

International Conversation Café

Is Faith Relevant to My Life? Human Need: Growth

All of us feel a need to be growing personally. It could be that we want to grow in our knowledge, whether it be professionally or in an area of personal interest. It could be that we want to grow in our skills, such as cooking, music, or technology. We also long to grow in our experience. Perhaps we want to travel and experience new cultures and people. Perhaps we want to become parents or teach or perform.

In what ways are you personally growing now?

What are some of the ways you would like to grow, in the future?

You may ask, "What does faith have to do with personal growth? Isn't personal growth something that we are responsible for? Is personal growth the most important goal in life?"

Jesus says that our first responsibility is to love God. Our first responsibility is not to our personal happiness or growth. However, our personal growth is extremely important to God. He is the one that guides that process, whether we are aware of it or not. In this discussion, we will look at two ways God causes us to grow.

One way God brings personal growth in our lives is through difficulties and tests. Yes, tests! Most of us dislike academic tests. They give us anxiety. It takes time to prepare for them. We worry about understanding the content and remembering it all. And yet, passing academic tests sometimes opens doors to further opportunities. In the New Testament, James writes about tests or difficulties we face in life and suggests what our response to them should be and ways that tests help us grow.

My brothers and sisters, you will face all kinds of trouble. When you do, think of it as pure joy. 3 Your faith will be tested. You know that when this happens it will produce in you the strength to continue. 4 And you must allow this strength to finish its work. Then you will be all you should be. You will have everything you need. ~James 1:2-4

What is the main message of these verses?

What attitude does the author recommend when we have trouble?

Give an example of someone who went through difficulties grew personally.

When parents send their children to school, they know their children will be tested socially, emotionally, and academically. They do this, so their children will learn from their experiences and grow.

What are other examples of testing we experience in life?

Times of difficulty can either build us up or tear us down depending on our response to them. James goes on to explain where a person can find help while being tested.

If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He will give it to you. God gives freely to everyone and doesn't find fault. 6 But when you ask, you must believe. You must not doubt.

That's because a person who doubts is like a wave of the sea. The wind blows and tosses them around. 7 They shouldn't expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 This kind of person can't make up their mind. They can never decide what to do. ~James 1:2-8

What is this section mainly about?

What does it say about our responsibility?

What does it say about God?

Another way God brings personal growth is in the opportunities he brings. Some believe in fate, good luck, the zodiac, or fortune. Others think that there is no sense to the universe. James goes on to identify where opportunities come from.

Every good and perfect gift is from God. This kind of gift comes down from the Father who created the heavenly lights. These lights create shadows that move. But the Father does not change like these shadows. God chose to give us new birth through the message of truth. He wanted us to be the first harvest of his new creation. ~James 1:17-18

What are these verses saying about God?

What are the opportunities for personal growth that God has given you?

God created each of us with abilities and shapes us with experiences and tests. He brings us opportunities for personal growth and development, not for our own exaltation, but for the honor of God's name. So, there are two parallel truths. God gives us opportunity to grow in many ways but the gifts and opportunities to grow come from God and are meant to honor him. St. Paul summarized it this way, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." ~1 Corinthians 10:31

How could your personal abilities and opportunities bring honor to God?

