**Faith and Growth**

[August 24, 2023](https://faithencounters.impart.org/2023/08/24/faith-and-growth/)[Martha Rodman](https://faithencounters.impart.org/author/martharodman/)

*And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.* Ephesians 4: 11-16 ESV.

I know that is a long opening passage. Paul gets very wordy, doesn’t he? As I was reading this section today, I began to wonder, is there any area in my life that I have not become mature in, that may be hindering someone else? Paul is encouraging us to allow the apostles, prophets, evangelists, the shepherds (or pastors) and teachers to equip us so that we may grow up in Him. I had a picture of an adult person with a full grown body, but one arm did not grow up. It remained small and for the most part useless. I don’t believe God has provided prosthetics for the body of Christ.

If we are all part of the body, then I don’t want to hinder that body, by NOT growing, learning and maturing. My own childishness could hinder someone else! That hurts! As I look around the body of Christ, I see many who are hungering and thirsting for Him and His ways. I also find others who don’t seem to comprehend the need to grow. It is possible they haven’t been encouraged to self feed from the scriptures themselves. I can only try to be an example to them. I trust the Holy Spirit is trying to encourage them to grow in His ways.

I appreciate those before me who have stepped up and followed Him. Their example is so encouraging. I found a poem, written by just such a saint. She was part of our church when we were pastors in Medford, Oregon. Her name was Alice M. Stephens. Alice loved to teach children God’s Word and God’s ways. One of her gifts was writing. Here are her encouraging words, I am sure learned from walking with her Savior:

Looking Unto Jesus

Look not at yourself, for that is in vain:

Look not at your faults, that only brings pain:

Look not at your habits, and hope to transform them:

Look not at your friends, you cannot reform them:

Look not at your failure, it will help not at all:

Look not at success, you will head for a fall:

Look not at results, you cannot control them:

Look not at your sorrows, that does not console them:

Look not at your sin, you only add to it;

Look not at your past, you cannot undo it:

But look unto Jesus, He only is strong:

He is the one who can cover your wrong:

Looking to Jesus, you will not sink in despair:

In success or in failure, you will find he is there.

All things through Christ, in Him put your trust.

His is the doing, and His the result

So look not at self, your gain is His loss.

But look unto Jesus, put self on the cross:

Behold, then, the Lamb, find forgiveness in Him.

Count all things but loss, that Christ you may win.

Forgetting those things that are helplessly past,

Press onward and upward to heaven at last!

–by Alice M. Stephens

My friends let us determine to grow in Him and His ways. Let us strengthen God’s Church by looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. By His help, and His Spirit, we will continue to grow into the fullness of the stature of Christ.

*Father, I thank you for your daughter, Alice. I thank you for the legacy she has left in the hearts of many people. I ask for your continued grace to continue to grow up into You and Your ways. You want us to put off childish things, and put on You. In Jesus’ Name, amen.*