our lives and that we are to bear fruit to the glory of Jesus Christ and just as the spring of the year allows us to have the opportunity to witness and to observe growth and the flourishing of beauty and every aspect of the world, so it is that the Christian life is to be a life that is marked by growth. Growth is something that is normal for the Christian. But let me also very quickly say that while growth is normal for a Christian it is not automatic, it doesn't just happen because you grow older. In fact you can grow old in the Lord and never grow up in the Lord. And it's so important for us to understand and to give attention to the subject of growth in our faith and in our walk with Christ. In fact this is a theme that we find repeated in the New Testament, the challenge for us to grow, and while it is normal it is not automatic, neither is it something that is instantaneous. It seems like just all the sudden we're starting to see things emerge around us and over the next few weeks we're gonna see as things fill out and grow out, how it will just happen. But you don't hear it, you don't see it, it just begins to happen, it's not in an instant. And so we need to understand that it's that way in the Christian life. We don't just instantly become mature believers. It is a process and a progress that we go through in life and it therefore, it's not something that's necessarily easy, it's not easy to grow in the Lord. But the Bible tells us that this walk of faith, this life that we live, this journey that we're making with hope that is in Christ is a journey that we make that leads toward growth as we follow the Lord day by day.

Tonight I wanna talk to you about this subject, *Overcoming Obstacles For Spiritual Growth*. Overcoming Obstacles for spiritual growth in your life and in my life. I'm been walking with the Lord now since I was about 15 years of age. I've been reading and studying the Bible on a regular basis. I've had the wonderful privilege of going to seminary and yes, even learning and enduring and ultimately surviving the study of Greek and Hebrew and all those languages and things that are related to in-depth Bible study. But for all of the technicalities and for all of the opportunities that have come into my life the greatest challenge to me personally is to continue in a path of growth in my life in Christ. And it's something that I have to focus upon and pay attention to and therefore it's something that I believe that we need to see and to understand and to talk about. So what I wanna do tonight is, I wanna give you just several sort of introductory thoughts to begin to sort of weave a tapestry, if you will, of a background of what we're gonna talk about and then I wanna specifically identify 3 obstacles to growth that every Christian in this room will face in your life. First let me just begin with several of these thoughts and, and the simplest and the most basic is this, that...

**GROWTH IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF LIFE.**

We are able to grow in our life and our walk with Christ because of the

presence of the life of Christ in us. Let me be very quick to say tonight that a part from the real and evident work of the Holy Spirit living in you, everything that I have to say tonight really will have little significance and really little relevance to your life. Because the way that we grow is as a result of the presence of life that is living in us. As we're seeing these barren bushes and these twiggy trees turn into, as though it were a..., flourishing plants, we're seeing that because even though they look dead there's a presence of life. And in you and me, though we were born into this world and born into sin something powerful and transformational occurs the moment that we receive Jesus Christ and that is that we receive the gift of eternal life and therefore the presence of life makes growth possible. Peter talks about this in the book that we're studying so if you'll take your Bible and open it tonight to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 1, I wanna pick up my reading in verse 23 because there it makes it very clear that the presence of life is real in a person who knows Jesus in a personal way. It's not knowing about Jesus, it's knowing Christ. In fact he even begins talking about this when he says in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1, verse 3:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope...*

And so therefore down in verse 23 this is what he says:

*having been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*

The Christian life is described as an experience of being born again and I am born again the moment that I receive Christ into my life and spiritually I become alive and that born again experience...

If we can get that Scripture back up there.

...that born again experience is actually...

A..., let's go back one if we can? Back one Scripture, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 1, verse 23. There it is, there we go, we got it, right there.

*Having been born again, not of corruptible seed...*

That is something that will wither and perish.

*...but incorruptible which is the word of God...*

You see everywhere you read about the life we have in Christ you realize that it is eternal life, it is life that is not corruptible. And so the Bible talks about the presence of this life in us. That's why Jesus said in John chapter 3 and verse 3, to a religious man,

*"Except you be born again you cannot see the kingdom of heaven."*

This thing about being a Christian and growing in the Christian life. You don't grow in to Christianity, you grow once you become a Christian and though it all begins the moment that you are born again into the family of God. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians chapter 5 in verse 17 talks about this. When the Bible says that:

*...if anyone is in Christ they are a new creature...*

Or literally a new creation.

*...old things have passed away; and behold now all things have become new.*

If you don't get anything else I say tonight please be sure that you hear this. To simply study the Bible, to simply learn about the Christian faith, to simply go out and try harder to do better, to be more in life in and of yourself is as though it were to open a present as you would on Christmas morning only to find, batteries not included. Hum. Did you ever have one of those Christmas', where you were so excited because you got something you wanted but when you opened it you realized that the batteries weren't included. There was no power, there was no force to make it work, to make it happen and to simply learn spiritual truth and spiritual knowledge and biblical background, though it's true and real, if you have never experienced new life in Jesus Christ then you don't have the batteries that are needed to be the power source of that life because growth is only possible when life is present and the life of Jesus Christ is in us. So when we talk about growth I'm talking about that in the lives of people who have the presence of Christ in them and if you have never received Jesus Christ, if you'll just look tonight on the back of that little handout you got it says, *Life Connection*, and it tells you how you can make a life connection with Jesus Christ. Second statement tonight.

**GROWTH IS A PROCESS AND IS A PROGRESSIVE EXPERIENCE FOR EVERY BELIEVER.**

It's a process and a progressive experience and God uses a variety of means, a variety of tools, if you will, to lead us in growth and life and in faith in our walk with Christ. God uses His Word and without a doubt we grow by the Word of God. It's so much a part of growing up and growing mature in Christ. But God not only uses His Word, God uses the circumstances of life to help us grow, that is the things that we go through, you know, the stuff you say, "I don't know why this is happening to me." God's using it, God and God alone can use the stuff that happens to you. That's why James said in James chapter 1 and verse 2:

<sup>2</sup>*...count it all joy when you fall into various trials and temptations,*  
<sup>3</sup>*knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*

Or perseverance and it goes on to talk about you endure these things so that you may be mature and lacking in nothing. You see ladies and gentlemen, either God is in charge in my life as a part of His plan or else everything is left to fate, everything is left to just how it happens in life and nothing in life will ever be worth living if all we're doing

is just waiting for the next catastrophe. It's that we are living on purpose, trusting in God who is working through the circumstances of life, some of them that feel good and some of them that don't, to help me to grow in the character and to the likeness of Jesus Christ. God uses His Word, God uses His circumstances, God uses family and God uses friends to help me in growth. Some of the people that get on your nerves the most, you know who some of those are? Just think of somebody that gets on your nerves. Don't look at em, just think about them okay. [congregation laughter] The people that get your nerves the most, God uses those people in your lives, the people you like and the people you don't like, because God uses family and God uses friends and God uses people that we encounter all to be a part of the progress and of the process of growth in my life. You see the principle of growth is never done in isolation, it is always a part of my relationship with God and my relationship with others. There's a third thought that I would say for you and set for you as a background tonight and that is that:

**GROWTH IS A PRIMARY THEME AND CONCERN FOR PETER IN THIS BOOK THAT WE'RE STUDYING.**

We've been studying week in and week out the journey with hope. But one of the primary means of hope that Peter establishes is that God is working in my life so that I can grow, even when I suffer, even when I face persecution in life. He says here in chapter 1, we've been reading verse 23:

*<sup>23</sup>having been born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible through the word of God which lives and abides forever, <sup>24</sup>because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, the flower falls away, <sup>25</sup>But the word of the LORD endures forever." Now this word which is preached is the gospel which was preached to you. <sup>2:1</sup>Therefore laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, <sup>2</sup>as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may...*

What is the next word? Oh I don't think you were reading with me. Chapter 2, verse 2:

*as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,*

Peter says you need the word that you may grow. But not only did he say it here in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 2 and verse 3 if you go all the way to the end of the second letter of Peter, the second epistle, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, chapter 3, verse 18, look how he ends the book. In the early part of the book he's talking about growing, in the first letter, but in the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter look at what he says:

*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.*

Peter say, I want you to grow, I want you to grow up and it is one of the passionate themes of his life as he's writing to these scattered believers who are struggling, who are suffering, who are facing resistance. Peter says, I don't want you just to survive, I want you to grow. Ladies and gentlemen if there's anything that is a passion of this pulpit and of our church in these days is that we would not simply hunker down and survive the times of which we're living but that we would grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and challenge that in each others lives.

So first we've said growth is possible because of the presence of life. Secondly growth is a process and a progressive experience for every believer. Then growth is a primary theme and concern for Peter in this book that we're studying together. One final background thought and that is that:

**GROWTH IS THE PATHWAY TO HEALTH IN MY FAITH AND IN MY RELATIONSHIPS.**

Growth is the pathway to health in my faith and in my relationships. One of the things I always talked to every perspective newly married couple about is about the need for them not just simply to say that they are Christians. Are you a Christian? Oh, yes I'm a Christian! But to ask and to press the point, are you a growing Christian? Do you know why so many Christian relationships, Christian marriages, Christian friendships, fray and falter and fail? It's because people aren't growing in their life with Christ and in their relationship with each other. Relationships can become just like a stagnate pond and if there's no life coming in and no, no oxygen, as though it were, and growth and, and newness this then there's gonna be a stagnation and a failure and what happens in my faith is that I quit growing, what happens in my relationships with other people is that I quit growing and before long my life is just in stagnation. So my goal tonight's to stir you up and to challenge growth in your life. Now if we're going to grow we're gonna to have to deal with the obstacles of growth and so tonight what I wanna do is I want us to go back here to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 2 and having looked at this background I want us now to begin to identify the 3 obstacles to growth that each one of us will face and how we are to deal with them.

Now the first obstacle is seen in chapter 2, verse 1:

Therefore...

Whenever you see a therefore in the Scripture stop and ask yourself what is it there for? Okay? What's it there for? And it's there for to tell you that this is connected to the thoughts you've just read and the thought we just read in this passage of Scripture is how we've been born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God and there's new life in us and we're to be growing and living this life, therefore, if this life is present in you then:

*...lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking,*

Right there in all those words he gives us the first obstacle that we have to overcome in growth and that is the obstacle of **ATTITUDE**. The obstacle of attitude, you see I like to see the problems in my life as being someone else's fault, I like to transfer the blame of things that happen to me to others. But the primary challenge that I have to face in my life and in my walk with Christ is my attitude. Because so much of where I trip is in what's going on inside of me. Yes there're problems in the world, there're issues in the world, there're problems in relationships and issues in relationships, there are circumstances that are favorable and not favorable in live. But let me tell you the greatest challenge that I face is my attitude. Someone has said that if you could kick the person responsible for the majority of your problems you couldn't sit down for a week and one of the biggest things that we have to realize is that for all of the desire and effort that we would put into growth, growth in my life and in my faith is all **< turn tape >** most hindered, is often most tripped over at the point of my attitudes and so Peter begins to talk about some things that are going on inside of us and the way that he talks about them he talks about them like they're old soiled garments. That word laying aside there, chapter 2 verse 1, where he says:

*Therefore, lay aside all malice...*

The idea is, is that you've got on something that's kinda old and filthy and you, you, you just need to get it off, you just gotta get rid of it. It's just gotten kinda nasty and it's something that's keeping you from being what God desires. Are you okay with me in short sleeves up here, I just wanna be sure? [congregation laughter] I was gettin a little warm anyway so it was a gracious way to take off my coat, a good illustration. But there're attitudes in my life that, that he says you just gotta get rid of them. Numerous times in the New Testament you read put off, a..., lay aside, right here that's what he's saying, he's saying, get rid of these things. In a decisive moment say I'm not gonna live this way any more. And though you may be a believer one of the biggest things that will often hinder your growth is the fact that you are letting the attitudes of the inside destroy the life of Christ that is at work in you. I actually like to connect this verse to the verse before it and the verse after it. The verse before it says in verse 23 that we've been born again. It's the picture of birth and of life. The verse after it says that as newborn babes we are to desire the pure milk of the word and when I think about new life and babes I think about what you have to do with a baby. Babies have to be changed. Amen? Yeah, somebody said amen back there. [pause for congregation laughter] And one of the most distasteful and one of the most undesirable parts of dealing with a baby is how many times that baby has to be changed. I was over in our preschool and children's building today and I was walking through there and you know I got to thinking [pause] do you know how many diapers we go through on a Saturday night and a Sunday morning here at Prestonwood? I mean we probably have, well, I mean, several hundred babies who need to be changed every week, maybe like 5 or 6 hundred and you think about all the changing that goes on over there around these services. How would you like to take out the trash on Sunday?

Huh? I mean I gotta tell you there's something about that, that when I started thinkin about how much and how many I though, man that is gross. [pause] But you know what? For all the babies that are changed there are a lot of people who come to church on Sunday and they try to present their righteousness as filthy rags in the sight of Christ and they walk in and they walk out and they're never changed. And ladies and gentlemen one of the most dangerous things that happens is that we are in an environment where we could grow but so many of us don't because we won't get rid of the attitudes that we hold on to on the inside. We have things about us that stink, frankly, but we're able to cover it up and to cloth it and not to let anybody see it. Now, now he tells us what they are. So let's just go through em, let's just identify them here because these are the attitudes that hinder my growth in Christ.

Number one he says:

*Therefore, laying aside all malice,...*

What is **MALICE**? Well it's the same word that we get our word malignant from, something that is malignant is something that is sick and diseased and even life threatening. When I think about it I also think of that a...character, that evil character, I believe it was in *Sleeping Beauty*, if not I can't remember the exact of the, of the Disney stories, but the, the one who malapropcent, who though on the one hand posed as having grace on the other hand had nothing but evil in the heart. And ladies and gentlemen the Bible is talking here about those of us who live with hidden anger in our lives. We may present a pleasantness to others but we are living with evil intent and concealed anger. And one of the things that is most destructive to growth in your life in my life in my walk with Christ in your walk with Christ is ultimately concealed anger, evil intent. That even when others had shown us good or when God has been good in our lives we ultimately allow that good to be put away instead we have an evil desire on the inside, hidden anger even at times behind good actions. Oh it's easy for us to see the evil and the, and, and the malice in the world and men like Kim Jung Ill of Korea and of Saddam Hussein, and they are men of evil and ultimately we see that evil and we must identify that evil but just as we see it in the world and what it does to people how much more must we expose the evil of malevolence in our heart even when we have a tendency to wear an exterior of religious piety? You wanna know why many of us aren't growing because we're angry on the inside and instead of really living with the good will of Christ we've let ourselves become inshackled and bound in anger.

The second thing that he talks about here is not only malice, he says:

*...let all deceit...*

**DECEIT**, you know what deceitfulness is? It's living as though it were in a misleading or a misrepresenting fashion, you mislead others, you misrepresent the truth to them. You may tell them what they wanna hear but it's half truths which are always whole lies, by the way. But the reality



is, is that we let craftiness and deceitfulness get into our lives. It's what I would call, living as though it were with a hidden agenda and only letting people know what you want them to know but trying to run your agenda in life. Then another word that is translated deceit in some translations is the word guile and it means that which keeps you from being pure. And so the Bible says that the attitude of malice and ultimately the attitude of deceitfulness are the things that can become a part of destroying our lives.

And then he quickly goes on to the next one and that is **HYPOCRISY**, the hypocrite. The word hypocrisy in the original language simply means wearing the mask, playacting and one of the greatest tragedies that I see in our lives and in our churches is that we get good at it after a period of time. We actually come to a place in life where we know after we've made a profession of faith how to get good at acting religious. We know how to carry our Bible. We know how to smile. We know how to do all these things and say all the right things but ultimately we're playing the hypocrite. And one of the greatest obstacles to growth in so many lives is that we've gotten good at being hypocrites and we've forgotten what it is to be real and authentic in our lay...in our faith and our walk with Christ. We're so afraid that somehow, somebody might see something tarnished and so what we do is, is we wear the mask, we play the gra...game, we talk right, we act right but we cease to grow spiritually. We present good motives but we often mask selfish desire and hypocrisy becomes an obstacle. So there's malice, there's deceit, there's hypocrisy. And then he says here:

*...and all envy...*

**ENVY**, envy, envy, envy is resentment and discontentment, resentment and discontentment. It's what keeps me from being at peace. It's what destroys so many families and friendships and churches. There's nothing as destructive in human relationships as is envy and so many times growth is interrupted and growth is stopped in life because we begin to be consumed on the inside with, "God, they got a better deal than I did. God, you're treating him or her better than you're treating me." And before long envy becomes an attitude that is hidden and is ultimately destructive in life. It's a mindset of comparison, a mindset of entitlement and when discontentment and resentment team up together they will blind me in life and they will destroy my faith and my witness.

One other thing that he talks about here and that is **SLANDER**:

*...all evil speaking,*

When we say things to cut and to tear others down and away, destroying their character, destroying their witness with the words of our tongues, spreading gossip, spreading rumors and one of the reasons that so many churches are not growing and so many Christians are not growing is because they're constantly se...in the process of just letting their tongues bless God and curse men and James said that's not real religion. It's gotten a

little quite in here. I've always said that my mission in life is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable and maybe I'm stepping on some toes here tonight. But just so you know every time I point one finger that direction I got 3 or 4 pointin back at me and I've already had to live through this message so I could stand up here and preach it and the thing God reminded me of the most is that the reason I often do not grow is because of attitudes in my life that are not becoming of Jesus Christ. Everywhere I look these days in the lawn businesses and the landscaping companies I see that they're all talking about preemergence, that you need to get the preemergent killer out there to keep the weeds from growing so the grass can come in and be beautiful in the summertime. This is exactly what I'm talking to you about in your life and your faith that the weeds will so surround and so choke out your life that instead of reflecting the beauty of the growth of Christ, you're life will be out of control because of attitudes that destroy. The first obstacle that we have to deal with is attitude.

The second obstacle, and none of these are as long as the first one so just relax, this isn't over about a 70-minute message anyway. So...the second obstacle is **APPETITE**, our appetite. What are we hungry for? If you go to a doctor and a doctor wants to determine your well being and your condition one of the primary things that he talks to you about is, is how are you eating and what are you eating and are you hungry, and what about your appetite? Because ultimately if our appetite is good then it's a sign of health and if our appetite is bad or limited then it's a sign of ill health in life and it's so important that we ultimately understand and ultimately embrace the fact that God wants us to have a good appetite. I guess this is of little value to the message but it was a great story about appetite that I read just a few days ago.

One cynic wrote:

*God populated the earth with vegetables of all kind so that man would live a long and a healthy life. But then Satan created the 99¢ double cheeseburger and Satan said to man. "You want fries with that?" And man said, "Supersize them!" [congregation laughter] And man gained pounds.*

*And God created beautiful yogurt and Satan froze the yogurt and brought forth chocolate and nuts and bright colored candy to put on top and man gained more pounds.*

*And God brought forth running shoes and man resolved to loose those extra pounds and Satan brought forth cable TV, remote controls and potato chips. And man clutched the remote and ate the chips and Satan saw to it all and said, "It is good!"*

*And then man went into cardiac arrest and God sighed and created quadruple bypass. And Satan created HMO's. [pause for congregation laughter]*

Heh, and that's the end of the story. But anyway I thought it was a good story. [congregation laughter] Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. There're

just so many things that we do that are bad for the appetite and yet the Bible says God wants us to have a good appetite. Look at what the Bible says in chapter 2, verse 2:

*As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,*

He says as babes desire the milk of the word. The word milk there is not really talking about something that is shallow or something that is simple. There is a passage of Scripture that says when you should have been eating solid food you could only get milk. But here it's talking about whole milk. It's not talking about something that's thinned out or something that's, that's run down, it's talking about something that is complete, something that is sufficient, something that will meet your every need and so it's saying just as you need total nutrition, desire the milk of the word of God. I think of it more in terms of as newborn babes desire the milkshake of the word, everything you can have of the word. And then he talks about being babes and, and again we have to immediately deal with the fact that mentally when we think about being babes we think about being immature. But he's not talking about maturity here he's talking about intensity here. And if you've ever seen a baby get hungry and want milk, you know what intensity is, to hear them cry, to hear them crave, to hear them not be satisfied until they've had what is sufficient and can bring comfort and assurance and that's what God's saying here. He's saying you like babes with intensity desire the fullness, the sufficiency of the milk that you may grow thereby. You see the Bible is the food source, the fuel source of the Christian life. And the only way that I'm gonna grow is in proportion to how this book is influencing and impacting my life. How am I ever gonna get rid of these old cloths and, and get rid of these rags that are stinking in my life? It's only gonna be by the word of God. That's why Jesus said:

***"Sanctify them in truth."***

The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12:

*The word of God is full of living power, it's sharper than the sharpest knife cutting deep into the innermost thoughts and desires and exposing us for who we really are.*

How do I separate pretense and reality in my life and faith? It's by the word of God. And that's why the preaching of the word of God and the teaching of the word of God and the reading of the word of God and the memory and the meditation of the word of God are so vitally important because ultimately as this book becomes a part of my life, my life begins to reflect the life of this book. Please hear me tonight. God hasn't given us this book for information, He's given it to us that it may be assimilated into our lives that we may grow in Christ. James chapter 1 talks about this. Turn back just a few pages if you will to James chapter 1 and verse 21 and together we read there about God's intent for us to grow through His word. James 1:21 says:

*<sup>21</sup>Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. <sup>22</sup>But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

Hypocrisy, malice, envy, what is all that? Deceiving yourself! You see it's only when the word of God begins to get into my life and I live that word that I can grow. You see far too many of us have assumed that exposure and experience are the same thing. It's kinda like when I go to Home Depot, it's a great place to go. You can do anything by yourself at Home Depot. But I wanna promise you I have been in there and had a whole lot more exposure than I've had experience in my life. In fact I don't really care to have all that much experience, I like the exposure just not the experience. And yet you know most people go to church just like they go to Home Depot? They go get in the atmosphere of all these things that can happen and be done and changes that can be made but when it all comes to it they just kinda walk out and they don't really experience it. And you see that's the difference is that the word of God wants to get into our lives to change us and here is the secret to Christian growth, it is the word, the word, the word.

D. L. Moody once said:

*"The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives."*

If your life isn't changing by Bible study and Bible knowledge and Bible memory then there is something seriously th...wrong with what you're doing with the Bible because you are trading exposure for experience, information for assimilation in your life and it is the Bible that will ultimately create in us a good appetite, hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Final thing, obstacle number one is attitude, obstacle number two is appetite, obstacle number three to Christian growth, **AMNESIA**. Amnesia, what happens when you have amnesia? You forget, right? Look at what he says here in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 1, or chapter 2 again. He says in verse 2:

*<sup>2</sup>As newborn be...babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow by there...thereby, <sup>3</sup>if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

Literally he says there, since you've tasted that the Lord is gracious please don't forget how good that tasted. Don't ever forget the power of God's grace in your life. Don't ever downgrade the power of His grace to make you, to change, to shape you into the image of Christ because one of the most tragic things that happens to so many of us is we forget what we have tasted in Christ. You know one of the things that I have learned about food is that I crave food, not only for the food itself because my body requires it, but I crave food because I remember it. There are certain deserts that my wife makes. She cook all kinds of things but I'm

tellin you there's some deserts that she makes that if she doesn't make them it never tastes quit right because ultimately it's, it's the one that she does that I not only enjoy, but I remember and I desire. Have you ever been back to eat a meal somewhere and through that meal you've looked at somebody and said, "I forgot how good this tasted." There's some places that you just gotta go there to get that one of a kind taste and that's exactly what he's talking about here. He's simply saying don't forget how good God is, don't forget the quality and the character of His word and enjoy it until such a place that growth is a part of your life and the emptiness and the distastefulness of everything else is put away from you, experiencing the word of God. That's why the Bible says in Psalm 34:8:

*Oh taste, see that the LORD is good;...*

Taste and see and a part of growth is remembering the goodness of God and the power of His word. Is it any wonder that a songwriter wrote it this way.

O to grace how great a debtor  
 Daily I'm constrained to be!  
 Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
 Bind my wandering heart to Thee:  
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
 Prone to leave the God I love;  
 Take my heart, Lord, take and seal it;  
 Seal it to They courts above.

But grow, you grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ for to Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.