

Growing

“Obeying”

Week 5 – October 30, 2022

Scripture: John 14:23-24; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Have you ever tried to do something strictly out of obligation, duty, or maybe even just because you felt bad for someone? Was it difficult to complete?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Watch the video posted here together: www.kensingtonchurch.org/growing Each week has a short video about the weekends message.

Discuss the following context:

Love is a powerful motivator. In **John 14:23-24** Jesus says, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.” When love replaces duty in terms of our submission to Jesus, we move from religion to relationship. Our obedience to God’s word is not purely because an authority told us we have to. We do it because he loves us, and his love motivates us to love him. Genuine love always leads to action.



Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Consider the word “obey” in **John 14:23-24**. Often we think of obeying as negative – maybe we take it as derogatory, or it makes us feel like a child, even the feelings of being “less than” or being “quieted” could be stirred up. Our human experience says obeying is not for the benefit of the one doing the obeying, but more for the one giving the directive. When Jesus asks us to obey, how could it be for our benefit and not his?
2. Just as love was a powerful motivator that caused God to send Jesus (**John 3:16**), our love for him should become a powerful motivator that leads us to want to follow and obey him.
 - a. Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you obeyed all the rules and felt empty?
 - b. What happens inside us when love replaces duty?
 - c. Obedience happens, not by trying harder, but in actually loving God more. How can we love God more? What challenges do you face in putting **2 Corinthians 5:14-15** to action?
3. It's a journey we won't get right all of the time, but when we start this journey – *believing in God, seeking God, knowing God, loving God, obeying God* – we start to live a transformed life. Think over the last 5 weeks of this series and consider where you are in this journey. Do you have a person or community you can journey with? If you do not, is there a step you could take? How can your life look different if you enter into or continue this journey with others?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Pray a prayer of gratitude that God loves us so much that he sent his son Jesus to us. Sit in silence for a bit, and ask God what he is saying to you personally through this Growing series.

Growing

“Loving”

Week 4 – October 23, 2022

Scripture: Luke 15; 1 John 4:19; Ephesians 3:16-19

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: What book or movie does everyone love that you don't like at all?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Watch the video posted here together: www.kensingtonchurch.org/growing Each week has a short video about the weekends message.

Discuss the following context:

This is the fourth of five weeks looking at growth in our relationship with God which results in transformation.

Kensington's Mission statement is **to see everyone transformed and mobilized by Jesus**. This series is about transformation of our lives- *by Jesus*. Jesus' desire is that we would become disciples. Disciples, as Dallas Willard so succinctly puts it, are those who are **“Learning how to be with Jesus to learn from Jesus how to be like Jesus.”**

The five things we are considering in this series are *not steps*, but rather a part of an ongoing and never-ending process that continues until our hearts no longer beat. Instead of steps leading us somewhere, think of a cycle that feeds and grows off each part. Today we look at the critical and powerful place of love in our spiritual growth.



Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. In our English language, we use the word love pretty generously: we love people, food, football. The New Testament was written in Greek, and that language had a number of words for love so a distinction could be made regarding feelings for a person and feelings for a sailboat, for example. The word used throughout the New Testament when speaking of God's love is the word "Agape". *It is a decision and commitment on God's part to us no matter what we do.* How does this differ from how we often define love?
2. **Luke 15** reveals God's passionate love for us. He tells three short stories (The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, The Lost Son) meant precisely to let us know what God feels. We are the lost object or person in each story. When you imagine God thinking about you in these ways, how do you feel? Do you believe there is something you can do which will cause God to love you more or less than he does right now?
3. To unlock the power to transform us, we need to experience the love of God. John wrote: "We love because he first loved us" (**1 John 4:19**). Our own love is a response, an increasing and powerful loving, because we are experiencing the deep love of God in our soul. Ask yourself this question: Am I living loved? Is my life an expression of one who experiences being loved by God? Why or why not?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Pray the following Scripture- a prayer God wants to answer. The pronoun is changed to pray it for ourselves; insert names when you pray it for others. Consider praying this prayer each morning for the next week.

God, I pray that out of his glorious riches that you may strengthen me with power through your Spirit in my inner being, so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith. And I pray that I, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that I may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

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"Knowing"

Week 3 – October 16, 2022

Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3; John 17:3

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Each of us has the desire to be truly known. Someone who knows the things we like and dislike, what brings us joy and happiness, and also what sets us off. Who are the people in your life who truly know you?

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Watch the video posted here together: www.kensingtonchurch.org/growing Each week has a short video about the weekends message.

Discuss the following context:

Knowing about someone and knowing someone are not the same thing. One is information based, the other is experience based. One is objective, the other is subjective. **2 Peter 1:3** says, "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our **knowledge** of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." The word "know" in the original language conveyed experiential knowing. It's not information or facts we come to know about, it's a Person we come to know. When God is reduced to theology, doctrine, or information, the power to be changed is lost. Knowing God is the foundation to following Jesus.



Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. Peter writes 2 Peter near the end of his life and his words are like a farewell speech to a group of churches he loved. He wants them to know Jesus' followers must never stop growing, and in order to grow in their relationship with God they must continue to know him better.
 - a. Knowing God is a lifelong pursuit. Is this difficult? What barriers get in the way?
 - b. Continually pursuing God to know him better does not mean we are not close to him. God's promise is that if we move close to him, he will move close to us. How does this give you hope and confidence?
2. Jesus wants us to spend time with him because he loves us. As we spend time with him, we get to know him, and what is important to him becomes important to us. **John 17:3** says eternal life starts with *knowing God*. How does this distinction shape your desire to know God right now?
3. God created us for an intimate friendship with himself. It is not a friendship that starts after this life when we get to heaven, but here and now. Are you making God a priority in your life and growing your friendship with him? Why or why not? How can you make one shift towards knowing him versus knowing about him?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Praise God that he created us for relationship, he knows every detail of our lives, and he loves us unconditionally. Tell him how you desire to grow in your relationship with him, how you desire to *know him*.

Growing

"Seeking"

Week 2 – October 9, 2022

Scripture: Jeremiah 29:13-14; Psalm 63:1; John 15:4-5

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Think about a time in your life when you grew rapidly, either physically or emotionally. Maybe it was an emotional jump transitioning into high school, or that summer you grew two inches in height. Share your "growing" memory with the group.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Watch the video posted here together: www.kensingtonchurch.org/growing Each week has a short video about the weekends message.

Discuss the following context:

Relationships require pursuit. This is the foundation for all that follows- knowing, loving, and obeying him. Seeking is the only one of this process that we have the ability to choose to do. What does a life of seeking God look like? We can equate it to how it works in human relationships. Without seeking God he will remain unknown, unloved, and our submission out of duty at best.



Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. When we seek God, we discover that God is the first and ultimate seeker. But for the relationship to grow, we need to show up. Discuss what the following Scriptures say about seeking God:
 - a. **Jeremiah 29:13-14** – Wholeheartedly
 - b. **Psalm 63:1** – Earnestly
2. God invites us to enter into a life where seeking Him is a priority. **Read John 15:4-5.** Abiding, or remaining in the Father, is seeking. The more time we spend with him, the more we will know him. What practical ways can you abide? What do you need to let go of in order to make abiding a priority in your life? What fears do you have about pursuing a relationship with Jesus?
3. God gives us tools to seek him. Spiritual practices create opportunities for him to reveal himself to us. Discuss the following practices and how they could allow you to wholeheartedly and earnestly seek God. Pick one of these practices to focus on this week.
 - a. Read your Bible. Picture Jesus sitting next to you and allow it to become a conversation.
 - b. Pray and spend time in silence. If you do all the talking, you will be less likely to hear what God might want to say.
 - c. Journal about being with Jesus. Write what you are learning, thinking, worried about, or confused about.
 - d. Listen to worship music. Allow your heart to feel the wonder and beauty of God.

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God he invites us into a life of seeking him. Ask him to reveal himself to us. Ask him to open the eyes of our hearts. Praise God for he is inviting us and he is waiting for us.

Growing "Believing"

Week 1 – October 2, 2022

Scripture: Mark 4:26-29; John 6:22-29; Luke 14:25-35

Grab your Bible and a few people to connect with. Look up the verses below and share your thoughts. It's that easy!

Share: Is there something you liked so much you worked really hard to improve at? Perhaps it was a sport or a hobby. Share your experience about putting in extra effort and if you experienced growth as a result.

Read the scripture noted above together: Take turns reading if you prefer. Enjoy the different Bible translations we each read.

Watch the video posted here together: www.kensingtonchurch.org/growing Each week has a short video about the weekends message.

Discuss the following context:

Christianity easily drifts into a form of behavior modification when it comes to growth as followers of Jesus. There is much said and written about discipleship and spiritual formation, but when it comes down to it, we end up believing in Jesus so that our sins are forgiven and heaven is ours one day, and in the meantime, the Bible is our resource for how we are to live. But is knowing what God wants from us, and even wanting it ourselves, and putting in the effort all that is involved in life transformation?

A linear process of Believe → Learn → Effort → Trust is not what Jesus describes in Scripture. Instead, Jesus shows us there is a certain mystery in growth (**Mark 4:26-29**), just like there is mystery in how God actually transforms us.

*"This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, **though he does not know how.**"*
Mark 4:26-27

Scripture describes an ongoing, cyclical process of growth.



Once we believe, we seek God (relationally). As we do, we get to know him, and in that knowing, our sense of his love for us, and our corresponding response of love for him grows. This increases our desire to surrender to him (obeying).

Share your thoughts about the following questions:

1. How can we grow in our relationship with God so that our lives are increasingly changed for the better? To answer this question we must ask two other questions: Do we want to grow? And, are we willing to put in the effort to grow? Discuss the following.
 - a. What do you want to be true of you when your life is over? What do you want to be said of you? Your legacy?
 - b. It's one thing to wish for your legacy to be true and another thing to put effort into pursuing what it takes to make it a reality. Share something you wish to improve or accomplish in your life, but lack the follow through to take action steps toward making a reality.

2. When Jesus uses the phrase "eternal life" he is not referring to some other place we go **after** we die, but to the fullness of life that we can experience **right now** if we know, trust and follow him.
 - a. Do you feel like you are experiencing "eternal life" right here and now? Why or why not?
 - b. Read **John 6:29** and **James 2:19**. We can believe things about Jesus, but if we really believe that he can lead us to "eternal life" of peace, hope, fullness, and abundance, we might take a step to believe IN him, not just ABOUT him. What is the difference?

3. Believing is much more than mental assent; it is better described as trust. Trust is the beginning of life with God. What barriers exist in fully trusting God?

4. Read **Luke 14:25-35**. Jesus does not ask us to believe a certain set of things, instead he asks us to join him – ALL in and fully committed. What does it mean to be fully committed to Jesus? How do you find his invitation in **Luke 14:26-27** to be challenging?

5. Jesus follows the challenge in **Luke 14:26-27** with two metaphors. The first is about a builder who starts building without a plan (**Luke 14:28**), and the second is about a king who goes into battle against another king (**Luke 14:31**). Jesus wants us to understand his expectations before we trust in him. What does this reveal about the character of God?

Pray together: Ask each other to share what is on your heart today. Thank God that trusting in him leads to seeking, then to knowing, then to loving, then to obeying. Thank him his invitation is to believe – to consider, explore, and investigate – if he is the Son of God and worthy of our lives. Ask God to help us begin, or to continue, the journey to believing in Jesus!