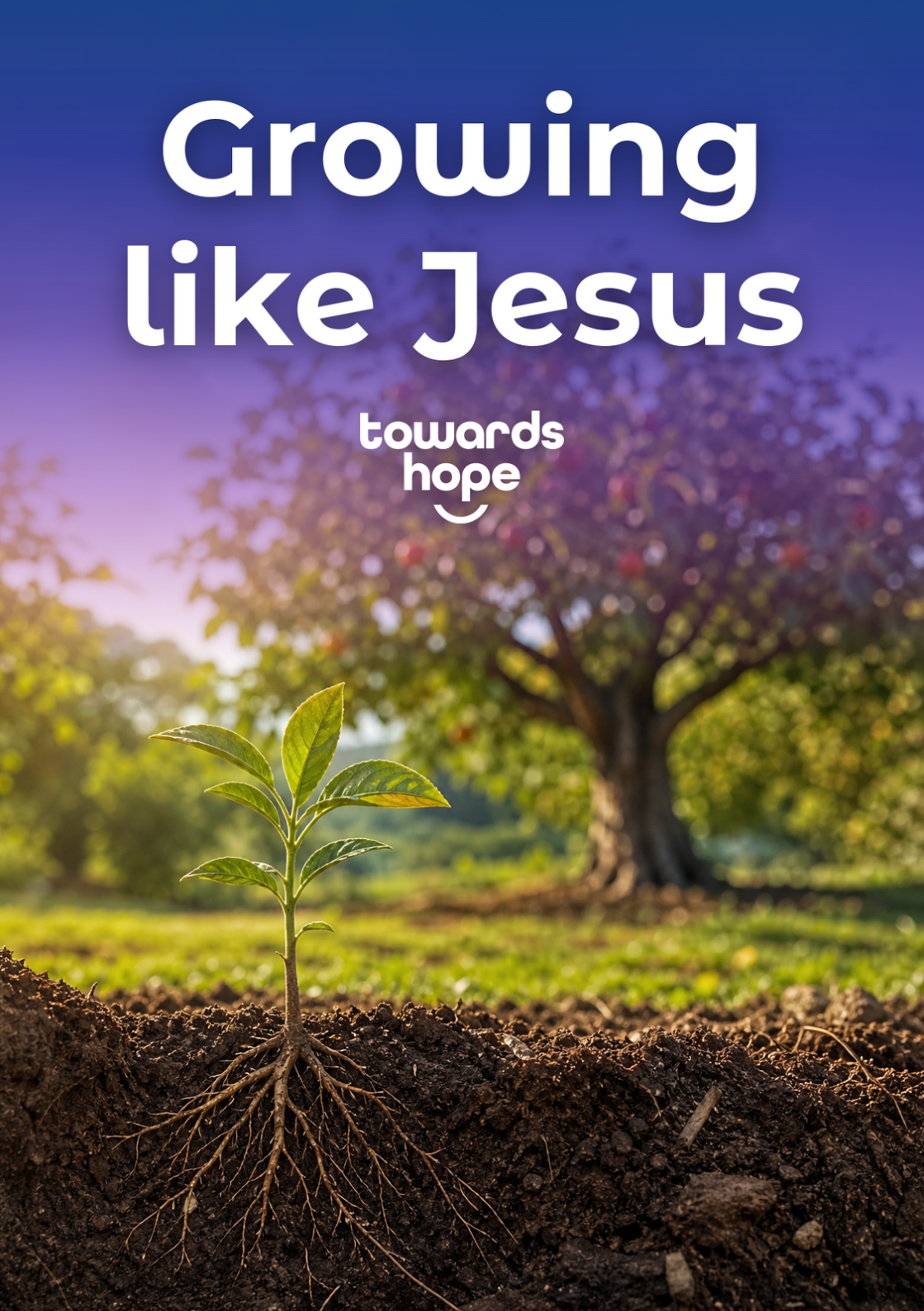
Growing like Jesus

towards hope



Contents

Chapter 1 — God Changes His Children 3

Chapter 2 — The Holy Spirit Helps Us Grow 7

Chapter 3 — Fighting Sin Every Day 11

Chapter 4 — Learning to Love What God Loves 16

Chapter 5 — Becoming More Like Jesus 20

Chapter 6 — Growing Through Hard Times 25

Chapter 7 — Helping Others Grow 29

Chapter 8 — Finishing the Race 33

Chapter 1 — God Changes His Children

When someone trusts in Jesus, something wonderful happens right away. Their sins are forgiven. They become part of God's family. They are made new inside. But God's work does not stop there.

Becoming a Christian is not the end of God's work in a person—it is the beginning.

God does not simply forgive His children and leave them as they are. He begins changing them so they become more like Jesus. This lifelong work is called **spiritual growth** or **sanctification**. That is a big word, but it simply means that God is making His people holy.

Before we knew Jesus, sin ruled our hearts. We wanted our own way. We lived for ourselves. Even when we did good things, our hearts were still turned away from God. But when God saves someone, He gives them a new heart—a heart that wants to know Him, love Him, and obey Him.

That does not mean Christians become perfect straight away.

Christians still struggle with sin. They still make wrong choices. They still have days when they fail. But something is different now: they do not want to stay in sin. Deep down, they want to please God.

Imagine planting a tiny apple seed in the ground. At first, it does not look like much. It is small and weak. But over time, with water and sunlight, it grows. Slowly it becomes stronger. Eventually, it becomes the tree it was meant to be.

That is what God does with His children.

When He saves us, we may still be weak and immature in our faith. But God patiently grows us. Day by day, year by year, He shapes us into people who look more and more like Jesus.

Sometimes the change is easy to see.

A person who used to lie may begin telling the truth.

A child who used to be selfish may begin sharing gladly.

Someone who used to be angry may begin learning patience.

Other changes happen quietly inside.

We may begin loving God’s Word more.

We may care more about prayer.

We may feel sad about sin in ways we never did before.

We may start wanting others to know Jesus too.

These changes do not happen because Christians are trying hard to be good on their own. They happen because **God Himself is at work in His people**.

> QUOTE
>
> *“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*
>
> **Philippians 1:6**

That means if God has truly saved someone, He will not stop working in them. He will keep changing them all through their life.

Sometimes growth feels slow.

A child may stand by a wall every day and never notice they are getting taller. But after months and years, everyone can see they have grown.

Spiritual growth can feel like that too.

You may not always notice the changes God is making in your heart. But over time, He is working. He is teaching you. He is correcting you. He is helping you trust Him more.

And one day, God’s work will be complete.

When Jesus returns, every believer will be made perfect forever. Sin will be gone. We will be fully like Jesus in holiness and joy.

So when you struggle, do not give up.

If you belong to Jesus, God is still working on you.

He is shaping you.

He is growing you.

He is changing you.

Little by little, day by day, He is making you more like His Son.

Big Truth to Remember

God does not leave His children unchanged—He grows them to become more like Jesus.

Think About It

What changes have you seen God making in your life since you began following Him?

> QUOTE
>
> *“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*
>
> **Philippians 1:6**

> QUOTE
>
> *Lord, thank You that You do not give up on Your children. Thank You for changing me and helping me grow. Please keep making me more like Jesus every day. Amen.*

Chapter 2 — The Holy Spirit Helps Us Grow

When God saves someone, He does not simply forgive their sins and then tell them, “Now do your best to live for Me.”

God knows we could never follow Him by our own strength.

That is why He gives every believer a wonderful gift: **the Holy Spirit**.

The Holy Spirit is not a force or a feeling. He is God Himself—the third Person of the Trinity. He is fully God, just as the Father is God and Jesus is God. And when someone trusts in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live in them.

Think about that for a moment.

If you belong to Jesus, God’s Spirit lives in you.

That means Christians are never alone in trying to follow God. The Holy Spirit is always with them, helping them grow.

Before becoming Christians, people are powerless against sin. They may try to be better, but their hearts are still trapped by sin’s power. But when the Holy Spirit comes, He gives believers a new power—the power to obey God.

This does not mean obeying God suddenly becomes easy. Christians still struggle. Temptation is still real. Sin is still a battle.

But now there is someone stronger at work inside them.

> QUOTE
>
> *“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”*
>
> **Galatians 5:16**

To “walk by the Spirit” means to depend on Him every day—to trust His help, listen to His Word, and follow where He leads.

The Holy Spirit helps believers in many ways.

He helps us understand the Bible.

He reminds us what God says is true.

He convicts us when we sin.

He gives us strength to obey.

He comforts us when we suffer.

He helps us pray when we do not know what to say.

He also grows His fruit in us.

Galatians 5 tells us the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Fruit does not appear overnight.

A tree grows fruit slowly over time. In the same way, the Holy Spirit patiently grows these qualities in believers as they trust Him.

Perhaps you notice that you are becoming more patient than you used to be.

Perhaps you are quicker to forgive.

Perhaps you care more about telling the truth.

Perhaps you feel stronger when facing temptation.

Those changes are signs that the Holy Spirit is at work.

But Christians must not ignore Him.

The Bible warns believers not to resist the Spirit’s work. When we choose sin, ignore God’s Word, or refuse to listen when He convicts us, we make spiritual growth harder.

Instead, we should welcome His work.

When He shows us sin, we should confess it.

When He teaches us truth, we should believe it.

When He leads us to obey, we should follow.

The Christian life is not about trying harder in your own strength. It is about learning to depend more and more on the Holy Spirit.

He is the One who changes hearts.

He is the One who gives power.

He is the One who helps God’s children grow.

So if following Jesus feels hard sometimes, remember this:

God never asks His children to grow alone.

The Holy Spirit is with you every step of the way.

Big Truth to Remember

The Holy Spirit lives in believers and gives them power to grow like Jesus.

Think About It

Which fruit of the Spirit would you most like God to grow more in your life?

> QUOTE
>
> *“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”*
>
> **Galatians 5:16**

> QUOTE
>
> *Holy Spirit, thank You for living in me and helping me follow Jesus. Please grow Your fruit in my life and give me strength to obey God every day. Amen.*

Chapter 3 — Fighting Sin Every Day

Even after becoming Christians, believers still struggle with sin.

That may sound surprising at first. If God gives His children a new heart and the Holy Spirit lives in them, why do they still sin?

Because although Christians are changed, they are not yet perfect.

Until Jesus returns, every believer lives in a daily battle. Part of them wants to obey God, but another part still feels the pull of old sinful desires. The Christian life is not a life without struggle—it is a life of learning to fight.

Before someone trusts in Jesus, sin rules their life like a cruel master. They may not realise it, but they are trapped, always choosing what their sinful heart wants most.

But when God saves a person, sin is no longer their master.

> QUOTE
>
> *"Sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace."*
>
> **Romans 6:14**

That means Christians still sin, but they are no longer slaves to sin. Sin still attacks them, but it no longer owns them.

Imagine a king rescuing prisoners from a dark dungeon. The prison doors are opened, and the chains are removed. The prisoners are free—but they must now learn to live like free people.

That is what happens to Christians.

Jesus has set them free from sin's power. But every day they must learn to live in that freedom by saying no to sin and yes to God.

This fight is not always easy.

Temptation can come from many places:

- A selfish thought
- A burst of anger
- Jealousy when others have more
- Pride when we want praise
- Fear when we do not trust God
- Dishonesty when telling the truth feels hard

Sin often whispers lies to us:

> QUOTE
>
> *"No one will know."*
>
> *"It is not that bad."*
>
> *"You deserve this."*
>
> *"Just this once."*

But temptation always lies. Sin promises happiness and gives sorrow. It promises freedom and brings slavery. It promises life and leads to death.

That is why Christians must fight sin seriously.

How do we fight?

First, by **remembering who we are**.

If we belong to Jesus, we are not slaves to sin anymore.

Second, by **confessing sin quickly**.

When we fail, we should not hide from God. We should come to Him, admit our sin, and ask for forgiveness.

Third, by **using God's Word**.

The Bible helps us recognise lies and fight them with truth.

Fourth, by **praying for help**.

God loves to help His children in temptation.

Fifth, by **running from temptation when possible**.

Sometimes the wisest way to fight sin is simply to get away from what tempts us.

Remember: fighting sin is not about becoming perfect overnight.

Sometimes Christians feel discouraged because they keep struggling. But the very fact that you hate your sin and want to fight it is a sign that God is at work in you.

Unbelievers may sin without caring. But believers feel the battle because the Holy Spirit is changing them.

Each time you resist temptation, confess sin, and keep trusting Jesus, you are learning to fight as God’s child.

One day, the battle will end.

When Jesus returns, believers will never sin again.

Until then, every Christian is called to fight faithfully.

Not in fear.

Not in hopelessness.

But with confidence that Jesus has already won the victory.

Big Truth to Remember

Christians still fight sin every day, but sin is no longer their master.

Think About It

What temptation do you most need God’s help to fight right now?

> QUOTE
>
> *“Sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”*
>
> **Romans 6:14**

> QUOTE
>
> *Lord, thank You that sin is no longer my master because of Jesus. Help me to fight temptation, confess my sins quickly, and trust You for strength every day. Amen.*

Chapter 4 — Learning to Love What God Loves

When God saves someone, He does more than change what they do—He changes what they love.

Before becoming Christians, people may do some outwardly good things, but their hearts do not truly love God. They may love being praised. They may love comfort. They may love getting their own way. But they do not naturally love what God loves.

That begins to change when God gives a person a new heart.

A Christian starts to care about things they never cared much about before. They begin to love truth more than lies. They begin to love kindness more than selfishness. They begin to love holiness more than sin.

This change does not happen all at once. Learning to love what God loves takes time. But little by little, God reshapes the desires of His children.

Think of a child who once hated vegetables and only wanted sweets. Over time, they may learn that good food helps them grow strong, and their tastes begin to change. What they once disliked becomes something they enjoy.

Spiritual growth can be like that.

At first, obeying God may feel difficult. Saying no to sin may feel painful. Choosing kindness, honesty, purity, or humility may seem hard.

But as God changes our hearts, we begin to see that His ways are good. We learn that obeying Him brings joy. We start wanting what pleases Him.

> QUOTE
>
> *“Delight yourself in the Lord.”*
>
> **Psalm 37:4**

God does not only want outward obedience. He wants hearts that delight in Him.

Imagine two children cleaning their room.

One obeys while grumbling, stomping, and complaining the whole time.

The other obeys gladly because they trust their parent and want to please them.

Both may do the same job, but only one has a joyful heart.

God cares about our hearts, not just our actions.

He is teaching His children not only to do what is right, but to love what is right.

This means Christians begin to:

- Love reading God’s Word

- Love gathering with God’s people
- Love worshipping God
- Love serving others
- Love purity and truth
- Love what is good and hate what is evil

Of course, believers do not love these things perfectly.

There are still days when sin looks attractive. There are still moments when selfish desires feel stronger than holy desires. But over time, God changes what His children treasure most.

The more we know God, the more we love Him.

And the more we love Him, the more we love what He loves.

That is why spiritual growth is not just about rules.

It is about relationship.

God is not trying to make His children into people who merely follow instructions. He is making them into people whose hearts delight in Him.

So if you belong to Jesus, ask yourself:

What do I love more now than I used to?

What sinful desires is God teaching me to hate?

What good things is He helping me enjoy?

Every time your heart begins to love holiness more and sin less, that is evidence of God’s work in you.

He is teaching you to love what He loves.

Big Truth to Remember

God changes His children’s hearts so they learn to love what He loves.

Think About It

What is one good thing God is helping you love more, and one sinful thing He is helping you hate?

> QUOTE
>
> *“Delight yourself in the Lord.”*
>
> **Psalm 37:4**

> QUOTE
>
> *Lord, change my heart so I love what You love and hate what is evil. Help me delight in You more than anything else. Amen.*

Chapter 5 — Becoming More Like Jesus

The goal of spiritual growth is not simply to become a “better person.”

God’s plan for His children is much greater than that.

He is making them more like **Jesus**.

> QUOTE
>
> *Romans 8:29 says that God chose His people “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” That means God is shaping believers so their lives reflect Jesus more and more.*

Jesus is the perfect example of what true holiness looks like.

He loved perfectly.

He obeyed perfectly.

He trusted His Father perfectly.

He was humble, kind, truthful, patient, pure, brave, and full of compassion.

When God changes His children, He is teaching them to become like Him.

This does not mean Christians become little saviours or gods. Only Jesus is perfect and worthy of worship. But believers are meant to reflect His character—like mirrors reflecting light.

Think about the moon.

The moon shines brightly in the night sky, but it has no light of its own. It reflects the light of the sun.

Christians are meant to be like that.

We do not produce goodness by ourselves. Instead, as God changes us, our lives reflect the beauty of Jesus to the world.

So what does becoming like Jesus look like?

It means learning to:

- Show kindness when others are rude
- Tell the truth even when lying would be easier
- Forgive people who hurt us
- Be humble instead of proud
- Trust God when life is hard
- Serve others instead of always wanting our own way
- Love even difficult people

This kind of growth is not always dramatic.

Sometimes becoming more like Jesus happens in quiet ways:

- Choosing patience with a younger sibling
- Admitting when you are wrong
- Doing the right thing when no one is watching

- Staying calm when frustrated
- Praying instead of worrying

These may seem like small things, but they matter greatly to God.

Every act of obedience, every moment of patience, every step of faith is part of God’s work in shaping His children into the likeness of Christ.

Of course, no Christian reflects Jesus perfectly yet.

There will be failures.

There will be sinful attitudes.

There will be days when we look very unlike Him.

But God does not stop His work because of our weakness.

He patiently keeps shaping His children.

A sculptor may spend many days carefully shaping stone into a beautiful statue. At first, the stone may look rough and unfinished. But little by little, each strike of the tool shapes it into the artist’s design.

That is what God is doing in His people.

Sometimes His work feels gentle.

Sometimes it feels painful.

But every part of it is making us more like Jesus.

And one day His work will be complete.

When Jesus returns, every believer will be perfectly like Him in holiness.

> QUOTE
>
> *1 John 3:2 says, “When Christ appears, we shall be like him.”*

What a wonderful promise.

The Christian life is a journey of becoming more and more like Jesus until the day we see Him face to face.

So when you feel discouraged by slow growth, remember:

God is not finished with you yet.

He is shaping you every day to look more like His Son.

Big Truth to Remember

God’s goal for His children is to make them more like Jesus.

Think About It

Which part of Jesus’ character would you most like God to grow in your life right now?

> QUOTE
>
> *Romans 8:29 — “To be conformed to the image of his Son.”*

> QUOTE
>
> *Lord, thank You for making me more like Jesus. Please shape my heart, words, and actions so others can see His character in me. Amen.*

Chapter 6 — Growing Through Hard Times

Most people think growing should always feel easy.

They imagine that if God is helping His children become more like Jesus, then spiritual growth should happen through happy days, answered prayers, and smooth paths.

But God often grows His children in another way.

He uses **hard times**.

Trials, disappointments, pain, sickness, sadness, fear, loss, and struggles are not wasted in the life of a believer. God uses even difficult things to shape His people.

> QUOTE
>
> *James 1:2–3 says, “Consider it pure joy… whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”*

That does not mean trials are enjoyable. Pain still hurts. Sadness is still real. Hard things are still hard.

But it does mean God has a purpose in them.

Think about how a tree grows stronger.

A tree that grows in perfect weather with no wind may look healthy, but it often has shallow roots. A tree that faces storms and strong winds must grow deep roots to stand firm.

In the same way, hard times can drive believers to trust God more deeply.

When life is easy, it is tempting to rely on ourselves.

But when we face struggles:

- We learn how much we need God
- We pray more earnestly
- We cling to His promises
- We discover His faithfulness in deeper ways

God also uses trials to shape our character.

Hard times can teach patience.

They can grow humility.

They can strengthen faith.

They can help us care more deeply for others who suffer.

They can loosen our grip on the things of this world and make us long for heaven.

Even Jesus learned obedience through suffering while on earth. If suffering was part of His path, we should not be surprised when it is part of ours too.

Sometimes God uses trials to reveal what is in our hearts.

Pressure can show whether we truly trust God or only trust Him when life feels comfortable.

Imagine squeezing a sponge.

Whatever is inside comes out.

Trials often do that to our hearts. They reveal what is really there—fear, anger, pride, doubt, or faith. And when God shows us these things, it is not to shame us, but to help us grow.

This is why Christians can trust God even in suffering.

We may not understand every reason for our pain.

We may not know why hard things happen when they do.

But we can know this:

God is never wasting our suffering.

> QUOTE
>
> *Romans 8:28 promises that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him.*

“All things” includes the painful things.

That means every disappointment, every trial, every tear is being used by God for the good of His children.

So when life is hard, do not assume God has forgotten you.

He may be doing some of His deepest work in you.

He is teaching you to trust Him.

He is strengthening your faith.

He is making you more like Jesus.

And one day, when all suffering is over, you will see that none of it was wasted.

Big Truth to Remember

God uses hard times to help His children grow stronger and more like Jesus.

Think About It

How might God be using a hard situation in your life to help you trust Him more?

> QUOTE
>
> *James 1:2–3 — "Consider it pure joy… whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."*

> QUOTE
>
> *Lord, help me trust You when life is hard. Teach me to believe that You are using even difficult times for my good and Your glory. Amen.*

Chapter 7 — Helping Others Grow

God does not mean for His children to grow alone.

When someone becomes a Christian, they are not only brought into God's family—they are brought into **God's people**. Every believer becomes part of the church, and God uses His people to help one another grow.

Sometimes people imagine that spiritual growth is a private journey between them and God alone. But the Bible shows something different.

God designed Christians to grow **together**.

Hebrews 10:24 says, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

That means believers should help each other keep following Jesus.

Think of a campfire.

When the logs are close together, the fire burns brightly. But if one burning log is pulled away and left by itself, it slowly cools and fades.

Christians can be like that too.

When believers separate themselves from God’s people, they often grow weaker. But when they stay close to other Christians, they are strengthened and encouraged.

God uses other believers in many ways to help His children grow.

He uses:

- Parents who teach God’s Word
- Church leaders who preach truth
- Christian friends who encourage us
- Older believers who set a good example
- Fellow church members who pray for us and care for us

Sometimes helping others grow means encouraging them.

A kind word at the right time can strengthen someone who feels weary.

Sometimes it means teaching them.

Sharing God’s truth helps others know Him better.

Sometimes it means correcting them lovingly.

If a Christian is choosing sin, loving them may mean gently warning them and helping them return to God’s path.

That can feel uncomfortable, but true love does not ignore danger.

Imagine seeing your friend walking toward a cliff without noticing. You would not stay silent. You would warn them because you care.

In the same way, Christians help one another by speaking truth in love.

But helping others grow is not only for pastors, parents, or church leaders.

Every believer can encourage others.

You can:

- Pray for fellow Christians
- Share Bible verses that help someone
- Encourage a friend who feels discouraged
- Set a godly example through your actions
- Speak kindly and truthfully
- Help someone who is struggling

Even children can be used by God to strengthen other believers.

Never think you are too young to help others follow Jesus.

At the same time, Christians must be humble enough to receive help from others too.

Sometimes God uses people to encourage us.

Sometimes He uses them to correct us.

Sometimes He uses them to teach us something we need to learn.

Wise believers welcome that help.

God’s people are not perfect. Churches are filled with sinners still learning to grow. Sometimes believers fail one another. But even

in imperfect churches, God still uses His people to help His children mature.

So do not try to follow Jesus alone.

Stay close to God’s people.

Encourage others.

Receive encouragement.

Help one another keep growing.

That is one of the ways God strengthens His family.

Big Truth to Remember

God uses His people to help His children grow together.

Think About It

How can you encourage another Christian this week?

> QUOTE
>
> *Hebrews 10:24 — “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”*

> QUOTE
>
> *Lord, thank You for giving me other believers to help me grow. Please help me encourage others and be willing to receive help when I need it too. Amen.*

Chapter 8 — Finishing the Race

The Christian life is not a short sprint.

It is a long race.

From the day someone trusts in Jesus until the day they die or Jesus returns, they are called to keep following Him faithfully. Some days feel full of joy and strength. Other days feel slow and difficult. But every believer is called to keep going.

Hebrews 12:1 says, “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Perseverance means continuing faithfully even when the journey is hard.

The Christian life requires perseverance because there are many things that can make believers want to give up.

There are temptations that pull us away.

There are trials that make us weary.

There are disappointments that test our faith.

There are seasons when growth feels slow.

There are days when following Jesus feels costly.

But God calls His children to keep running.

Imagine watching a long-distance race.

At the beginning, runners are full of energy. They feel strong and excited. But as the race continues, their legs grow tired. Their breathing becomes hard. Their bodies ache. The finish line may seem far away.

That is when perseverance matters most.

The Christian life can feel like that.

Anyone can start well for a short time. But faithful believers keep trusting Jesus year after year, through both easy and difficult seasons.

How do Christians keep going?

First, by **fixing their eyes on Jesus**.

Hebrews 12:2 says believers should run “fixing our eyes on Jesus.”

If we stare only at our problems, we lose heart.

If we compare ourselves to others, we become discouraged.

If we focus only on how far we still have to grow, we may want to quit.

But when we keep looking to Jesus—His love, His power, His promises—we find strength to continue.

Second, by **remembering the finish line**.

One day the race will end.

Every believer will stand before Jesus.

Every struggle with sin will be over.

Every trial will be finished.

Every tear will be wiped away.

Every faithful runner will hear their Saviour’s welcome.

What a glorious day that will be.

Third, by **trusting God to keep us**.

Christians persevere not because they are strong enough on their own, but because God holds them fast.

Jesus said in John 10:28, “No one will snatch them out of my hand.”

That means true believers are secure in Christ. God will preserve His children to the end.

Yes, believers must keep running.

But behind all their perseverance is God’s faithful power keeping them.

So when you feel tired in the Christian life, remember:

God is not asking you to finish the race alone.

He is with you.

He strengthens you.

He keeps you.

He will help you endure to the end.

And when the race is over, all the struggle will be worth it.

Every hard choice to obey.

Every battle against sin.

Every moment of faith in suffering.

Every step of perseverance.

None of it is wasted.

Keep running.

Keep trusting.

Keep following Jesus.

The finish line is coming.

Big Truth to Remember

God helps His children keep following Jesus faithfully until the end.

Think About It

What helps you keep trusting Jesus when following Him feels hard?

> QUOTE
>
> *Hebrews 12:1 — “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*

> QUOTE
>
> *Lord, help me keep following You faithfully all my life. Strengthen me when I feel tired, and help me keep my eyes on Jesus until the race is finished. Amen.*