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## Principles of Christian Growth

### Section Two: The Means of Christian Growth – How do we do it?

#### Lesson Seven: We grow through the local church's ministry.

Bible Reading: Matt. 16:13-19; 18:15-22; Rom. 12:1-21; 1 Cor. 3:9-23; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 3:14-15; Heb. 10:21-31.

When it comes to the *how* of Christian growth, we began with a lesson that said that we grow by abiding in Christ. Christ said that He is the Vine, and that we are the branches, and we noticed how indistinguishable one is from the other (John 15). So to abide in the Vine is to be one of the many branches connected together. Paul uses a similar metaphor for the church before he discusses the sense in which the church is a building (1 Cor. 3:9). Our Christian growth is a part of Christ's building His church (Matt. 16:18). The *body* metaphor also emphasizes the local-church context of Christian growth into Christlikeness (Eph. 4:11-16).

Discussion questions:

1. Matthew is the only Gospel to use the word *church*. We see the universal church in 16:18 and the local church in 18:17. In both the Lord teaches that His church creates a connection between heaven and earth. What is the nature of that connection, and why is it important to the growth of the believer in Christlikeness (16:19, 18:18-20)?
2. We noted that Paul calls the church a building. What kind of building did he mean, and why is building that building so important (1 Cor. 3:9-23, 1 Tim. 3:14-15)?
3. We grow in grace as we build the church, because the work involved in building the church requires Christlikeness. What characteristics of Christlikeness are necessary to be a good church member (Rom. 12:1-21)?