

# Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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## Bringing Potentiality Into Actuality

by Dan Trygg

“And in Him you are having-been-filled-full, who is the Source of all rule and authority.” Colossians 2:10

“And we proclaim Him, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.” Colossians 1:28

“Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become fully-mature, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let us therefore, as many as are mature, have this mindset; and if in anything you have a different mindset, God will reveal that also to you; <sup>16</sup> however, unto what we have attained, let us walk in. <sup>17</sup> Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.” Philippians 3:12-17

In our study last week, we looked at the first two passages listed above. The first says we “have been made complete” or “full”. It is indicating that **we have been given everything we need for maturity in Christ**. We have the full potential to live a God-centered, victorious, Spirit-filled, empowered and fruitful life in Christ. The apostle Peter tells us the same thing in his second letter: “all things of His divine power, the things pertaining to life and good-devotedness, are having-been-given to us...” (II Pet. 1:3). This potential is fully-provided so that we could become “partakers of the divine nature, escaping from the corruption of the world by lust” (vs. 4). In the Colossians 1:28 passage, we see that **this is not just a “given”, however**. Paul found it necessary to “continuously-proclaim” the reality of the indwelling Christ as the hope of maturity and Godlikeness. He also had to “remind” or “admonish” these believers, and “instruct” them with all skill, in order to get them to move on toward maturity in Christ. In the next verse, we see that this was not an easy or lackadaisical aspect of his ministry. On the contrary, toward this very goal Paul *labored-to-exhaustion, agonizingly-struggling* according to the inner working of God’s power that was active within him. This very candid description tells me that **it was not easy getting people to push forward toward maturity**. It sounds like an “uphill battle”, about as neat and easy as “pushing a rope”. Either the people themselves were distracted, unmotivated and resistant to change, or the spiritual opposition and practical difficulties were oppressive. In any case, **it took all that Paul had, and all the energy God gave him, to remain focused and to work diligently for tangible, real results**.

From the Philippians passage, we also see that **Paul himself was continually applying himself to grow and mature in Christ**. It is a good reminder that, no matter how mature I *think* I am, ...no matter how long I have been a Christian, ...or how many years I have gone to church, ...or how many times I have read through the Bible, ...or how much I may have done for the Lord in Christian service..., **there is always room to grow**. When he wrote these words, he had been a Christian for over twenty years, and had incredible experiences of spiritual insight, ...had been on three missionary journeys, establishing churches in two continents, ...had endured overwhelming hardships, ...saw powerful miracles and movements of the Spirit. Yet, **he still saw it was necessary to press on to reach farther for maturity and effectiveness in Christ**. *He told us to follow his example, and that of those like him*.

How do we move from our potential in Christ to actively *apply* and *experience* that reality in day to day living? **How do we progress from potentiality to actuality in Christ?** Below, I have listed twelve steps that can help us break down or clarify different aspects of the maturing process. These can, in turn, be categorized or summarized under three main headings: Repentance, Reckoning and Risk. **Just as we used to talk of the “Three R’s” in education: “reading, ‘riting and ‘rithmetic”, the “Three R’s of spiritual growth would be “Repentance, Reckoning and Risk”**. Obviously, there was more to a well-rounded education than those “Three R’s”. They were fundamental, *basic* skills that people could see were important and necessary. Any school would quickly move beyond these three subjects into other areas (like science or history) that further specialized, sharpened and expanded upon these basic skills. The same is true for the twelve steps listed below. **There are the “Three R’s”, but there are also sub-categories or further delineations that help to specialize, sharpen and expand upon these general principles to a broader curriculum**. In another parallel with education, *those traditional fundamentals employed very different skills*. There were the skills for taking in new information (reading), for expression (‘riting) and for calculating (‘rithmetic). In a similar way, **the Spiritual “Three R’s” also employ different skills. There are input skills (repentance), calculation or assessment skills (reckoning) and expression skills (risk)**. While these are recognizably different, the following list is my own creation, ...my attempt to help us get a handle on the growth process. The Bible does not lay them out in this systematic way, but they are certainly easily found in its pages.

## Twelve Steps For Spiritual Growth

- (1.) **Repent** – The Greek word, *metanoia*, means a “change of perception”. It means you realize your understanding of reality was faulty, and you see things differently. It also implies that *because* you see things differently, you embark on a new course of action. Growth and change won’t come unless we see things differently, and recognize the need to change. Matt. 4:17; Lk. 3:8; 17:3; Act 8:22; 26:20; II Cor. 7:9,10; Rev. 2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19.
- (2.) **Return** – Come back to God as your Savior from sin and Source for living. The Greek word means to “turn around”. Acts 26:20 indicates it is a separate act, different from “repentance”. Isaiah 30:15 says, “...in returning and rest you will be delivered”. It is not enough to realize error. We must correct it.
- (3.) **Refresh** – Empty yourself of hurry and anxiety. Think about God’s provision, His faithfulness, His many blessings. Fill your mouth with laughter, and your heart with praise and thanksgiving.
- (4.) **Renew** – Gather new insights, ideas and techniques to help you apply your faith in practical ways. Rom. 12:2 says that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (perception), and Eph. 4:23 indicates that this is a key aspect of learning to put on our “new self”. On a practical level, we only know what we know. If we don’t know of other *options*, we can only do *what we are aware of* to do. Gaining new ideas allows us to try new things.
- (5.) **Reckon** – The word means to “calculate, consider, count it to be true”. We are to “count it to be true” that we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11). Note that this is a deeper act of the will than just “knowing”. It is choosing to apply God’s truth to our thought process. We choose to believe Him.
- (6.) **“Re-dress”** – Consciously “put off” the old identity and its practices, and “put on” the new identity and the practices that go with the new heart (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:5-10). Take up, and put on, the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-16; Rom 13:12; I Thess. 5:8). Who are you? – A sinner, or a saint? A victim, or a warrior?
- (7.) **Recapture** – Take captive errant, deceptive thoughts and reasonings that block or oppose the experiential knowledge of God. (II Cor. 10:4; cf. II Tim. 2:24-26; Lk. 4:18).
- (8.) **Recalibrate** – Learn to recognize God at work around you (cf. Jn. 5:19,20), and how He communicates with you. God *desires* to communicate with us. It is our heritage as His servants. (Psa. 25; Prov. 3:32; Isa. 54:13). Being led and directed by the Spirit is meant to be *normative* (Jn. 14:26; Rom. 8:9,14; Gal. 5:16-18)
- (9.) **Risk** – You must step out in faith to experiment or “put to the test” what you may perceive to be the truth, and the leading of God in your life. Romans 12:2 indicates that, in some ways, *we discover the will of God through a process of experimentation*, testing and trying things to see what works (cf. Gal. 6:4; Eph. 5:10; Phil. 1:10; I Thess. 5:21). Note that this is a still further investment of our wills. Now, instead of just applying ourselves to “think” differently, we are choosing to “put ourselves out there” to express our faith in new ways.
- (10.) **Respond** – We must learn to *wait for, watch for, take hold of* and *act in correspondence with* the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit. Each of these components requires faith, discipline and self-control, because our selfish flesh does not *want to* yield to God (Gal. 5:5,13-25). *He* is the leader.
- (11.) **Remain** – Abide in the reality of “Christ in you”, as you live throughout the day (Jn. 15:5-8; Col. 1:28).
- (12.) **Repeat** – Continue rehearsing and reapplying these steps as often as needed. The spiritual journey is a marathon, not a sprint. There will be ups and downs. *God* is consistent, ...but *we* are *not*, in our humanness. If you fail, don’t give up. As Paul said, “Overlooking what lies behind, ...I press on...”