

# The Growth Mindset

June 2, 2019

## Ephesians 4:17-24

Who remembers this? It's called a growth chart. Growing up, some of you, I'm sure, had this thing on your kitchen wall. When our children were growing up, we had one. And, from what I recall, each child had to stand in front of it on their birthdays to see how much they'd grown over the past year.

Now, have you ever wondered what a child thinks when he's standing in front of that growth chart and hearing his mother say "Ernie, you've grown two inches this year"? So, Ernie's thinking "Hmmm, if I keep growing at this rate, I'll probably be taller than the house by the time I'm forty-nine?" But we all know that your growth rate diminishes with time and eventually you reach full height.

Now, can you imagine what it'd be like if you had a growth chart for your education so that every year at the beginning of the school year, you'd have to stand in front of a ruler of some sort and be measured? Or, "Do you think the LORD has some kind of growth chart to measure my spiritual growth?" Something to think about, isn't it?

But, of course, physical growth is drastically different than mental growth and spiritual growth is in a category all its own.

Here's what I want to say something about today; "a growth mindset." Do you believe that God's purpose for you is that you grow up spiritually? So, today's topic is growth; in particular, spiritual growth. I've titled today's message "The Growth Mindset." Shall we pray?

Please find with me the second verse of Romans chapter twelve.

Do you know anyone who's very busy; yet they don't have a close walk with the LORD? Busy-ness isn't a sign of spiritual growth. Do you know someone who thinks they know a lot of Bible, yet they can't figure out how to put it into practice? Bible knowledge isn't a sign. Do you know someone who is going through some very difficult struggles? That *is* a sign of spiritual growth. My hope today is to show just you what a growth mindset looks like.

Think again with me about the growth chart. All you see when you stand in front of that chart is your present height. You have no idea how it happened. You slept. You ate. You played outside. You did something every day. And now you are two inches taller than you were on your last birthday. How did that happen?

Here's what I find in Romans 12:2. I find a "Growth Mindset." And what is that? A growth mindset is an attitude. It's an attitude that says "what I'm doing every day it affecting my growth. It either hinders my spiritual growth or it promotes it."

And, for every single one of us here, two things always matter when it comes to the personal spiritual of a Christian. Here they are. II Peter 3:17 *"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. (18) But **grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.** To him be glory both now and forever. Amen."*

You see, spiritual growth is expected in a Christian. You can't command someone to add two inches to his height. Yet, the LORD can command you to grow in these two areas of your life. For growth to occur, you need grace and you need to know the LORD more. Romans 12:2 shows you

what to do, practically speaking, so that you are growing in grace and knowledge. This is a growth mindset.

Here it is. Romans 12:2 *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

You remember those days when you took a course in high school or in college? It’s practically a guarantee that you *will* do better if you are thinking that this class is contributing to your educational growth. Something happens in your heart and in your mind if you study intentionally. The very same thing happens, of course, if you are learning a new skill, like playing the piano or the guitar.

Now, this second verse of Romans twelve is a command. It’s a command to Believers in Christ. The first eleven chapters of Romans tells you, at one time you were an Unbeliever. But someone came to you with the bad news that you’d broken God’s Laws and that you were a sinner. They then presented to you the Good News that Christ had paid the penalty for your sins. And one day you repented. On that day, you believed the Gospel message. Now, you’re saved. Now, things are different. Now, the Spirit indwells you. Now, you are united to Jesus Christ. Now, you to see changes in your mind, changes in your attitudes, even changes in your behavior.

But, haven’t you also noticed that your thoughts often hold you back from growing in grace and knowledge of the LORD? And, haven’t you noticed that you’ve often fallen back into your old ways? You commit sins. It’s like you’ve fallen from growth. Well, let me show you this very important mindset the LORD lays before us here in Romans twelve.

First, the daily choice. Romans 12:2 *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that*

*ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

Actually, this is more than daily. It’s a circumstance by circumstance choice. Here’s the choice: will you adopt the mind of the world in this particular circumstance you find yourself or will it be the mind of the LORD?

Let’s say someone has said and done some very un-nice things to you. Suppose it’s someone at work who, for some reason, doesn’t like you; and finds ways to make the job miserable for you. This is the circumstance you find yourself in. But, you know what God’s word says about it. I Thessalonians 5:15 *“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”*

Now, is it the world that dictates to you your response or is it the Scripture? Can you see what a growth mindset looks like? Either you conform yourself to the world’s way of handling it or you allow the Spirit of the LORD to transform you by renewing your mind. Who here isn’t tempted to retaliate? Yes, tempted. But, the growth mindset will rise to the surface of your heart. Will you let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly and will you grow you up in God’s grace and the knowledge of the LORD Jesus Who lives in you?

You see, the growth mindset is a daily choice.

How about worry? Aren’t there things you *need*? Aren’t there things you can’t do without? What will you do, for example, if your washing machine breaks on the same day you get into a car accident and on the same day your dog runs away? As you are laying in the hospital being treated for your injuries, you are tempted to worry about your dog, about how you will be able to get another washer, another car; even how you will pay for the medicine you need when you get out of the hospital? etc. Folks, worry is a thief. So, will you let the worry steal your joy and peace because you’ve

got circumstances that are difficult? Or, will you be renewed in the spirit of your mind? Will the Scripture be your conscience and your Director or will it be the world?

Philippians 4:6 *“Be careful [pulled in two different directions] for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

Daily, circumstance by circumstance, God provides you with a choice to be renewed in your mind or to give in to the temptation to fall back into your past patterns. Can you see the growth mindset at work?

Your mind, folks, is where you live the Christian life. Will it be the way the world would have you respond? Or will it be the way the Scripture would have you respond?

First, the daily choice.

Now I want to say something about the laboratory of your life. Second, the laboratory of your life.

Your life is your own laboratory. And, in your laboratory you have lots of tools and supplies to work with. But the main purpose for a laboratory to prove things by experimenting. In your laboratory you can experiment and some of your experiments fail. Some succeed. Sometimes you spill things. Sometimes you have lot of cleaning up to do. But *your* laboratory is yours. And in every laboratory there are both successes and failures; just like in every life. And, no doubt, you’ve had your share of failures in your Christian life.

Here’s Thomas Edison on his failures. *“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”* But he also said this. *“I’ve never done a day’s work in my life. It was all fun.”* Edison’s life was a laboratory. And who was it that discovered the theory of relativity? His name was Albert Einstein. Einstein once said *“Failure is success in progress.”*

Look again at what the LORD says here. Romans 12:2 *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

There’s a reason why you need to have a growth mindset. Here it is. It’s because something wonderful occurs each time you choose Scripture over the mind of the world. You will prove something to yourself. You prove that the will of God is good, acceptable, and perfect.

In high school science class, we often had to prove things. Do you remember the term “the scientific method”?

The scientific method says this; through a process of experimenting you will ask and answer questions to determine if something is true or not. Question, data research, hypothesis, testing, and conclusion.

Question: what is the will of God?

Research: there are two aspects to the will of God: His unchangeable, sovereign will; and the will of God as found in the Bible.

Now, let’s go on to our Hypothesis: The Scripture is what God says. When I apply the Scripture to my life and my circumstances I should be able to find that God’s will is good, acceptable, and perfect for my life.

Next, there’s testing: God provides daily opportunities for me to test His will. Romans 8:28 *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

Here are a few examples of tests: suffering, impatience, discontentment, pride, resentment. Here’s a real life example of a test: anger. Is there anyone here who’d admit they are prone to road rage? Do you exhibit a quick temper every time someone cuts in ahead of you and nearly causes an accident? This is *your* test. And a growth mindset will ask this question. What does the Bible say? James 1:19 *“Wherefore, my*

*beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: (20) for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."*

Can you see how important it is to choose the growth mindset? It the way a Christian lives. He or she is constantly asking themselves "Will I operate by Scripture or will I set Scripture aside and operate according to my own will." This is especially critical when the other person is at fault."

You see, every time you apply a passage of Scripture to the circumstances you are facing, you are putting Romans 12:2 into operation. And the more times you apply Scripture to your life, the more you prove that the will of God is these three things: good, acceptable, and perfect.

Romans 12:2 "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

You know what the will of God is. You get it from your Bible. You also know that God's working everything together for your good. Yet, God shows us here that it's very important for you to prove something to your own heart; that His will is good and acceptable and perfect.

Folks, the only way for you to really live is by renewing your mind. Why? Because every time you do, you discover for yourself something about God's will. You discover that His will is always exactly what you need.

Now, it's a simple fact that God's will is good and acceptable and perfect. But, do you know that personally? Do you know it practically? Do you know it in your situation, in those circumstances God has allowed in your life?

His will is always good. And it's always acceptable. This word "acceptable" is simply another word for "pleasing." Each time you chose Scripture over yourself and the world's way you please the LORD immensely. And it's perfect.

God's will is more than good. It's perfect. And this word means "having reached its intended purpose."

You see, the only thing that *really* matters in your daily life is the LORD's will. And so the LORD says three things in the Bible about His will. Here they are.

1. Understand it. Ephesians 5:17 "*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but **understanding** what the will of the Lord is.*"
2. Do it. Matthew 7:24 "*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and **doeth them**, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ...*"
3. Prove it. Romans 12:2 "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may **prove** what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

Can you think of anything that is more important than this growth mindset?

First, the daily choice.

Second, the laboratory of your life.

Third, Christ is being formed in you.

Romans 12:2 "*And be not **conformed** to this world: but be ye **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

Conformed to the world or transformed as you continually prove God's will. Here's Paul again. Galatians 4:19 "*My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be **formed** in you ...*"

The word inside each of these terms is "formed." "Conformed" means "identified with." It also means "following a similar pattern." Every time you choose a worldly way of dealing with someone or something, you are conforming yourself to the world. Paul's point is that a Christian needs to stop conforming and begin to let the LORD transform him.

“Transformed” is the exact same word as our science term “metamorphosis,” which means “to change into another form.” Do you remember the metamorphosis of the butterfly? It changes from the caterpillar to the pupa to an entirely new creature. By the very problems and circumstances you face every day, your Heavenly Father is changing you completely. And each time you set your mind on doing what the Scripture says and not what you prefer; your transformation occurs.

Then there’s Galatians 4:19 “*until Christ be **formed** in you ...*” And this word means “to take on the form of what is in your inner man.” A Christian with a growth mindset is constantly being shaped and re-shaped; you are, in essence, becoming more and more like Jesus in your character, your speech, your attitudes and your behavior.

Every spring new leaves appear on plants all over the land. It’s an indication that a renewal is taking place. But, also, every day a renewal is taking place in your mind, if you decide that you choose it. To be renewed in the spirit of your mind is really the most wonderful thing that can happen to a person.

Now, we need to ask this, “Is there anything I need to do first?” Yes, there is. Look with me at the first verse of Romans 12. Romans 12:1 “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*”

Before you can put the growth mindset into operation as a Christian, you need to do something with your body. You need to “present your body to the LORD as a living sacrifice.”

You see, the presentation of your body comes before something happens in your mind; it precedes choosing to be transformed by renewing your mind.

Now, at the beginning of today’s message, I asked this. Does the LORD has some kind of growth chart to measure my spiritual growth?” Let me show you this.

Ephesians 4:11 “*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

*(13) **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:***

*(14) That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: ...”*

If the LORD were to have a growth chart for you and me, it wouldn’t be a ruler on a wall. Instead, it would be this. He’s measuring us by Christlikeness. We are increasing in the stature of the fulness of Indwelling Christ. Your Heavenly Father is working on you every day to accomplish a particular goal. That goal is this; that His Son, the LORD Jesus, fill you up. He’s making you more and more like Jesus. That’s why He permits those problems and circumstances and trials to come into your life. As His child, He’s growing you up in Christ.

So, who here will choose the growth mindset today? Will you take the Bible and apply it to your situation? Will you stop being identified with the world and begin to be changed into the likeness of the LORD Jesus? If not, why not?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 549 “Higher Ground”