

Equipped to grow in grace

“Grace is Not a Blue-eyed Blonde”. This clever book title caught my eye and made me smile. While there are, undoubtedly, girls fitting this description, the meaning of the word “grace” is a mystery to many people. It’s a word that appears frequently in the Bible and, basically, can be defined as God giving us good things that we don’t deserve. How can we respond to such amazing generosity? In one of his New Testament letters, the apostle Peter gives us a clue by urging us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.¹ Here are some suggestions for how we might grow in **G-R-A-C-E**...

Get into the right environment. Plants need to be in the right environment if they’re going to flourish. To grow in grace we, too, need to get into the right environment. Spiritually speaking, a right environment will:

- Nurture us (are we plugged in to a church that is centred on the Bible?)
- Refresh us (do we have relationships that replenish us?)
- Give us room to grow (are we involved in activities that enhance our spiritual development?)

Root out the weeds in our lives. A garden of weeds is not a pleasant sight. Neither is a person who has allowed weeds to take root in his or her life. Take bitterness, for example. This weed might include resentment, blaming other people, harsh or hurtful words, self-pity, or an unwillingness to forgive. The Bible warns us about the dangers of allowing bitterness to go unchecked² and we’d be wise to heed this.

Accept support from others. Wilting plants often need support. We do, too. Don’t underestimate the support that a good friend can bring.³ None of us has to walk through troubled times on our own. Our friend might be close at hand or on the other side of the world. With telephone and email access, we can connect with friends who live hundreds, or even thousands, of miles away. With friends who are nearby, it’s a good idea to include some fun things when you get together rather than focusing the entire time on your difficulties.

Cultivate our relationship with Jesus Christ. Growing strong, healthy plants takes time. So does developing a relationship with Jesus Christ. We need to speak to him and we need to listen to him. Marriage counsellors tell us that a common cause of marital breakdown is poor communication. A relationship can barely survive, let alone thrive, without it. Why should our relationship with Jesus be any different? That’s why personal bible study and prayer are so important if we want to keep growing in grace.

Expect a bumper crop! Sometimes, as followers of Jesus Christ, we settle for less than we need to. Perhaps we’re scared to hope for too much in case we’re disappointed. We shy away from expecting a bumper crop of fruitfulness. But listen to what Jesus said: “*I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last*”.⁴ Like branches on a tree, we bear the fruit that the Spirit produces in us⁵ when we stay connected to him in love and obedience.

Why not take on board these five suggestions? They may equip you to grow in grace!

¹ 2 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

² Hebrews 12:15

³ Ecclesiastes 4:10

⁴ John 15:16 (NIV)

⁵ Galatians 5:22,23