**Opening Scripture**

*Psalm 46:1-7 NLT*

*God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. [2] So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. [3] Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! Interlude [4] A river brings joy to the city of our God, the sacred home of the Most High. [5] God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed. From the very break of day, God will protect it. [6] The nations are in chaos, and their kingdoms crumble! God’s voice thunders, and the earth melts! [7] The LORD of Heaven’s Armies is here among us; the God of Israel is our fortress.*

**Are You Grown?**

**(What Spiritual Growth Looks Like)**

Intro: As we enter into a new year (a new decade) we will be faced with new challenges and new opportunities. With that being said, we have great potential to grow in relationship with God, while at the same time facing the threat of being sucked into the whirlwind of chaos and worries that this world has to offer as we live in these prophetic times. The times in which we live require spiritual maturity in order to survive and thrive. If set our intentions on spiritual growth, we put ourselves in a place where we can fully enjoy our relationship with God and by doing this we can become fruitful in other areas of life (i.e. relationships, career). Even though God desires to see His people enjoying His blessing, it is vital that our motive for wanting to grow spiritually is born out of a desire to **Know God more intimately, because there is nothing in this life that is more fulfilling than Knowing Him.** Therefore, we will begin the year exploring what it looks like to seek after Him (God) first, identifying the challenges and benefits of making relationship with God Priority One.

Focus Statement: **To mature as believers, we need to become more childlike...**

Main Text: *Matthew 18:1-4 NKJV*

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” [2] Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, [3]* ***and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. [4] Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.***

**Point One: As Our Trust In God Deepens, We will stress less**

(Illustration of a child’s dependance on a parent-noting how as we grow in chronological age our level of trust in them, in most cases decreased as we began to lean more towards our own understanding)

**Response to Point One: How Do We Develop Trust?**

**(Expound on the following three points)**

**Reflecting** on God’s Goodness In Your life personally

**Rehearsing** God’s Promises

**Remembering** When & How God First Saved You

*Isaiah 26:3-4 AMP*

*“You will keep in perfect and constant peace the one whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You—in both inclination and character], Because he trusts and takes refuge in You [with hope and confident expectation]. [4] “Trust [confidently] in the LORD forever [He is your fortress, your shield, your banner], For the LORD GOD is an everlasting Rock [the Rock of Ages].*

**Point Two: As We Grow Spiritually, Our Thought Life Will Become More Christ Centered**

*Romans 16:19 NKJV*

*For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.*

**(Expound on Verse, Leading into Illustration)**

(Illustration- Benjamin Button-Explain the Plot-then connect it with our transformation as believers. We begin our Christian lives as Full Grown in the knowledge of sin aiming to grow childlike in our relation to sin, while starting out lacking knowledge of the depth of God’s Grace aiming to mature in our relation to living in the fullness of God’s Grace, a life exhibiting Godliness)

**(Extra Commentary)**- When we are first Born Again, for most of us our minds are filled with years, decades of self-will, self-reliance, and experiential knowledge of the things of the flesh. So we start off our Christain lives have vast knowledge of sin, but unfamiliar with the Ways of God, who we are in Him, and the lifestyle He has called us to. But as we grow in our walk with God a transformation takes place.

**Point Three: As We Grow Spiritually, We will be ready to help restore those who have fallen**

*Galatians 6:1-2 NLT*

*Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. [2] Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*

(Expound on how this is contrary to the natural tendency to judge and/or gossip)

*1 Peter 4:8 NLT*

*Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.*

***If We have been saved by God’s Grace then why does Spiritual Growth matter?***

***It matters because as the scripture bears witness to, the more mature we are spiritually the more fruitful we can be in the lives of others to the Glory of God***

Restating Focus Statement: **To mature as believers, we need to become more childish...**

We are to imitate children in our walk with God because typically children display an unwavering trust in the Words, Intentions, Abilities, and Love for them. Thus, placing the child in a position where they are open to receive all that they can provide for the child. Therefore, as we **Reflect** on God’s Goodness In our lives, **Rehearse** God’s Promises, and **Remember** When & How God First Saved You. We can enter into the place of childlike peace that desires for us to enjoy.

**Benediction**

*Numbers 6:24-26 NKJV*

*“The LORD bless you and keep you; [25] The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; [26] The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.”’*

**Jesus Qualifies Us For This Blessing!**