

1



ROOM TO GROW

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence, and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. (Philippians 4:6-8)

Dear Lord, I pray for wisdom and guidance. I am grateful for you watching over me and allowing our relationship to continue to develop. When I think you are not listening, you are. When I think you are not answering me, you are. When I cried out to you in frustration it opened my heart to you and you answered. When I doubt, all I have to do is look over my life and see the blessings and answered prayers. Not in my way, but yours. Amen.

“But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.” (James 1:5-7)

2



ROOM TO GROW

"13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 1:13-15)

Always be ready, whether it's convenient or not, to witness and give a defense to our faith. Why defend something that is true? Because it is attacked. Have we taken a blind leap in the dark? Is it blind faith? When we carefully read the scriptures, God doesn't mind honest questions; He honors them. God doesn't expect us to believe without evidence, but once we have evidence, God calls us to have commitment without reservation. Christianity is the absolute truth and this bothers a lot of people. Everyone does what is right in their own eyes. Even today's Christians say every religion is the same and they all lead to the same place. They say it doesn't matter which you follow, just as long as you believe in something. But Christianity is exclusive. Jesus is the son of God, and God in flesh who exists before Abraham, forgives sins and is the creator of this world. Jesus claimed all these himself. It's not the amount of faith you have, but the object in whom you place faith. Many other religions give you a work stripe, but God says "It's impossible for you, you can't earn through your own works. And I will send you my Son, you believe in him and he'll change your whole life." This separates us from followers of other religions.

Dear Lord, I pray that we would be emboldened in our faith, in demonstrating and defending it against the attacks of this world. Teach us and help us to overcome the little fears that the enemy uses to keep us from standing up to what is true. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

3



ROOM TO GROW

UNITY

Psalm 133 - A Song of Ascents. Of David.

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."

God loves it when we live as one. In the book of Acts, we get a glimpse of a realized church. The author says, "All the believers were together and had everything in common." (2:44) When God's people are unified under Christ, incredible things begin to happen. People are healed, like the lame beggar (Acts 3). The neglected are fed, like the widows and the orphans (Acts 6). And those exiled from the community are brought back, like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). Unified under Christ, the world is put into order and the kingdom of heaven is brought to earth. By turning to Christ as our head, we strive to embody grace and truth as we grow followers of Him. What would being unified in Christ look like? What steps can we take to be unified? How can I contribute to this unity?

Father, Magnificent are your ways. Truly there is none like you. You heal the sick, you mend the broken, you feed the hungry. You are an awesome God. We pray your unifying Spirit would dwell among us. We pray our eyes would be set on the perfect Unifier, your Son, Jesus. We pray we would all come together in unity under him. Show us how, Lord Jesus. Amen.

4



ROOM TO GROW

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:7 - 8)

What a wonderfully powerful, yet simple summary of how to walk victorious over the schemes of the evil one while on this earth. Jesus said we'd have trials and tribulation, but to be of good cheer. His supremely sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection prove He has overcome the world. As believers and followers of Christ we are promised that He will never leave us or forsake us, so we should NEVER fear. During a recent prayer walk, the Holy Spirit gave me a revelation about something that many of us take for granted. I was doing my best to cast my cares on Him knowing He cares for us...sharing with God whatever situation was causing me to fret at that moment. In my spirit I heard "The very dirt you're walking on was My idea...the trees you're enjoying were also My idea. Can I not handle ALL the problems in your life?" As Pastor Adam noted shortly after we embarked on our new path as a church, (paraphrasing) "I don't believe it's a coincidence that our conference room flooded, AC units died, & our roof needs immediate repair right after we started this journey..." He was inferring that the devil doesn't like Christians moving in one accord. Thank God, we are more than conquerors through Christ and even more powerful standing together.

Heavenly Father, You are worthy of all of our praise. We offer You highest praise right now. Lord, we ask that You forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And, we humbly request that You guide our every step as we move into this new season. A season where we become a church that You can use to expand Your kingdom while we strive to grow followers of Your son, Jesus Christ.

5



ROOM TO GROW

Known

Psalm 139 For the Choir Director: A psalm of David.

○ LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night— but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you.

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, ○ God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!

To know that GOD, creator of the universe, knows me and is constantly with me is an amazing and profound thought to ponder. To think HE even takes the time to know each of us intimately is the truest form of being KNOWN. Dear Heavenly Father, creator of all, today I stop and say thank you. It is your praise that is on my lips today and forever. Let me rejoice in the thought of being known by YOU. That YOU know me inside and out, from the moment I was conceived to present day and into eternity. I look forward to being with you each day and pray I remember to always be in awe of Your greatness; and even though I may think of myself as insignificant YOU see me and know me. I am forever humbled and grateful to YOU my GOD and my King. In Jesus, Amen.



ROOM TO GROW

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”
(Isaiah 6:8)

So many times I have asked God to use me for His will. Then, when the Lord’s timing isn’t convenient for me, I have a tendency to back-pedal and make the excuse...I am not up for the job. I even let doubts, fears and excuses creep into my vocabulary. You may have also experienced this in your walk with God. God calls us to fulfill his purpose even in the most inconvenient and uncomfortable times. Even when we think we can’t, God can! It is a matter of trust on our part to open our eyes and hearts to His vision and timing, not ours. We can glorify Him by saying, “Yes Lord, use me to carry out Your will and plan. I am ready! No excuses!”

Heavenly Father, please erase all my doubts, fears and excuses. Help me to do my part and follow your will...even in uncomfortable and inconvenient times. I trust you Lord in all things. Help me to keep my eyes on you and see your vision. I love and praise you Lord. Thank you for your son, Jesus, in whose name I pray. Amen.

7

Extend Yourself

"But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

It is easy, at times, to bemoan or focus on all of the needs we have or all of the problems we can't seem to resolve, but God promises us that we can rely on Him to know and hear our concerns and have faith that He will guide us in the way He knows best. Of course, patience is required in this focus journey. An unknown author stated, "I remember the days I prayed for the things I have now." We have the commission and privilege and can make the time to pray for and care for ourselves and, more importantly, those around us. Recognizing God's grace, the acts of Christ, and our ability to sustain these tenets of our Christian faith and the mission of AGCC, we can build a stronger community of faith and followers.

Dear God, please help me to extend myself today and thank you for listening to and understanding my concerns and the desire to build my faith. I pray now for members of our community and the needs of so many. God, thank you for your gift. Thank you for giving me this time to help me to understand your grace.



ROOM TO GROW

8



ROOM TO GROW

"Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with Him." (Philippians 3:8-9a)

Paul went through a lot in his life to come to the conclusion that there was nothing more valuable than knowing Jesus Christ in an intimate way. He wrote earlier in this chapter that he had more reasons than anyone else to be confident in his own efforts but now considered it all worthless. Knowing Jesus means we get to experience His love, joy and peace, along with all of His other amazing qualities. Some people describe following Jesus as boring and that you have to give up many exciting things, but the truth is that by knowing Jesus we get love and peace that the world can only dream about. Everything else truly is worthless.

Lord God thank you that we can know You and Your Son Jesus. May we seek each day to know you more deeply so that we can show its value through the way we live our lives to a world that is desperately seeking meaning and purpose in their lives. We praise you as a great and awesome God and pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.



ROOM TO GROW

“So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.” (Hebrews 4:16)

Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection made a way that we could come straight to God’s throne of grace 24/7 and offer our prayers. This is not something to do mildly but to do so **BOLDLY!** May we come to Him regularly with our bold requests and see what amazing things He does.

Dear Father in the name of Jesus I pray for our young people and families who are a part of this church that not one of them will ever be snatched out of Your hand. I ask You to give them the knowledge and insight that they need. I ask that You flood their hearts with Your light so that they can see without a shadow of a doubt that You are real and that You love them with a deep, never-ending love. Amen.

10



ROOM TO GROW

"In the beginning was the Word..." (John 1:1)

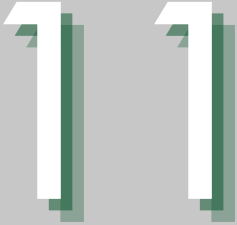
"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. And we saw His glory - glory as of the only-begotten of the Father - full of grace and of truth." (John 1:14)

"...for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

Dear Lord, you are our example. It is You whom we aspire to imitate in our lives. In You is the light of men. Shine into our darkness and light our way in these endeavors which we do in Your Name. Guide our path that your will be done. It is You we will to serve. Bless our humble efforts that they may be fruitful unto Your glory.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration. Of His own will, he has begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be, as it were, the first-fruits of His creatures." (James 1:17-18)

"But be doers of the word..." (James 1:22)



Shipwreck

"Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. "You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks," he said. "Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish." The he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat—all 276 of us who were on board." (Acts 27: 33-37)

I love this story and this passage from "Paul's Shipwreck" for several reasons. One, because I understand the nautical part of the story and the predicament presented. Also, the hopelessness and misery in this story match and probably exceed anything most of us will experience in our lifetime. But mostly, I love the number 276 written so precisely and matter-of-fact: not "a lot of people," not "everyone" or "most" or "some." 276 souls with names and histories and futures, all sharing in the experience of being "saved" by our loving God.

My dream and prayer is that we as a church will soon number 276 souls; and when that day comes, my dream and my prayer is that we will stand together and share the story of God's love and salvation with each other and with our world, just like these poor shipwrecked souls did so many years ago.

"Dear Lord, Help us to be people and a church that can share the story of being saved from our own "shipwrecks" by your love and the sacrifice of Jesus.



ROOM TO GROW

12



ROOM TO GROW

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, " and I will make you fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)

In this scripture, Jesus was calling his disciples to lay down their nets and follow him. This was an invitation asking the disciples to trust Jesus and trust His character. Jesus knew He had a much bigger and better plan for them. Jesus also invites us to follow Him. We must choose to trust Him, to listen, to obey, and to do things His way. We know that the end result of our obedience to His call will be not only better for us, but will increase the kingdom oh Heaven.

Dear Lord, as you are calling me to follow you, for your kingdom, let not worldly things keep me from being obedient to your will and your plan. Help me to trust you, knowing that your plans are always for my good and the good of your kingdom. Amen.

13



ROOM TO GROW

"I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any situation - whether well fed or Hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."
(Philippians 4:12)

As an "older adult" I have grown to realize how God has been with me in many situations. I can't say I have ever been hungry unless it was for need of feeding my spirit. However, the realization of this did not hit home until the passing of my husband in 2019.

I have been blessed with the wealth of love, security, family, and a Christian upbringing. It was not until my middle age that I truly recognized that God was my personal God.

Looking back now I can see all the ways God has been with me and led me through the difficult times, as well as the good times.

The last few years have led me through a time of reflecting and recognition. Older age gives you time to do that.

I remember how a minister once told us that the giving of our tithes and offerings would always come back twice-fold.

As I go through daily life I marvel at how God is providing every need. Some days it may be a surprise check, a phone call from a friend to encourage me, or a scripture that reminds me to be content. God provides!

Thank you God for all your blessings.

14



ROOM TO GROW

"Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved."
(Acts 2:43-47)

I am a child of the 60's. I grew up in a not-particularly-religious home, but I was fortunate to have friends whose parents were my Sunday School teachers and served as my religious mentors. And so, like my friends, I had my very proper little white King James version Bible with the zipper - rarely opened! - hanging out in the back of my bedside drawer. But sometime in my tween - early teen years I was handed a copy of the "Good News For Modern Man" version of the New Testament, and wow! - what a difference that made in making sense of what I thought was important, but - let's face it - pretty dry reading material. Especially for a young teenager, all those "ye's" and "wherefor's", those "hearken's" to this and that - KJV was a snoozer compared to the Good News version. So I started actually reading the Bible for a change and the verses from Acts 2 above were underlined by my 12-13-year-old self a few decades ago. Back then, I wasn't thinking: what an incredible model for an alive and active church, but man, I want to be a part of that! Isn't it amazing and miraculous how our loving God has persisted in finding ways to speak to folks through the years - the centuries - the eons?! Even to a silly little girl long ago.

Dear Heavenly Father, Your ways, Lord, are mysterious and awesome. We thank You for your Word and the light it can shine into our hearts, no matter where we are on our walk in this life on earth. Amen.

15

"Don't worry about anything, but in everything through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)



ROOM TO GROW

While a very favorite verse, life provides many opportunities to worry. None of us plan to weather confusion or failure of lose, pain, conflict, or suffering into our lives, they just arise. We need to remember when we feel anxiety, we should turn to thankfulness by saying a prayer of thankfulness to God for what we have and where we are at this time in our life.

Heavenly Father, may we remember that no matter what we face in life, you are always with us. May we stand firm in faith, be strong, and do everything with love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

16



ROOM TO GROW

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth."
(Psalm 121:1-2)

Each one of us is on a journey. We have bright spots, blessings, and spiritual highs. As the life cycle is, we also experience the times when things aren't going well and we feel all alone.

This brings a song to my mind...

"For the God on the mountain (good times)

Is still God in the valley (low times)

When things go wrong, He'll make them right

And the God in the good times

Is still God in the bad times

For the God in the day, is still God in the night"

It is down in the valleys or low times that we do our growing. As we are growing, the scripture says lift up your eyes, because our help comes from the Lord. By growing and looking up while in the valley, we can again experience the mountain tops. We definitely need both experiences to keep us on the journey that God has planned for us.

Father God, help us enjoy the mountain top blessings when they come our way. Give us the courage and strength to do the growing we need to do. Make each of us a blessing for you. Amen.

17



ROOM TO GROW

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" (Philippians 4:6-7)

As Jesus conducted his ministry, He carried out a holistic ministry. He preached the good news of the Kingdom. It was a proclamation of certainties: forgiveness, mercy and joy. In an age of uncertainty, people have ceased to be certain of anything. Jesus commands His followers to proclaim the same certainties in our generation. God loves humanity and he wants to show mercy and forgiveness to all who will turn to Him and live in obedience. He not only preached, but He also taught. We are to teach, but also live the good news. They need to see the love of God in our lives, being merciful and forgiving toward all. We may not fill the role of teacher in the church body, but we need to teach others by our example. Jesus was also a healer. The priest would say religion is sacrifice. A scribe would say religion consists of Law. Jesus demonstrated that religion consists of Love. The church body will continue the ministry of Jesus by bringing spiritual healing to the sinner and comfort to the hurting. It should be our prayer that God would help us to be used as laborers in the harvest field of the world today.

Heavenly Father, help us to see the world around us as you see it. People who are harassed and helpless and without direction in their life. May we as a congregational body be willing to be used to minister to the needs around us. Fill us with your Spirit as we seek to do your work. May you be glorified by what we do in your name. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

18



ROOM TO GROW

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)

A LIVING SACRIFICE

In these verses the apostle Paul urges believers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God. That means to surrender our lives completely to God, allowing God to work in and through us, dedicating ourselves to God's service and seeking to honor God in all that we do. The world often tempts us to conform to its values, but as followers of Christ we are called to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This transformation happens as we study God's word and let it shape our thoughts, attitudes, and actions. With this transformation we can understand and live God's perfect will for our lives. As we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, we can experience joy, peace, and fulfillment in serving our Lord. We must commit ourselves daily and let God mold us unto the image of our Savior.

Dear God in heaven, thank you for the gift of salvation and for your daily mercies. May we understand your will and may our lives bring glory and honor to your name. In our Savior's blessed name we pray. Amen.

19



ROOM TO GROW

When I started thinking about a devotional, I thought that it would be fun to write one with Canon. He, on the other hand, did not like the idea. So, the stubborn mother in me decided to “make” him do it. It would be fun...he would see. Boy, was I wrong. As much as I pushed, talked about Bible stories that he likes, the more he pushed back. I wrestled with it and with him all day today.

Tonight, as he was finishing dinner, Canon asked if he could get on his computer. I agreed, and logged him on. A few minutes later I heard it. Worship music blaring out of the computer and out of my sweet boy! Of course! What was I thinking? No matter how frustrating or hard his day is, Canon, at some point, always comes back to worship music. His favorite song is different every time I ask, but tonight he said that he loved “Lord, I Need You.” We started singing together and I asked what this song means to him. This is a difficult concept for Canon to grasp, so I broke the song down and we talked about the meaning of each line/verse. Finally, Canon said, “Mom, the song means that I need Jesus.” True, baby, so true.

Today, let’s sing our prayer to Jesus:

Lord, I Need You / Lord I come, I confess / Bowing here, I find my rest / Without You, I fall apart / You're the one that guides my heart / Lord, I need You, oh, I need You / Every hour, I need You / My one defense, my righteousness / Oh God, how I need You / Where sin runs deep, Your grace is more / Where grace is found is where You are / And where You are, Lord, I am free / Holiness is Christ in me / Lord, I need You, oh, I need You / Every hour, I need You / My one defense, my righteousness / Oh God, how I need You / So teach my song to rise to You / When temptation comes my way / And when I cannot stand, I'll fall on You / Jesus, You're my hope and stay / Lord, I need You, oh, I need You / Every hour, I need You / My one defense, my righteousness / Oh God, how I need You

20



ROOM TO GROW

"Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

(Matthew 11:28-30)

It is so easy to get lost in the hustle bustle of our everyday lives and forget to rest; rest from physical labor, rest from fear and worry, and to rest in the Lord's presence. While the world is constantly demanding so much from us, Jesus simply asks us just to rest. How amazing is that? The rest that He gives is unlike any other, reaching to the depths of our heart and soul. Are you willing to pause and receive that rest from the Lord?

Jesus, I come to You and ask for Your rest and peace. Allow me to sit in Your presence and let You do all of the work. In this time of rest, help me reflect on Your goodness and faithfulness. In the midst of busyness and chaos, help me to slow down, soak in Your presence, and receive Your great love and peace. Amen.