

Beginnings – ORIGIN *(Where did we come from?)*

- **Only Two Choices**
- **Realize the Significance**
- **Is it Faith or Science?**
 - LAB - Lookable, Accessible, Breakable
- **Guess at the Evidence**
- **Inspect the Evidence**
 - Universe = "Decay"
 - Age of the Earth = "Can't Say"
 - Origin of Life by Chance = "No Way"
 - Evolution of Species and Man = "Lacks Genes and Tweens"
- **No Compromise**

DON'T - Death, Orders of Creation, Names in genealogies, Ten Commandments refer to seven-day week

Intent of Life – LIFE *(Why are we here?)*

- **Love - GOD and MAN**
- **Increase - GROW**
- **Faithfulness - Time, Talent, Treasure**
- **Eternity – Past, Present, Future**

Authority – POWER *(Who's in charge?)* A God Who is:

- **Personal and Loving**
- **Omnipotent**
- **Wise and All-Knowing**
- **Everywhere and Eternal**
- **Righteous and Reliable**

Standards – RULES *(What are the rules?)* God's rules are:

- **Revealed supernaturally, not derived by reason**
- **Universal and apply to everyone, everywhere, all the time**
- **Loving**
- **Enforced**
- **Steadfast**

I - Increase

God created the process of growth, and a major purpose of our lives is to grow in various ways. Some areas of growth are natural, such as physical growth. Mental growth also just happens as we spend time experiencing life. But to accomplish our real purpose in life we have to continually and ***purposefully*** grow in the areas God commands us to grow. We'll summarize key target areas of growth via the acrostic "GROW":

- **Godliness**
- **Relationships**
- **Obedience**
- **Work**

G - Godliness

When a Christian identifies himself with Christ he starts down the road to Christ-likeness. Growing in godliness involves growth in character qualities that are consistent with the character of Christ. He is our example of the ways we as humans can develop the "image of God" in which we were created. In one sense we can never be like God because He has attributes that we will never have. But apparently in some ways we can become like God, and Christ's life on earth is our model. We are commanded to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15).

Overflow of the Heart

The Bible refers many times to the heart and to what fills it. To grow in godliness requires *that I speak to my own heart and tell it what it should desire*. God says that our hearts are inclined to evil (Gen 8:21), but He also says that we can store up good things in our hearts (Luke 6:45). So I believe the action item here is to focus my attention on storing up good things in my heart so that the overflow of my heart will honor God. Good things are put into my heart through thoughts (Philippians 4:8), words spoken (Psalm 19:14), and words heard (particularly God's Words). As my heart is filled with God's good law, my desires and actions will be more godly (Proverbs 40:8). I want my heart to love what God loves, hate what God hates, and desire what God desires.

One practical step to take daily is to ask God to continually fill me with His Spirit (Galatians 5) so that the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) is what comes out of me. I can't successfully focus on NOT being evil, but I can ask God to fill me with what's good (His Spirit) so that what flows out of me is actually fruit from Him. This allows me to be God-honoring even if I don't "feel" like it.

Pride and Self Worth

A common enemy of godliness is Pride. Pride is what Satan appealed to when he tempted Eve and Adam (“you will become like God”), and I think pride and self-centeredness are at the heart of most sins. As a Christian it is vital that I view myself with the proper perspective – I am a Beggar Offered Worth (acrostic of BOW):

- **B**eggar - On the one hand I deserve nothing. I am so imperfect and am capable of such wickedness.
- **O**ffered – Yet God has given and offered me so much.
- **W**orth - So I have infinite worth because God says He values me and has adopted me as His child and made me a joint heir with Christ!

To grow in godliness I need to recognize that my worth comes from God, and that what is best for me is to BOW before Him and serve Him rather than serve my selfish desires and pride.

Made in God’s Image?

What does it mean to be made in God’s image? I don’t fully understand all the ways we are unique in God’s creation, but here are a few characteristics of man (in the acrostic IMAGE) that seem to be special gifts from God:

1. **I - Imagination and creativity** – we can dream beyond what we have experienced
2. **M – Moral judgments** – we have a sense of right and wrong
3. **A – Abstract thinking** – we can think about concepts
4. **G – God-awareness and consciousness of self**
5. **E – Eternal spirit and soul**