

GROW Lesson 3: Stepping Out in Faith



Q: Do you consider yourself to be an introvert or an extrovert? What is good about each trait? What challenges does each face? It may seem more appealing to pursue being an extrovert, but it could be argued that introverts are better at deep, meaningful relationships. Extroverts are experts at making friends and embracing the gift of life, but perhaps many of their friendships are shallow and superficial. Of course, it is possible for extroverts to have great friendships and it is possible for introverts to influence many people, but each can learn from the other. Is there an ideal balance? Perhaps. Let's be grateful for who God has created us to be while seeking to grow in the areas that we may need to improve. It is also important for us to appreciate what strengths each brings to a group's interactions. Discuss and then read **Romans 15:7**.

Q: Do you remember your life purpose statement? Could you put into words how God wants to use you to build the kingdom of God? In part one of the curriculum we wrote out a life purpose statement to clarify why God has placed us here on the earth at this point in history. It's good to review this and keep it in front of us so that we don't lose focus of the plans He has for us. We take our spiritual gifts, our passions, and our life experiences and use these to build into the people that God has placed around us in the way that He has specifically created us to serve. When we have a good grasp of how He has created us, then we can take the next step in applying our lives in loving service wherever He leads. Consider **Proverbs 19:21** and **Ephesians 2:10**.

Q: Do you have a habit of serving in the church? What typical excuses do people come up with to justify why they don't serve? What is wrong with these excuses? Serving other people requires a sacrifice of our time and efforts, it is inconvenient for our already busy schedules. Some people may feel inadequate to serve or intimidated by commitment. Other people may avoid serving because they have been hurt in the past and they don't trust people. Some people feel too tired, overcommitted, unneeded... the list goes on and on. These excuses keep us from the fulfilling life that God desires for us. He wants us to serve because He created us to serve! If we focus on ourselves and our desires, we will eventually feel empty inside because our spirit is telling us that we were made for something more. Read **Acts 20:35**. It truly is better to give than to receive.

Q: What problems might be solved if everyone in the church was committed to doing something to serve in the church or in a parachurch ministry? Consider **Ephesians 4:11-16**. People wouldn't feel isolated. They wouldn't be bored and get into mischief. They would have a place to belong and a purpose to serve. They would have people around them who know them and would notice when they are missing. There would not be any gaps in ministry needs. There would be less burnout for those who work hard. Ministry leaders would not feel alone in their challenges. People who are discouraged would have others to pick them up. Needs in the church and community would be easily met. People would see the church as a place that can offer helpful assistance, where people genuinely care, and where God extends His love in tangible form.

Q: Jim Elliot wrote in his journal, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." What does this mean? Just before this in his journal, the now famous missionary said, "One of the great blessings of Heaven is the appreciation of heaven on earth." (He made reference to *Ephesians 1:3*)

He followed up his famous quote with **Luke 16:9**. He wanted to use all of his earthly resources to show God's love to people who didn't know him, didn't trust him, and didn't understand him. Many people may believe that he regretted his decision, but looking back from the other side of eternity at what God has done, it was well worth his sacrifice.

Q: What are your greatest fears about serving God in the church? Read **Galatians 5:13-14**. How would you put this into your own words? Some people may not see it as necessary to serve, but the Bible clearly states the priority of serving others. It is simply living out the character of Christ who came to serve (*Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45*). You don't need to know the Bible to serve people. You don't have to be good at praying to serve people. You don't have to have it all together to serve people; you just need a heart that loves God and compassion for the people He loves!

Q: How do we overcome our fears? What is the key to our victory? **1 John 4:18** says that perfect love drives out fear, so fear is an indication that we need to grow in love. Don't let fear quench your love. When we fill our hearts with God's love, we will feel compelled to not let fear get in the way. We consider our fears, address what we can, and give the rest to God. **1 Peter 5:7** tells us to cast our cares on Him because He cares for us. God can handle anything that causes us to fear. He can equip us when we feel inadequate (*Ex. 4:10-11*). He can give us wisdom when we lack it (*James 1:5*). He can give us strength when we feel weak (*Is. 40:29*). If He calls us to do something, He will certainly give us all we need to carry out His will.

Q: In what areas have you grown the most on the chart from the workbook over the last year? Look at **Philippians 1:3-6**. It's not important who is farthest along on this chart; what we want to know is if people are aware of where they are at spiritually and have an accurate understanding of what they really need to work on. Some people may not be ready to serve. It may be better for them to enter a time of healing and growth. If they are healthy, then perhaps they can take another step towards their spiritual maturity. If they are doing well, then it would be great for them to celebrate all that God has been doing in their lives! Note to leaders: Try to make a mental note of where your group members are at and encourage them in the direction that seems best for where they are at. Follow up with anyone who needs special attention with an email, a phone call, or a personal meeting. Perhaps you can spend time in prayer for each person in your group at the end of your meeting today.

Q: What is your next step of spiritual growth from page 22 of the workbook and how can we pray for you? How can we help you? Note to leaders: You might want to write these down as prayer requests either as a group or for yourself personally. Check in from time to time to see how people are doing with taking the next step in their faith journey. Do what you can to lead them to resources, answer their questions, or to encourage them to keep moving forward!

Progress update on the Class Assignment: Get connected to a ministry at church.

Review Memory Verse:

1 Peter 4:10-11 - *"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."*

PRAYER REQUESTS: