

The Pastor's Quarry

First Baptist Church of Granite Falls, MN
June, 2010

Keep Growing!

Christians are supposed to grow. God tells us so! The Bible is replete with commands to grow and with rebukes for not growing. We're supposed to grow in faith, in love, in the grace and knowledge of Christ, and in love with all knowledge and discernment, to name just a few ways (Php 1:9-10; 2Th 1:3; 2Pe 3:18). Indeed, we're supposed to "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph 4:15b, ESV). But how do we grow? Is it something that just happens automatically, or is it something that takes effort? The answer, of course, is that it takes effort.

In this way, growing is much like climbing. Both require effort to begin, and both require effort to continue. When a baby gets to a flight of stairs, he soon learns that he has to make a special effort to mount that first step. He has to keep working at it, too; each successive step requires the same effort. It never gets easier. Nor can he stop once he has begun. Unless he slides back down to the floor below, he has to keep climbing. If he gets tired or frightened and stops, he is stuck. And because a stair-step is no place to live, he will soon become miserable and start crying. So it is with Christian growth. The difference, of course, is twofold: the Holy Spirit does help you along the way, and you are not permitted to give up and slide back down. But you must keep climbing, no matter what.

You may become tired, and maybe even a little frightened. With each step you take, you are leaving things behind, just like the baby who leaves behind the comfort of the familiar, toy-strewn floor. Not only are you leaving behind the familiar things of this world, but you are actually leaving behind the person you once were. If your friends and family are not climbing with you, then you are leaving them behind, too; you are leaving behind the things they hold dear. This is a very hard thing to do.

It is hard because you will lose their approval, just like Jesus said you would (Mat 10:34-49). They may shake their heads and laugh. They may look upon you with pity. They may dismiss you by suggesting that you are just "going through a phase," or by concluding that you are misled. They may stop talking with you, at least about serious things. They may even mock you and revile you. But you must keep climbing. To do this, you must desire to reach the summit more than anything else.

If you don't, if you prefer the approval of your friends and family, then you will stop growing. You will content yourself with huddling upon a stair-step. You will convince yourself that if it's good enough for your friends and family, then it's good enough for you. Never mind that a stair-step is no place to live. Never mind that you have forgotten your first love. What really matters is that your friends and family are all perched on the stair-step with you. Surely, you tell yourself, this little ledge is just as good as the summit itself!

Jesus' disciples refused to think that way. They left everything behind to follow Jesus – and as they grew, they changed. The Pharisees and scribes reviled them for not holding fast to the traditions of their fathers. But Jesus turned to them and said, "For the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'" (Mat 15:6b-9, ESV). It was a good thing that the disciples were growing and changing.

The Pharisees and scribes had a zeal for God, but it was a misguided zeal (Rom 10:2). They clung to the earth. Most of the Jews desired their approval so much that they were afraid to even take the first step toward Jesus. Some who did take the first step were still tempted to stop growing, even some who had climbed quite far. Peter himself succumbed to this temptation; when in Antioch, he feared the Judaizers so much that he withdrew from the Gentiles, until Paul rebuked him. It was as if Peter looked down for a moment from the dizzying height to which he had climbed, and was paralyzed with fear.

The same can happen to us. The more we grow, the higher we climb, the more different from our friends and family we may become. So don't look down! Don't worry about how different you are becoming. Keep looking up toward the summit and the one who stands there, calling you to become like himself. Don't stop to rest. Keep climbing. Keep growing!

Mark Your Calendars

Sun., July 4: During the Sunday School hour, missionary Steve Diachenko will share his plan to plant a church in Innisfail, Australia.

Wed., July 14, 7:00 P.M.: Book discussion in the lower level of the church building. Don't forget that this has been changed from Friday to Wednesday.

Sat., July 17, 12:30 P.M.: Summer Picnic at the Parsonage!

Sun., July 18, 1:15 P.M.: 2nd Quarter Business Meeting.

Sun., July 25: We have reserved the large pavilion on the north side of Memorial Park for our Fourth Annual Riverside Sunday. Our meeting times and meal plans will be just like a normal Sunday. Lord willing, I'll have my grill there again this year, along with plenty of hamburger patties and fixings. Bring a friend!

Quote of the Month

I am of the opinion that we should not be concerned about working for God until we have learned the meaning and the delight of worshiping Him.

A. W. Tozer
Whatever Happened to Worship?

From All That's Mortal, All That's Vain

Samuel Medley (1738-1799)

From all that's mortal, all that's vain
And from this earthly clod,
Arise, my soul, and strive to gain
Sweet fellowship with God.

Say, what is there beneath the skies,
In all the paths thou'st trod,
Can suit thy wishes and thy joys,
Like fellowship with God?

Not life, nor all the toys of art,
Nor pleasure's flowery road,
Can to my soul such bliss impart,
As fellowship with God.

Not health, nor friendship here below,
Nor wealth, that golden load,
Can such delight or comfort show,
As fellowship with God.

When I am made in love to bear
Affliction's needful rod,
Light, sweet and kind, the strokes appear,
Through fellowship with God.

In fierce temptation's fiery blast
Or dark desertion's road,
I'm happy if I can but taste,
Some fellowship with God.

So when the icy hand of death
Shall chill my flowing blood,
With joy I'll yield my latest breath:
In fellowship with God.

When I, at last, to heav'n ascend,
And gain my bless'd abode,
There an eternity I'll spend,
In fellowship with God.

My Contact Information

Todd Mitchell
1620 10th Avenue
Granite Falls, MN, 56241
320-564-3748
pastor@firstbaptistgranitefalls.org
<http://www.firstbaptistgranitefalls.org>

A Bit of History

Have you ever wondered why we worship in the order that we do? Almost all churches (Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, etc.) follow the same basic order. A little music and prayer comes after the sermon, but most of it comes before, as does the offering – though never at the very beginning. Why is this order so consistent? After all, though the Bible does teach us to include each of these elements, it does not teach us any particular order. How did we learn one?

The answer is *tradition*. Early in the Christian church, men carefully assembled these elements in the order that we know so well. The basic order of service of our churches today is pretty much the same as the one followed by the Roman Catholic Church, long before Martin Luther or John Calvin were even born. Where it is different, we owe much of the difference to these two Reformers. In keeping with their doctrine they changed some things, even while keeping other things. What did they eliminate? What did they modify? What did they keep? Answering these questions will help us understand the order of worship, or *liturgy*, that we have inherited.

Let us begin by considering Luther. As a Roman Catholic monk, he recognized a number of errors in Roman Catholic doctrine – errors that were perpetuated by some aspects of the liturgy of the church. Where he thought the liturgy was right, he kept it. “There were basic patterns in ancient liturgy he strove to maintain because he believed they were consistent with the gospel he wanted to communicate.”¹ But he also labored to correct the liturgy where it was wrong.

Of all the errors that Luther recognized in Roman Catholic doctrine, two led Luther to make his biggest changes to the liturgy. These errors are closely related, and they remain to this day. The first error regards the priesthood, and the second regards the Lord's Supper. According to Roman Catholic doctrine the Lord's Supper is a propitiatory sacrifice offered to God by a Roman Catholic priest, who “goes to the altar as the minister of Christ, inferior to Christ but superior to the people. The people, on the other hand, since they in no sense represent the divine Redeemer and are not mediator between themselves and God, can in no way possess the sacerdotal [priestly] power.”² The Roman Catholic liturgy emphasizes this mediatorial role of the Roman Catholic priest. The priest and choir do most of the work while the people watch and participate only minimally. This was especially true in Luther's day.

“Instead of the service requiring a priest to offer Christ again in sacrifice, Luther understood worship as God's gift to the people.”³ Therefore, Luther made two big changes to the liturgy. First, he drew the people into active participation. “The music was no longer the exclusive domain of those in sacred orders. The choir could assist the congregation, but the congregation was to sing.”⁴ Second, Luther eliminated or modified certain aspects of communion to make clear that the bread and the cup were not being turned into the body and blood of Christ for a propitiatory sacrifice.

In future issues of *The Pastor's Quarry* I hope to explore Luther's changes in more detail, as well as the changes that Calvin made to the liturgy. Then we will consider the development of liturgy from their day to our own. This will help us to grow in a vital way. As we grow in our understanding of our liturgy, we will grow in our ability not only to worship well today, but to worship even better tomorrow.

¹ Brian Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 38.

² Pope Pius XII enc., *Mediator Dei*, 84.

³ Chapell, *Worship*, 35.

⁴ Chapell, *Worship*, 36.