



INTRODUCTION: Assessing Spiritual Growth—Adult

Do you remember as a child tracking your physical development by standing next to a doorpost in your home and marking your height? You wanted to gauge your upward progress. Do you remember the thrill of making a new growth mark to record your increased stature?

Growth is not relegated simply to the physical realm. As Christians, we have a spiritual dimension to consider. God designed the spiritual life of the believer for growth. He intends for every believer to be built up in Christ and in the faith. From the moment of salvation to the day of complete maturity when the believer meets Christ in Heaven, a process of spiritual development should take place.

As a church leader, you must ask yourself, “Are individuals in my church growing spiritually? Can I see definite progress in our church family’s spiritual formation?” The answers to these questions are important to designing effective ministry.

As you once measured physical growth, you can also track spiritual growth. The Bible affirms the value of assessing spiritual development. The apostle Paul encouraged believers, “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified” (2 Cor. 13:5).

Tracking spiritual growth

Assessing spiritual development enables the believer to identify roadblocks in the growth process and to take corrective action. The writer of Hebrews assessed the spiritual development of a group of Christians, noting that their growth rate was not what it should have been for the length of time they had been believers. He wanted the believers to more aggressively move toward spiritual maturity. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use

have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:12–14).

Spiritual birth and growth are the major focus of church ministry. You and your church are partners with God in the process of spiritual formation. Paul gave himself wholeheartedly to the challenging task of the spiritual development of believers. He passionately described his ministry objective in Colossians 1:28 and 29: “Him [Christ] we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”

Setting the standard

Any assessment requires a measurement standard. Paul assessed believers by the only trustworthy standard of spiritual development—by standing them next to Jesus Christ. He described this assessment process in Ephesians 4:11–13: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Assessing progress

BuildUP assessments are designed to assist in measuring church members’ progress toward spiritual maturity. By engaging in the assessment process, you will be able to obtain a spiritual maturity profile for your congregation or class. Another BuildUP tool provides the opportunity for you to evaluate your church’s educational ministry. After determining specific areas in which growth is needed, you will be able to design a unique and intentional plan to effectively move people toward spiritual maturity. No greater force for God exists than a church growing toward spiritual maturity. Jesus said, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).