



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 11

March 9, 2025

No. 10

My Grumpy Neighbor

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Loving your neighbor as yourself isn't always easy. We once had a neighbor that was about as unfriendly and grumpy as you can get. We did not live next door to him but we were about a half a mile down the road in the farm land of Michigan. He did however live directly across the street from my in-laws and had actually sold them the old family home. Yet, he didn't like them at all. My family was guilty of whatever crime had taken place in his head because we were related to our out-laws. He was grumpy. Never said hello. Only spoke when he had a complaint. He was miserable.

His real problem was with his own flesh and blood. He hated his brother who was a very successful farmer. His brother was buying up all the farmland in the area as farmers were selling to retire because their children did not want to farm. Oh, and I guess we were also guilty of a crime because we rented an old farm house from his nephew who had taken over his father's farms after his passing.

Why am I telling you all of this? Because the Bible says to "love your neighbor as yourself" (James 2:8) and that can be rather challenging when your neighbor has no desire to be kind and friendly to you. I wanted to obey God's command to love my neighbor but he wasn't making it easy at all.

What do you do? Well, you don't get even with them and you don't speak evil of them. You don't antagonize them and you don't wish them harm. You don't revile when reviled and you don't threaten. (1 Peter 2:23)

What you can do is pray for them. (Matthew 5:44)

You can do is be kind and continue to do good things for them. (Matthew 5:44)

You overcome their evil with good - Romans 12:21

If it is possible, on your part, you live peaceably with them. Romans 12:18

We moved from that area a long time ago and that neighbor has long since passed from this life but sadly history has repeated itself, I once again have an irrational and grumpy neighbor and he does live next door. If the Lord wills, and I am given a few more years, the chances are I will yet again have an unfriendly and unhappy neighbor. The plan will be the same. Do them no harm and try hard to be at peace with them.

What all my neighbors need is the gospel of Jesus Christ to change their lives. I must be resolved to let my light shine before them so they can see the gospel at work in my life. I must be careful to not bring reproach against my Savior. If you have a difficult neighbor, remember to imitate Christ. Follow His footsteps and become more and more like Him, 1 Peter 2:21.

How to Tell if I'm Growing Spiritually

by Heath Rogers

It is important for parents to measure their children's physical growth. During checkups, a pediatrician will measure a growing infant's weight, height, and head circumference. These measurements can assure parents that everything is well with their child or provide an early warning of underlying medical problems.

Regardless of how old a person is when they are saved, all Christians start as babes in Christ (John 3:3-5). As spiritual babes, we are expected to grow (1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). How can we know we are growing and developing as we should? Is there a way we can chart our progress and know for sure we are maturing spiritually?

1. I'm Changing the Way I'm Think. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). If one is coming to Christ from the world, they must unlearn some things. They can't live by the standards and expectations of the world. Am I adopting God's priorities and standards (Is. 5:20)? Am I developing the right attitude towards sin (1 John 2:1) and battling temptations (1 Cor. 10:13; James 1:12)? Am I hungering and thirsting for righteousness (Matt. 5:6)? Am I learning to love and forgive others - even my enemies (Col. 3:13; Matt. 5:44)?

2. I'm Drawing Closer to God. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8). Part of spiritual growth is learning to live in God's presence (living as if God is always present in our lives – hearing and seeing everything we do).

Prayer is a great barometer of our relationship with God. Am I continuing earnestly in prayer (Col. 4:2)? Do I spend time alone with God in prayer each day (Matt. 6:6)? Do I make time for prayer (Mark 1:35)? Strengthening a relationship requires two-way communication. How much time do I spend listening to God speak to me through His word?

Worship is another way for me to draw near to God. Do I look forward to every opportunity to assemble with Christians and worship God (every service of the local church, area gospel meetings, etc.)? Do I take the time to offer praise, honor, and thanksgiving to God in my daily life.

3. I'm Bearing Fruit. Jesus is the vine, and Christians are the branches (John 15:1-8). The Father is looking for branches that will bear much fruit to His glory.

As a Christian, I have been created to walk in good works (Eph. 2:10). Scripture thoroughly equips me for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Am I a fruitful doer of the word, or a hearer only (James 1:22)? Am I actively serving others (Gal. 5:13; 6:10)? Am I busy planting and watering the word so that souls can be saved (1 Cor. 3:6)? Am I supplying what I can and doing my share for the better functioning of the local church (Eph. 4:16)?

4. I'm Enduring Trials. One may read this article and say, "I know I should be accomplishing these things, but my life has been very hard lately. I'm doing my best to hang on as a Christian." Handling trials is an opportunity for growth. Hardships come to everyone who is trying to serve the Lord in this wicked world (2 Tim. 3:12). If we handle these trials with the right attitude, it will result in the growth and development of our character (James 1:2-4). The fact that you haven't given up is a sign of growth.

Conclusion: Other things could be added to this short list, but these are enough to help get started with a good evaluation of our spiritual growth. It is dangerous to believe we are growing if we really aren't. However, it is harmful to think we aren't growing when we really are. Let's pray for clarity and honesty in this matter and continue to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). Knollwood Reminder 12/22/24