

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO GROW UP?

Pastor Warren's sermon transcript

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40 Days of Prayer – Week 1

If you take out your message notes, I want to welcome you to 40 Days of Prayer, our spiritual growth campaign for this year. Now we've done a spiritual growth campaign every year for decades. It's an important part of your personal growth, and the growth of Saddleback Church where we focus intensely on a theme. We've done 40 Days of Purpose and 40 Days of Community, 40 Days of Peace and 40 Days in the Word and Transformation, and on and on and on.

We've done one almost every year. It's an important part of Saddleback that we focus intensely on spiritual growth. Why? Because most of the problems in your life come from spiritual immaturity. When we're not spiritually mature, we make dumb decisions. We build our decisions based on how we feel, which is a terrible basis for making decisions. "Well I just feel like doing it." Well your feelings are wrong a lot of the time and you're manipulated by your moods. Mature people make decisions based on truth, not based on feelings. So many of the problems in our world today, national debt and other things like that, happen because of immaturity. The people don't know how to do what's wise, how to do what's mature.

The Bible tells us that growth is God's will for your life. You know earlier we had these little girls out here with Tosh and Kristy and they're cute. Babies are cute. Kids are cute. But a child that doesn't grow up, that's not cute, that's tragic. It is possible to grow old and not ever grow up. You know as well as I do, I know a lot of old people who are spiritually and emotionally immature. They never grew up. They grew old without growing up. God wants you to not stay as a baby in diapers. He wants you to be spiritually strong. He wants you to be a man. He wants you to be a woman of God.

That's what we look at every spiritual growth campaign. Growth is God's will. Ephesians Chapter 4, there on your outline at the top, verse 14 says this, *"We're not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every wind of teaching..."* In other words, you just fall for anything when you're immature. *"Instead we're meant to hold firmly to the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ."* We're not meant to remain as children but we're meant to grow up, circle the word grow up, we're to grow up in Christ. What is the perfect picture of maturity? Look at Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate picture of spiritual, emotional, intellectual maturity. To have the thoughts of Christ and know how to respond like he did will be a whole lot better in your life.

Now, every campaign that we do is built on six pillars of spiritual growth. Before we actually get into the subject of prayer, which is an important thing for breakthroughs and miracles and all that God wants to do in your life comes through prayer. We'll talk about that starting in the next session. In this week, I want us to look at why we do what we're going to do the next 40 days so you understand the reason behind it. There are laws of spiritual growth that you can not violate. God is the God of order and he makes things based on principles. He designed the universe built on principles of physics. The physical laws, like gravity and the second law of thermodynamics, and a lot of other laws are what guide the universe and make the universe actually work.

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Just as there are physical laws that God invented for the universe, there are spiritual laws that God has invented for your life. If you want to grow you've got to cooperate with them. Why don't you write these down?

Number one, the first law is:

1. We grow when we feed on God's Word.

We grow when we feed on God's Word. This book, this Bible, is your soul food. Now you know that you can't be physically healthy if you eat junk food all the time. You can't be spiritually healthy unless you feed on the truth. Feed on the Word of God.

What kind of health would you have if every Sunday you ate this giant Sunday brunch buffet and just gorged yourself with all this food and the rest of the week you ate nothing? Well it would harm your health. It harms your health if all you get of spiritual truth is what you get on Sunday. That's not enough. You've got to eat a little bit every day. You've got to feed your soul, not just once a week going to church, you've got to feed your soul a little bit every day or you're going to be a spiritual wimp. You're not going to have the strength that you need in order to do what God wants to do in your life.

Matthew 4:4, Jesus says this, *"People need more than bread for their life..."* They need peanut butter and jelly too No, that's not what it says. Okay. *"People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on the Word of God."* That's what God wants you to do to feed on it a little bit every day. We want to help you develop that habit, whether it's five, 10, 15 minutes a day. In Acts, chapter 20:32 the Bible says this, Paul says, *"The Word of grace"* that's the Bible, *"The Word of grace is able to build you up and give you all..."* notice this, *"all the blessings that God has for his people."*

Would you like to have all the blessings that God has for you? Yes. As your pastor, your friend, your spiritual coach, I want you to have all the blessings that God has for you. That's why we do these campaigns. How do you get all of the blessing that God has for you? He says right there. The Word of grace will build you up. When you get mature, then God can give you all the blessings he has for you. There are some gifts you can't give a baby because it will destroy them. There are some gifts you can't give a young child. It will destroy them. There are some gifts God wants to give you, but he's waiting for you to grow up. He says, *"The Word of grace"* the more you get into this book, he says, *"The Word of grace will build you up"* build you up to maturity, *"and [then] give you all the blessings that God has for his people."*

Now, how do you do that? How do you feed on the Word of God? Well let's go back to what we call the hand illustration of five ways and then the palm is the sixth way to get a grasp on the Word of God. We teach this in Class 201, but some of you took 201 in the 1800s. Let's just review it again. Your hand represents six ways to get into God's Word. Hear it, that's your pinky finger. Read it, that's your ring finger. Study it, that's your middle finger. Memorize it, and then meditate on it. Meditate means to seriously think about it, and the palm is to apply.

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If all you do, the only spiritual input you get is by hearing, like you come to church on Sunday, that's the only time you hear the Word of God, or maybe you listen to it on the radio, then you only have a grip like this. Satan can steal the Word from you very easily. He can steal your joy, steal the promises, all these things. He can steal it from you because you don't have a grip on the Word of God. Why? We forget 95 percent of everything we hear within 72 hours. That depresses me as a pastor. By Wednesday, you will have forgotten everything I said unless you happen to write it down, which is why we never teach without giving out notes, because the shortest pencil's longer than the longest memory.

If you hear the Word of God, and then you read it a little bit every day, you've got a better grip. Satan can't pull it away from you as quickly. If you hear it, and you read it, and you study it, okay, and we have ways to teach you how to study the Bible, you've got a bigger grip. When you memorize it, now you've got a really good grip. When you actually think about it, that's called meditation. You seriously think about what does this mean in my life? Now you've got a grip and when you apply it, that's the palm, nobody is taking this out of my hand. They're not going to get it out of my hand, because I've got a solid grip on the Word of God.

For the next 40 days we're going to teach you, or reteach you, how to hear, read, study, memorize, meditate, and apply the Word of God, specifically in the area of prayer. These are some habits that we're going to teach you how to do this so you get a good grip so you're not an immature baby and you forget all of that stuff, but you know what God wants you to do. That's the first principle.

Here's the action step we're going to do for 40 days. A daily time with God for 40 days.

I'm going to ask you for the next 40 days to spend five minutes, 10 minutes, 15, whatever, half an hour, whatever you've got, a little bit every day where you're going to feed on the Word of God. That's going to make you healthier.

Number two. Second law of spiritual growth.

2. We grow when we learn in different ways.

We grow when we learn in different ways. Let me explain this. God made us all different. We're all unique. There's nobody in the world like you. Never will be, never can be, even identical twins are different in thousands of different ways. You have a unique voice print, a unique eye print, a unique thumb print, fingerprint, hand print, unique foot print. You have a unique heartbeat and you have a unique learning style. You learn differently than the person sitting next to you learns. If you're going to grow, you've got to learn other learning styles and you have to know what your learning style is.

Notice in Luke chapter 3:18, it says about John the Baptist, *"In many different ways, John preached the good news to the people."* How did he preach in different ways? Why did John use different teaching styles? Because we all learn in different ways, which by the way is one of the reasons I don't do all the teaching here. I think it's important for you to hear the Word of God

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from other people besides me. I don't want you to have your entire spiritual diet coming through one personality.

Pastor Tom has a different personality. Pastor Buddy has a different personality. When they teach they use different styles and then I bring in the best teachers that I can from across America and around the world, because I want you to hear God's Word more than from just me. I want you to hear it in different styles, and it doesn't bother me if you go, "Well I like Buddy's teaching the best," or, "I like Tom's teaching the best," or, "I like that guy we had or that woman we had," or whatever. That's good. We all have different styles of learning so we need different styles of teachers.

Now let me explain this in a little more detail, because we're going to use all these learning styles the next 40 days. That's what makes a campaign different than just like a sermon series. Some of you are auditory learners, you learn by listening. You learn, you hear it, you get it, I got it. All you had to do is tell me, I got it. You learn through the ear. If you're an auditory learner, you love church. Why? Because that's the primary way we use in most churches. What we're doing right now. Sit still while the teacher instills. Everything you're hearing right now is going through the ear gate. If you learn that way, well that's good. Problem is we forget what we learned unless we write it down and the other problem is a lot of people aren't auditory learners.

There's some people who say, "I don't like to listen..." but I like to read or watch. I'm a visual learner. Show it to me. Don't tell me, show it to me. I see it, then I can do it. I can watch a video. I can read a book and I learn through not the ear gate but the eye gate. You're a visual learner. Some of you are actually oral learners and you learn by talking. You learn through the mouth, and if you're an oral learner you love small groups. Why? Because that's where you get to talk, and so that's where you learn. You can't talk in a crowd this big so you may not be learning as much, whereas when you get in a small group, and if you're an oral learner, when you talk your mind starts engaging.

In fact, all of us know people who their mind doesn't really engage until first their mouth starts engaging. Now don't look at them. You know who they are, and it's no different than some people learn through the ear, some people learn through the eye, and some people learn through the mouth. Actually, you don't really think about stuff until you start talking about it. When you talk about it, you go, "Hmm, that's what I believe." Maybe you've never even thought about it but as you say the words, your mind is actually activating. It's important for you to talk about what you believe, because that actually helps you form what you believe. That make sense?

Now there are some people who say, "I don't like to listen. I don't like to read. I don't like to talk." They're called men. Okay? Now that's a generalization. Generalizations are often generally wrong, but it is true, a lot of guys, they're kinesthetic learners. In other words, they learn hands on. They learn actually by doing it. Nobody learns to play football reading a manual. Nobody learns to play golf listening to a lecture. People go out and say, "Let's just go play catch. Let's go shoot some hoops. Let's go up to the driving range and knock some balls around," and you actually learn by doing. Those are kinesthetic learners who learn with your hands. It's hands on learning.

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The average guy will say, "Something's wrong with the car. Let me just get under the hood here. I'll try and figure it out. Don't give me a manual. I'll just figure out how to put this carburetor back together." Or, "Let me figure out how to plug in this stereo and how to wire it all right. I can figure out how to download that app and how to install that program. I'll just figure it out by doing it." There's not right or wrong.

What we're going to do during the next 40 days is we're going to teach you on one truth, prayer, but we're going to teach it through the ear. You're going to hear sermons on it every week, seven messages. You're going to learn it through the eye. You're going to watch seven videos about it. You're going to learn it through the mouth, you're going to discuss it in the small group. You're going to read a daily devotional. You're going to do some projects with your small group. It's like taking a nail and instead of just hitting it one time, you hit it four times. If all you do is come the next 40 days and listen to the sermons, you're not going to get anything out of this. Because the sermons, the messages I'll teach, the next seven messages, are 10 percent of the campaign.

We've got nine other things we're doing and most of them happen in the small group. That's where you're going to learn all these other different styles rather than just through the ear. We learn in different ways. Now notice even God understands this. He made you. In Job 33:14 he says, "*God speaks in different ways, and we don't always recognize his voice.*" God speaks in different ways, because people learn in different ways and we don't always recognize what's going on. You know growing up in a pastor's home, my dad was a pastor, and he was a pretty good teacher, but I would watch and say, "How come people could be in my dad's church for 20 years and they're still cranky, self-centered, gripey gossips, mean to people, and you don't feel like the Gospel, or the Good News is actually penetrating their heart? It's not changing them.

I think how in the world can they sit and hear the truth, week after week after week, and it doesn't even change them? They're still self-centered. Well there's a couple possibilities for it. One is, they're not taking notes and so everything they're learning, they're forgetting all but five percent by Wednesday. You could have come to Saddleback for the last 38 years, heard everything I've taught, and you'd only remember five percent, unless you wrote it down. They're not writing it down so they're learning it and the other is maybe it's not their learning style. If their primary style is not through the ear, but through the eye or the mouth or the hands, sermons aren't enough to get them to maturity. They need more than that.

In a campaign, we're going to use all four of these learning styles and rather than just hitting it one time with a message, we're going to hit it with hearing it and reading it and studying it and memorizing and meditating on it and doing it and in a group. In the eye gate, in the ear gate, in the mouth. Does this make sense? That's where we're going. It's more than a simple sermon series. Much more complex. That's why it takes the better part of a year to produce our spiritual growth campaigns. All right?

Here's the third law of spiritual growth.

3. We grow when we develop spiritual habits.

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We grow when we develop spiritual habits. I cannot over estimate with you the importance of you building good habits in your life. If you build good habits in your life, you're going to have good character. If you have good character, you're going to have a great destiny. Your habits determine what you are and what you determines where you go in life. Your character is the sum total of your habits. You can't say for instance, "I'm a kind person. I have the character quality of kindness" unless you're always kind, unless it's habitual to you. It's your habit to be kind. If you're only kind 25 percent of the time, you're not a kind person.

If you say, "Well, I have integrity. I'm honest." If you're only honest 25 percent of the time, you don't have integrity. Integrity means you're habitually honest. You are habitually doing the right thing. If I were to say to my wife, "Honey, I'll be faithful to you 28 days of the month." Partial faithfulness is unfaithfulness. Partial obedience is disobedience. I can't say I'm a faithful husband if I'm faithful most of the time. No, no. It has to become a habit in your life.

Now there are lots of habits you need to grow in your spiritual life. There's dozens of them. We talked about some of the basic ones in class 201. If you haven't taken that class you should take it. In this next 40 days, we're going to focus on four specific habits. We'll talk about that in just a minute, but first I want you to notice some Scripture.

How do you develop habits? Well you develop them by repetition and by practice. John chapter 13:17, Jesus says this, *"Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you..."* what? Circle that. *"Practice them!"* If you do them. You practice them.

You don't get God's blessing for knowing the right thing to do. You get God's blessing for doing the right thing. For practicing the right thing and for making it a habit in your life. The way you build any habit in your life is two ways. Through repetition and through practice. You often wonder why is our spiritual growth campaign 40 days or 50 days? Sometimes we'll do 40 Days of Prayer, 40 Days of Purpose, 40 Days of Community, 40 Days of Peace, 40 Days of Love. We've done 50 Days of Faith. We've done 50 days of Transformation, and we usually do 40 or 50 days. Why? I'll tell you why. Study after study shows it takes six weeks for you to develop a new habit. Six weeks. You have to do something every day, this is whether it's exercise, diet, or a spiritual habit or anything else, you've got to do it every day for six weeks before it actually becomes a habit in your life.

It takes about three weeks to become comfortable with something. It takes another three weeks for it actually to get ingrained in your life. Now for instance, you know, I don't have to tell you this, you know that to read the Bible a little bit every day and pray is a good idea. That it would actually make you stronger spiritually, but you don't have a daily time with God and the reason why is you've never gone six weeks without missing. It's not a habit in your life. Here's what most of you do. You read the Bible and you pray for a day or two and then you miss a day. Then you read your Bible for a day, and you miss two days. Then you read your Bible for three days in a row, prayer and then you miss a week. Then maybe you miss a month.

Well you're not developing the habit because you've got to do it every day for six weeks. Doing it that way is like rolling up a ball of string and dropping it. Rolling up a ball of string and dropping it. Rolling up a ball of string and dropping it. You keep undoing everything you're

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doing every time you miss it. What we want to do is try to develop some habits in your life that you'll use the rest of your life that will help you grow and be strong. We want to develop in the next 40 days and if you'll do it every day for 40 days, it'll become part of your lifestyle.

Some of you had habits in the past, you've dropped them off. This is a time to go back to what God wants to do. He says, *"Now that you know these things, you'll be blessed if you practice them."* What happens when you practice good habits? Spiritual habits? You grow. Look at the next verse. Hebrews 5:14, *"Solid food is for mature people,"* Now you know what I'm talking about here. Babies eat Gerber Pablum. They eat baby food. When you're mature you get to eat a steak. A baby can't eat a steak. It's not mature enough to eat a steak. He says, *"Solid food is for mature people, whose minds,"* notice this, *"have been trained by practice."* That's called habit. *"Whose minds have been trained by practice to know the difference between good and evil."*

One of the reasons you have a lot of problems in your life is you often make bad decisions because you don't know which thing to do. Do I do this or this? Is this right or is that right? Is this wrong or is that wrong? Is this good? Is that evil? And you don't know. How do you make wise decisions? You become spiritually mature, then you know the difference. Don't do that.

You know treasury agents in America, when the United States government wants to teach treasury agents how to identify counterfeit bills, they don't give them counterfeits to study. In fact, they never will ever show an agent a counterfeit bill. They give them the real deal. A real \$100 bill. Real \$50 bill, and they say, "Study this. Look at it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Think about it. Immerse your life in it. Know it backwards and forwards. Memorize what it looks like." When you know the real deal, when they see a counterfeit, "Oh that's a counterfeit." Say, "How do you know?" "I could tell in a second it's counterfeit." "Why?" "Because I know the real deal." "Well, what about that?" "Well, that's counterfeit too." "How do you know?" "Because I know the real deal."

The problem why a lot of Christians get by-lined and side-lined, because they don't know the real deal. Say, "Well maybe that's okay. I'll just go do that. Maybe it's okay to believe that. That's okay." Because they don't know the real deal and so people sell them counterfeit ideas, counterfeit thoughts all the time, and they don't know the difference. Why? They're not mature. How do you get mature? Habits. Solid food for the mature whose minds have been trained by practice. You do it over and over. Repetition and practice.

Nobody gets to the Olympics on, "I just hope to get there some day." You have to set up habits and be disciplined and do it. You know friends, over my life I've met a lot of very successful people and I've met a lot of very unsuccessful people. I'll tell you this. The difference between successful people and unsuccessful people is simply this, successful people put the time and energy into developing habits and disciplines that unsuccessful people are unwilling to develop. These people are not willing to pay the price.

Successful people are just normal people who decide to develop good habits that take them for the rest of their life. You determine your habits and your habits determine you. These people over here, "I don't know if I want to do that." The same is true in your spiritual life.

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You know yesterday I read about Tom Brady. Most successful NFL quarterback in history. He's also the oldest player right now. He's the oldest player in the NFL, and he's the best. How in the world does Tom Brady stay the best in the entire NFL? He has team members on his team that weren't born when he started playing football. How did he get to be so good? It had a list of all of Tom Brady's habits that he does every single day with extreme discipline that other people are not willing to do.

Every day the first thing he gets up in the morning he drinks 20 ounces of water, right off the bat. There's a whole list of all the things he does to stay in peak mental, physical, emotional shape. He's willing to pay the price. He's developed the habits and they have paid off for him and other people aren't willing to develop those habits. He's still around being the best even though he's the oldest of all that's going on.

The Bible says this is 1 Corinthians 9:25. *"All good athletes train hard and practice to get better. They do it to win a prize that won't last. But we practice to win a prize that will last forever!"* in eternity. The habits you build in your spiritual life are going to pay off forever and ever and ever and ever in eternity.

Now there are a lot of habits we could teach you, but during 40 days of prayer we're going to focus on these four that are there on your outline. First the habit of weekly large group worship. That's what we're doing right now. Then the habit of small group fellowship. Then the habit of a daily time alone with God where you pray a little bit and you talk to God and you read the Bible and let him talk to you. Now notice, it's large group, small group, and personal. That's three different kinds of habits. Then the habit of memorizing God's Word. These four will change your life more than almost any other thing in your life.

Now these first two, **large group worship** and **small group fellowship**. Where'd we get that idea? From the Bible. It's the way all the churches in the Bible are organized. Let me show you. Look up here on the screen. This is the first church. It was in Jerusalem and these are the first Christians. Here's how they organized themselves:

"Every day the believers had the habit, notice there's that word, of meeting together..." Not just on Sundays, but different groups met during the week. *"Every day the believers had the habit of meeting together in the temple courts,"* that's what we're doing here, large group worship *"and also in their homes."* that's small group fellowship. There are things we can do here we can't do in a small group, but there's things we can do in a small group we can't do here. We can't pray for your needs. You can't say, "I've had a tough week." You can't say, "I need help for this." You can't ask a question. There are a lot of things you can do in a small group you can not do in a large group. So you need them both. *"They ate together, and they celebrated with happy and thankful hearts."* They're partying. They're having a good party. *"They praised God and the whole community..."* this isn't talking about the church, it's talking about the community around the church, the whole community *"liked what they saw in these people. As a result, the Lord added to their groups daily as their neighbors were being saved."* (Acts 2:46-47)

If there was any one verse in the Bible I would want to be true about Saddleback Church it's that verse. I would like people to go, "Look at those people over there. They seem to be a little less

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stressed than we are. They seem to have a little bit more purpose in their life. They've got the exact same problems that all of us do, but they seem to handle them a little bit better. They've got some maturity in them. They're not blown around. They're not emotional and manipulated by moods. They're not driven by their feelings. They seem to be more stable, less stressed, even though they got the same problems we do."

They go, "I want to go check that out." The church grows, and your neighbors come to know the Lord and they accept Christ because they see the difference in your life. That's my prayer for our church too, that we do that. To be a strong believer you need both weekend worship and during the week, small group. You need both. To have both are important for spiritual muscle.

Then the other two habits are a **daily time alone with God**, where you read the Bible a little bit and you pray and a **habit of memorizing God's Word**.

Now, I'm going to ask you a question. I'm going to ask you to raise your hand if you say yes to this. How many of you at the end of your life would like people to be able to say about you, she lived or he lived a successful life? Hopefully that's all of us, because I don't want you to be a failure. I certainly want you to be a success as your coach, as your pastor, spiritual coach. I want you to succeed. It's my job to help you succeed in every area of your life. In your finances, in your relationships, your marriage, your career, your health and everything. To be successful in every area. All right?

In the Bible, there's only one place in the Bible where God promises and guarantees success. Would you be interested in that verse? Yeah? Let me put it on the screen. It's Joshua chapter 1:8. Here's what God says is the key to prosperity and success in life. *"Always remember what is written in this Book."* He's talking about the Bible. You need to remember it. *"Read it and think about it."* Now that's the hand. We've got to remember it, we've got to read it, and we've got to reflect on it. Hear it, study it, memorize it, read it. He says, "If you remember what's written," you memorize some verses in the Bible, *"Read it [and you reflect on it, and you] think about it every day and be sure to obey it,"* that's the apply, *"be sure to obey everything that's written in it. If you do this, you will be prosperous and successful in your life."*

Okay. You think God's lying? Think God's just teasing you? You think God's just making this up? No. God says, "You want to be prosperous? You want to be successful?" Well you're not doing what will be the key to it. This is the owner's manual for life and if you do this you'll make a whole lot fewer mistakes, if you read it and study it and memorize it and you get in it. He says, "I will promise you, you will succeed in your life." You want to succeed in your business? You need to read it, reflect on it, remember it. You need to do all these habits that we're just talking about.

All right. The last three. We'll go through these real quick. Number four. The fourth law of spiritual growth is that

4. We grow when we help each other grow.

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We grow when we help each other grow. You cannot grow to spiritual maturity by yourself. It isn't going to happen. No way Jose. Nada, zip, nothing, zero. It is not going to happen. You cannot grow to be the person God wants you to be by yourself. You need me and I need you and we need each other. God wired us in such a way that nobody grows to maturity by themselves. You grow by yourself, you're going to be a lonely, stunted, spiritually person that will be wimpy and weak and not mature. The more you involve other people who are strong in the Lord in your life, we grow together. It's relational. Spiritual growth is relational. We're better together.

Romans chapter 1:12, Paul says, *"I want us to help each other with the faith that we have. Your faith will help me and my faith will help you."* You have to have other people in your life. God wired us this way. How many times have I talked to you about the verses called the 56 one another's in the Bible? Fifty-six commands you cannot obey unless you're in a small group. Love one another. Care for one another. Help one another. Encourage one another. Pray for one another. You can't do it in a crowd like this. Serve one another. Share with one another. Build each other up. Be there for each other. On and on. Fifty-six times God says, "The only way you grow is in community. The only way you grow is in relationships."

The Bible says, "The hand can't say to the foot, 'I don't need you,' and the ear can't say to the eye, 'I don't need you,' and the body of Christ one part can't say, 'I don't need you.'" A hand severed from the body of Christ is worthless. It can't do anything. An eye severed from the body of Christ can't see. An ear severed from the body of Christ can't hear. You have to be connected in order to grow. You have to be connected in the body of Christ in order to grow.

Now this is the exact opposite of every other faith. Every other faith says, "The holiest, most righteous, most pure person is the person who isolates themselves from dirty rotten humanity, goes out and lives in a cave, high up on the mountain as some kind of guru and stays away from all the people who are evil, wicked, mean, bad and nasty. Then they're really holy." Jesus says, "No, no, no, no, no. I made you to be with people." Jesus is not hiding in some cave. He's out in the marketplace all the time. He's going to parties. He's going to weddings. He's a wedding crasher. Okay? Most of what you see Jesus doing he's hanging out with people at parties. In fact the religious people so hated the fact that Jesus hung out with people having a good time they called him, they said, "He's a glutton and a wine bibber." He said, "He's a drunk and he's an overeater. He drinks too much and he eats too much." That's what they said about Jesus. He was a party animal.

Why? Because why is being in a small group and being with other people important to your spiritual growth? Because the number one thing God wants you to learn in all of life, the most important thing God wants you to learn is how to love. How to love God and how to love other people. You can't learn to love other people, you can't learn love in a cave. The very reason you don't want to be in a small group is the very reason you need to be in a small group. You know, "There might be some people who disagree with me. There might be some people who kind of irritable." Yeah, it's you. You're irritable. You need people in your life who sometimes think differently than you, that challenge your self-centeredness. That teach you to be giving, to think of other people.

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The most selfish person on earth is a baby. I, I, I, me, me, me, me. It's all about me and everybody exists for the baby's needs. It is only when that baby grows up to maturity that it can actually think about other people. Some people never grow up. They're stuck and it's all about me. My schedule, not your schedule. My needs, not your needs. My problems, not your problems. My priorities, not your priorities. It's all about me. We need each other. We grow when we reach each other and we're together in groups. We only grow in community.

Here's what the Bible says. Hebrews 10:24-25, *"Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good."* basically to one another. *"Let us not give up the habit,"* there's that word again, this is the habit of fellowship, *"the habit of meeting together..."* By the way that verse is talking about small groups, because in the Bible days, there were no church buildings. There were no church buildings in Christianity for the first 300 years. One hundred percent of the church was in homes, in small groups. He's saying, *"Let's not give up the habit of meeting together [in these homes,] as some are doing. Instead let us encourage one another all the more."*

Here's the action step. Write it down. You want to grow? Join a small group.

Join a small group. You want to grow? You say, "Well, I'm not willing to pay the price." Then you're willing to be immature. Now how many of you are in a group right now? See the hands. Yeah, most of you. Okay. Saddleback is the only church in America that has more people in small groups than actually come on the weekend. This weekend in our church family, in all of our campuses, we'll have about 30,000 people. Hi everybody. Those guys that are watching right now. Hi all the other campuses. About 30,000 people in church this morning. During the week we have about 40,000 people meeting in over 7,500 small groups. Those small groups go from Santa Monica all the way to San Diego. Every city in Southern California has Saddleback small groups in it. If you're not in one, now's the time to get in one.

The easiest way to do it is just start one. How many people do you have to have in a small group to be a group? Three? Two? Jesus said, "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I'm in the midst of them." Small's actually better. Three's better than five. Five's better than eight. Eight's better than 10. You get more than 10 people in a small group, somebody stops talking. It tends to be dominated by the most boisterous and outgoing person. You know, to start a small group you just say ... get a couple friends and say, "Hey, you want to study this material on prayer for the next 40 days?" I'm not asking you to do it the rest of your life. I'm just saying for 40 days, you say, "Do you want to study this with us?" Get a couple friends.

You say, "I don't have any friends." I will buy you two friends. Okay. I so badly want you to be in this, I'll buy you some friends for the next six weeks. Some of you were around 15 years ago when we did 40 Days of Purpose, and I really wanted everybody to get the material, like I want this year, and so I said, "We need every single person in our church to be in a small group. To do that, we're going to need to start, have about 3,000 groups total." At that time, we only had 800 small groups in our church. I said, "I need 3,000 of you to volunteer to be a host for six weeks." Anybody can do this. A teenager can do this. A senior citizen, a little old lady who's in her 90s can do this. You don't have to teach anything. You don't have to lead anything. You just host, H-O-S-T.

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I said H stands for you have to like people. If you don't like people, you're grumpy, we don't want you. Okay. You've got to really be nice to people. Have to like people. O, open up your home or your apartment or an office or go to the Starbucks and pull out your laptop or park. Open up your home. S, serve something to drink. Coffee, tea, water. T, turn on the DVD player. If you can do that, you can be a host. I said I need 3,000 of you to sign up and be a host. That weekend 3,200 people signed up to be a host. I said, "Okay, look. This is the only way you're going to get this material is to get in a small group. I can train you how to be a host in about 25 minutes. It's real simple. It's not rocket science. You can do it in the dark. Everybody show up tomorrow night here at the Lake Forest campus, and I'll teach you in about 25 minutes, and we'll just have some fun."

The next night 3,200 people showed up right here in this auditorium. I said, "Okay. Now it'd probably be a good idea, you don't even have to be a Christian to be a host. You just have to be nice to people. But some of you maybe you would like to step across the line now. You're ready. You say, 'I just haven't done it. I haven't made my commitment to Christ.' Anybody in here need to get saved?" 17 people raised their hand. I said, "Cool." I said, "We're all family here. Let's just pray the prayer together." We all prayed the prayer aloud together. Those 17 people gave their lives to Christ. Then I said, "You know, some of you maybe it'd probably be a good idea to be baptized. You don't have to be baptized to be a host, but it'd probably be a good idea. Anybody want to be baptized?" I baptized 400 people. Four hundred people. We started 3,000 new small groups in one week. It was life changing. Life changing.

All right, number five. Number five. I can do this one real quick. The fifth law of spiritual growth is this.

5. We grow when we expect to grow.

We grow when we expect to grow. I call this the faith factor. Jesus said in Matthew 9:29, "*According to your faith it will be done to you.*" Do you realize that God blesses your life according to your faith? Whatever you believe him for he says that's what I'm going to bless. You realize that God says you get to choose how much I bless your life. You get to choose how much I use your life. You get to choose how much your life succeeds. According to your faith it will be done unto you.

The question I ask, if you haven't even thought about it until now, is what are you going to expect to happen in your life the next 40 days? If you expect nothing to happen, guess what? Nothing will happen. According to your faith it will be done to you. I highly recommend you go home this afternoon and you set a goal, a prayer request, something to say, this is what I want to see God do in my life in the next 40 days. I want to be stronger in this area. I want to see movement in this area. I want to see a breakthrough here. Because if you study Scripture you learn this, God does not move and bless you for your complaining. God is not moved by your moaning, by your griping, or your complaining, but God will move heaven and earth when he sees you trust him.

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Every time God moves out of heaven and moves on earth he does a miracle in somebody's life is because somebody believed. If you want God to do something in your life, "God I want to grow the next 40 days, I believe I am going to grow in the next 40 days." What are you expecting to happen? You need to think about this. Get a goal. Don't waste the next 40 days. Get a goal and say, "God, I'm expecting you to do this. I'm expecting you to work in my life. I'm expecting a miracle. I'm expecting a breakthrough. I'm expecting an answer." You need to start this campaign with a spirit of faith. I am going to grow a lot in the next 40 days. Okay.

Number six. The last one. Last law of growth is

6. We grow when we commit to grow.

When we choose to grow. When we intend to grow. Growth is a choice. Spiritual growth is not automatic. As I said you can grow older without growing up. Growth is not automatic. It is a choice. You must choose to grow. You must choose to do the habits. You must choose to make the effort. You make a choice. Now let me ask a very personal question. A year from today how different do you intend to be? Do you intend to be stronger or still stuck in the same problems you are right now? You want to be more mature or you want to still be the way you are right now? It's your choice. It's your choice.

A year from today some of you are going to be much better people, much stronger people, much more mature people and others, they're going to be the exact same, still stuck in the mud. Still walking around in diapers. Why? Because they never actually intended to grow. They weren't willing to pay the price.

The bottom line, to just be blunt, is you're as close to God as you choose to be. It's your choice. If you feel far from God, God didn't move. You're as close to God as ... Well if my husband, if my wife, if my parents, if my brother, if my sister, if my girlfriend. Stop blaming anybody else. You're as close to God as you want to be. It is a choice and growth is a choice. Some people quite frankly are not willing to make the effort and take the discipline and build the habits in order to grow.

I go back to the question, which is the title of this message, do you really want to grow? If so, how badly do you want to grow? If so, what are you willing to do to grow? Are you willing to do these habits for the next 40 days? No? Then you're not really willing to grow. You don't really want to grow. What you want is convenience. See here's what God says, he puts it pretty bluntly in Jeremiah 29:13. God says, *"You'll find me when you get serious about finding me, and want it more than anything else."*

When we say, "God I have to grow. I'm tired of being a spiritual baby. I don't like being manipulated by my moods, by the opinions of others. I don't like being a people pleaser. I don't like the fears and anxieties and worries. I don't like the depression. I don't like the problem I have with anger and sex and I don't like all these. God, I want to grow up. I want to be a woman of God. I want to be a man of God. I want to man up and be strong and steady and stable." Well, that's a choice.

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What's the action step? Write this down.

Covenant with others. You covenant with others.

A covenant, we grow faster when we make a decision with other people and we do it in community. We do a covenant every time we do a spiritual growth campaign. A covenant... it's easier to change when other people are changing with you. It's easier to go on a diet when other people go on a diet with you. It's easier to exercise when you've got a partner. It's easier to grow when you make a covenant with other people to grow.

Now this is a covenant that I'm going to encourage us to sign. And you say, "Well I don't know if I want to make a covenant with God." Why? You make covenants with everybody else. You can't do anything in life without making commitments.

You can't buy a car without signing a covenant and I'll pay it off in 36 months. You can't rent a house or buy a house without making a covenant. I will make these payments every week. You can't get a job without making a covenant. I covenant to be there and show up and actually get the work done. You can't get married without making a covenant, till death do us part. You can't do anything in life without commitment.

The epitome of immaturity is the guy who won't commit to anything. The fear of commitment is the ultimate example of immaturity. The only way you grow is by making commitments and growing into it. You say, "Well, I don't think I know what to do." Of course you don't know what to do. But you make the commitment and you grow into it. Some of you when you got married and you said, "Let's have kids." You made a commitment to be a parent. Did you know how to be a parent? No. Not a single person knows how to be a parent before they're a parent. You just make the commitment and then you grow into it. I'm asking you to make a commitment to the most important thing in your life. Spiritual growth.

Forty years ago when I was 25 years old I made a covenant with you. Forty years ago, when I started Saddleback, I made a covenant to this church. I stood up on the first Sunday and said, "I commit the next 40 years of my life to be the pastor of this church. I'm going to give my life for this church and I'm going to covenant with you and I'm not going to leave. I will love you and I will pray for you and I'll teach you." I made a covenant and I said, "I will pastor this church until 2020." That started in 1980. That's 40 years, and we'll have 20,000 members by 2020. That was a vision. That was a goal.

God didn't tell me to stay 40 years. It was just, I just made up a number. Just to say I'm going to be there. We called it the 2020 goal. You know when you're 25, 65 years old sounds like you're going to be in a wheelchair. Today it sounds like middle age. Okay? Honestly, I didn't even think about that covenant with the church until about a couple years ago when we had the 35th anniversary of our church at Anaheim Stadium and I started thinking, "Hmm, the clock is ticking. I've only got five years left." Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick. About a year and a half ago Kay and I went off on a couple day prayer retreat, and we said, "God, you know, you didn't tell us to do this, but do you want us to stay or do you want us to go? Do you want us to stay longer than 40 years, or do you want us to go and do something else?" Honestly the truthfulness

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is, we didn't hear anything from God. We said, "Okay, we'll wait a year and a half and we'll do it again."

You need to know that every single Sunday, and Saturday night too, when I'm driving to the service, I pray a prayer. It's the same prayer and part of that prayer is this, and I've said it every week for almost 38 years, "God, I offer you my resignation because I belong to you. This is not my church. It's your church. You used me to start it. You love these people. You love me. Used me to start it but God, if there's somebody who can do a better job and take this church to the next level, I willingly, gladly, will step down and let someone else take the leadership of this church because I belong to you." Then this is the hardest part of the prayer, "I'm willing to do something more difficult." Because there's a lot of things that would be easier than pastoring a church that has 100,000 names on the role. A whole lot of easier things. But God I'm willing to do something harder and difficult.

I prayed that and when you hold what God puts in your hands with an open hand, that there's no stress to that, because you're not trying to grab onto anything. This summer, while we were doing the rest of this material, Kay and I went and took another two-day break. Kind of decided what are we going to do. Are we going to retire at 2020? After 40 years here or do we stay? We made a list of about 25 reasons why I should stay, and the only reason we came up that I would leave would be if my health was not good enough that I could be the leader this church needs. I will never harm this church. I'd rather stick a knife in my heart than hurt you, hurt this church. I've given almost 40 years to this church.

We prayed about it. If it's okay with you, I'd like to sign a new covenant and stay here a little bit longer. If that's okay. If that's okay, I don't think I'll ... I love you. Yeah. Okay, okay, okay. Given that, I just want you to know if I'm staying, I'm coming after you! You have no idea what you just gave me permission to do, because I am not going to let you waste your life. I love you too much. I will not let you waste your life! If I'm staying and you're staying, we're going to a whole nother level. All right? We're going to take it up and I may get in your face and you may not like some of the things I say, but it's because I love you and I do not want you to waste your life. I want the rest of your life, whether you have five or 50 years left, to be the best of your life.

As your pastor, as your coach, somebody who loves you, I'm going to force you to grow. The starting point is 40 Days of Prayer. When you study any revival, renewal movement in history, it always starts with prayer. Folks, our nation needs a revival. It's in deep, deep weeds right now. We need revival in our hearts. We need renewal, refreshment. A fresh sense of joy. A fresh sense of God's presence. A fresh sense of what he wants to do in our lives. I believe it comes through prayer, and that's why we've spent the better part of the year preparing all of these tools. You have to get in a small group. You have to get in one. For six weeks, just do it for six weeks. Start one because it's not the sermons. It's what we've all been preparing for and we're going to go to a whole new level.

Now why am I staying? One reason. I am committed to your personal growth. You know I serve this church for free. I've served it free now for now 38 years. I don't take a salary, so you can't fire me, because I'm a volunteer. I'm a volunteer pastor. I'm an amateur. Professionals are paid. I'm an amateur pastor. I love that because amateur comes from the word amore which means I do

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it out of love. I don't do it for money. I do it out of love for God and I do it out of love for you. My goal is the last verse on your outline.

“Our greatest wish and prayer is that you will become mature Christians.” (2 Corinthians 13:9)

The bottom line really is what are you going to do for the next six weeks, seven weeks? Do nothing? Miss out and watch everybody else grow and benefit and get the blessing? Or, are you willing to step up to the plate and to develop some new habits, which will determine the rest of your life and even the rewards in eternal destiny?

Let me lead you in prayer. Let's bow our heads. Father I look out on these people and I love them. They are good people. These are good, good people. We've been through a lot of ups and downs, highs and lows, crushing grief and soaring joy. Lots of different experiences in life. I do believe that our best days are ahead of us. I do Lord, re-up, I commit to moving myself first and everybody else to deeper levels of maturity and growth. We don't want to waste our lives. We don't want to miss out on what you've got in store for us. We want all of the blessings. If we will just do what you say to do, you say our lives will be successful.

I pray a blessing on every person here that as we go into the next 40 days, we will go into it with anticipation and expectation. It'd be a waste of time for us to do this and not do it in faith, so thank you in advance. Thank you in advance for what you're going to do in my life and in the lives of everybody here who chooses. We know that growth is a choice, and we pray that as we build these habits in our lives, we will become true men of God and women of God in a world that is filled with unstable, flaky, uncommitted people. I pray this blessing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.