



Spiritual Growth

At the beginning of his book, “The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation”, Mel Lawranz quotes the words of Count von Zinzendorf, 1700-1760: “Lord, when my eyes confront my heart, and I realize that you have filled my heart with your love, I am breathless with amazement. Once my heart was so small in its vision, so narrow in its compassion, so weak in its zeal for truth. Then you chose to enter my heart, and now in my heart, I can see you, I can love all your people, and I have the courage to proclaim the truth of your gospel to anyone and everyone. Like wax before a fire, my heart has melted under the heat of your love.”

Spiritual growth is part of being a Christian. Through the gospel, God calls us to be part of his family. Like in any given household children are the results and expressions of the love of parents. We also add to this love the care needed for the children to grow healthy. There are many ways to show children our love and care for them. Nourishment is one of the many words we use to express the attention a child needs to have if we expect a child to grow physically, mentally, and spiritually. The baby Jesus received the type of nourishment, love, and care from Mary and Joseph that he needed so that he could grow up in a healthy household.

Saint Paul gave Timothy the instructions for people to know how they ought to conduct themselves in God’s household. Paul received these instructions from Jesus because previous to his conversion with him in Damascus he had no knowledge of how everyone needs to behave in the household of God, the Church. These simple rules that Paul is sharing with Timothy about how to behave in the household of God gave Timothy guidelines so that he could follow up with a “manual of instructions”. Timothy would then be able to teach other people the spiritual principles everyone needs to abide by when he/she is part of the Christian Church.

Knowing Jesus’ instructions for the church helps us to follow his teachings and by doing so, we fulfill the need to work together in meeting Jesus’ demands. This is one of the many ways by which we follow up on the concerns we have for the spiritual growth of our members and the Christian discipline that needs to be carried out in order to accomplish the mission of the church. Christ calls us to work for God’s kingdom, to use our resources, talents, gifts, and money for his glory, mission,

and ministry. We are called to the fellowship of Christian love. Paul said “...*knowledge puffs up, but love builds up...*” (The NIV Study Bible, 1 Corinthians 8:1).

The letter of Hebrews says, “*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*” (Hebrews 12:11). Teaching, preaching, serving, worshipping, administrating the business of the church and sharing with others our gifts of ministry are among the many ways by which we pass down to new generations the rich blessings entrusted to us by our Lord.

We go through many different experiences in life because this is part of growing up and these experiences help us in our spiritual formation. Later on, we can teach, give advice or take part in the spiritual formation of other persons because we have been trained in the ways of the Lord. Through our examples, words, and Christians discipline we share the image of Christ so that people may follow Christ. This new understanding helps them in their spiritually formative process. They can then go on and practice Christian discipline that leads them and other people into further spiritual formation and growth.

We may repeat the words of Count von Zinzendorf, “Like was before a fire, my heart has melted under the heat of your love.”

Happy Independence Day, on July 4, 2023!

In Christ,

Pastor Rey Díaz