

SPIRITUAL

Growth



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personal
spiritual growth

BIBLE STUDY

**Desire the sincere milk of the word
That you may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2)**

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Did you know that one can be a Christian and never grow up spiritually?

- **Arrested spiritual development** is not God's plan nor should it be our goal.
- We should be mature, but tragically, spiritual maturity is not automatic- it take time and effort

The Bible says in **II Peter 3:18**, "***Continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our savior, Jesus Christ.***" (*Good News*)

- The verse indicates **a process** that takes time. It is not instantaneous.
- Do you remember the formula for distance in 9th grade algebra?

$$\mathbf{r \times t = d \quad [Rate \times Time = Distance]}$$

Thus, if I'm going 5 miles per hour, it will take 1000 hours to cover 5000 miles.

And if I'm going 50 miles per hour, it will take 100 hours to cover 5000 miles.

There are Christians that have known Christ for 50 years, and by now they should be mature; yet they are poking along at 1 mile per hour.

- Some have stalled even out, not going anywhere.

There is no shortcut nor instant pills that will effectuate spiritual growth, it takes an intentional pursuit

- We must equip ourselves with proper tools to effectuate the process of growth

1. In order to grow we **need to eat**

–The Bible

2. In order to grow we **need to breathe**

–Prayer

3. In order to grow we need **good spiritual hygiene**

–Confession of sin

4. In order to grow we need **a caring family**

–Fellowship

5. In order to grow we need **regular exercise**

–Service

6. In order to grow we need **protection**

–Temptation

7. In order to grow we need **to give**

–Stewardship

The writer in Hebrews expresses his frustration to the believers who desired to turn back to Judaism because of persecution:

- **Heb. 5:12-13** “You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things a beginner must learn about the Scriptures. You are like babies who drink only milk and cannot eat solid food. ¹³And a person who is living on milk isn’t very far along in the Christian life and doesn’t know much about doing what is right.” (NLT)

What child does not want to do the things he/she sees their older siblings perform?

So, if one of the purposes of your life is to grow up spiritually and to become like Jesus, what is Jesus like?

- When you look at him, you see what the Bible calls the fruit of the Spirit.

- **Gal. 5:22-23** But the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love *in all its varied expressions: joy that overflows, peace that subdues, patience that endures, kindness in action, a life full of virtue, faith that prevails, gentleness of heart, and strength of spirit.* Never set the law above these qualities, for they are meant to be limitless.
- These are the qualities God wants to build in our lives.
- God not only anticipates that we will grow, but He also expects that we will bear fruit

How do we measure up to God's ultimate expectations for our lives individually and our lives collectively? --- i.e., What does God expect of us?

- He does expect us to love Him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.
- And to love others as we love ourselves, and love others as Jesus loved us.

He told us what He does and does not want us to do: ● Do not misuse His name ● Worship Him alone as God ● Set time aside to worship and honor Him ● Do not glorify anything made by our thoughts or hands ● Do not purposefully take another's life ● Do not lie ● Do not steal ● Do not commit adultery ● Do not covet what others have ● Do not dishonor our parents

All these dos and don'ts are stated in one way or another in the Bible -- God's rulebook for living for Him and living together on this planet .

- But those are still not His ultimate expectations for us.

God expects us to accept His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Savior, thereby becoming His children.

He also expects us to give our lives to Him, and in so doing, develop the character of His Son Jesus the Christ.

- God expects us to trust Him, Love Him and pattern ourselves after His Son, Jesus Christ.
- And that pattern includes moving from infancy to adulthood working in the Kingdom

Oh yeah – and God expects us to grow up:

- **Ephesians 4:11-16** And **He Himself gave** some *to be apostles*, some **prophets**, some **evangelists**, and some **pastors that are teachers**,¹²for the **equipping of the saints for the work of ministry**, for the **edifying of the body of Christ**,¹³ till we all come to the *unity of the*

- *faith* and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*, to a *perfect man*, to the *measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*; ¹⁴ that we **should no longer be children**, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, **may grow up in all things** into Him who is the head--Christ-- ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, **causes growth of the body** for the edifying of itself in love.

The writer declares that God Himself has made provisions for us not to remain as little children but to mature (perfect) and advance to spiritual adulthood.

God's indictment against Israel was their inability to grow up and be what He expected

• **The prophet declares in Jer. 4:22** For my people is foolish [‘ewîl – eviyl], they have not known me; they are **sottish [sākāl]** children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge

➤ **Eviyl** -- to be thick brained; refers to moral perversion or insolence, and to what is sinful rather than to mental incapacitation.

○ **Prov. 17:28** He would be wise to **conceal his folly by keeping quiet**

○ When he **starts talking without thinking**, ruin is at hand (Prov 10:14).

○ While a **wise man avoids strife**, the fool **quarrels at any time** (Prov 20:3).

○ He **cannot restrain himself** and will "display his annoyance at once," whereas **a wise man overlooks an insult** (Prov 12:16 NIV).

○ An eviyl fool has **no balance in his relations with others.**

➤ **sākāl** – a lack in moral or spiritual sense --used in contexts where one acts out of fear and thus behaves rashly, rather than acting wisely out of a confidence based in God.

○ Thus, David recognizes that he acted foolishly in taking the census of Israel to determine his military strength.

○ It was a foolish act because he sought his security apart from God (II Sam 24:10; I Chron 21:8).

The simple truth is that God is far more interested in building our character than He is anything else.

● We often pay too much attention to mundane things of life (food, clothing, career, furniture, house) and are insensitive to what is really important to God

- God cares more about who we are than about what we do!
- We are human beings, not human doings – He more concerned about our character than your career.
 - **I Cor. 10:31** Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
 - **I Cor. 16:14** Let all *that you do* be done with love.
 - **Col. 3:17** And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
 - **Col. 3:23** And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men

Spiritual growth is an intentional, lifelong practice which we achieve by spending time with God through studying, reading and meditating on His Word, a consistent prayer life-- allowing the Holy Spirit to guide your life daily as we live a life of faith in God

Spiritual Growth should be every believers' intention in life; for when we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we become new creations.

We start this journey like a newborn baby, and our spirits develops a longing to know God more; and this longing can only be satisfied by God Himself through His Word.

For a newborn to grow, we feed it healthy food and everything that the baby needs for healthy growth.

- Similarly, believers must feed on the word of God so they can grow in Christ.
- As we read and study God's word, we are being transformed into what God wants us to be.

Paul writes in Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be **conformed** to this world (this age), but be **transformed** (changed) by the [entire] **renewal of your mind** [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may **prove** [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you]” (Amplified)

- **Conformed** [syschēmatizō] fashioned after the pattern of and adapted to its external, superficial customs
- **Transformed** [metamorphoō] to change into another form; for Christians it means being changed into the same image of excellence that shines in Christ; II Cor. 3:18)

Spiritual growth is a normal desire for all believers as God put that desire in our hearts when we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts.

- **Phil. 2:12-13** says, “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (KJV).

Do you have the desire for spiritual growth so you can have a fulfilling relationship with God?

Many people are under the impression that it is their responsibility to pursue the relationship they desire to have with God.

- But we are not in this by ourselves
- As we learn God’s word and pray over life changing scriptures for our families, children, marriage, ministry and church, our lives are revolutionized

THERE ARE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH?

I. WE GET TO KNOW GOD PERSONALLY

Knowing God for yourself is the best thing you can ever do for your life. God wants us to know Him and He reveals Who He is through His Word. Once we know God's promises for our lives, no one can deceive us.

We are enabled to resist the devil with God's word. Therefore, studying the Bible to enhance spiritual growth and to know God is necessary.

- Here is what the Bible says about the devil who is a thief: *"The thief comes only to steal and to kill and destroy. I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows)" John 10:10 (AMP).*

- It is important for you to know and understand that Jesus came so you can live an abundant life.
- It is God's will for you to have an abundance of joy, peace, prosperity, health, a happy and blessed family, children who are happy.
- However, there is an adversary who wants to interfere with God's plan.
- The more we spend time in God's Word, the more we will seek His counsel for the challenges we may face in your life.
- In Matthew 4:4 Jesus stated that we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.

II. WE BECOME FAMILIAR WITH GOD'S VOICE

God speaks to us through His word and as you continue to spend time in the word, we become more in tune to His voice.

- **Heb 1:1-2** says, *“God in sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”*

Countless people have asked throughout the ages: What does God’s voice sound like:

- Samuel heard the voice of God, but did not recognize it until he was instructed by Eli (I Sam. 3:1–10).
- Gideon had a physical revelation from God, and he still doubted what he had heard to the point of asking for a sign, not once, but three times (Judges 6:17–22,36–40).
- When we are listening for God’s voice, how can we know that He is the one speaking?

A. First of all, we have something that Gideon and Samuel did not. We have the complete Bible, the inspired Word of God, to read, study, and meditate on.

■ **II Tim 3:16-17** “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for *teaching, rebuking, correcting and training* in righteousness, so that the man of God may be **thoroughly equipped for every good work.**”

■ When we have a question about a certain topic or decision in our lives, we should see what the Bible has to say about it.

■ God will never lead us contrary to what He has taught in His Word (Titus 1:2)

B. Second, to hear God’s voice **we must belong to God**. Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

■ Those who hear God’s voice are those who belong to Him—those who have been saved by His grace through faith in the Lord Jesus.

- These are the sheep who hear and recognize His voice, because they know Him as their Shepherd.
 - If we are to recognize God's voice, we must belong to Him.
- C. Third, we hear His voice when we spend time in Bible study and quiet contemplation of His Word.
- The more time we spend intimately with God and His Word, the easier it is to recognize His voice and His leading in our lives.
 - Employees at a bank are trained to recognize counterfeits by studying genuine money so closely that it is easy to spot a fake.
 - We should be so familiar with God's Word that when someone speaks error to us, it should be clear that it is not of God.

While God *could* speak audibly to people today, He has chosen to speak primarily through His written Word.

Sometimes God's leading can come through the Holy Spirit, through our **consciences**, through **circumstances**, and through the **exhortations** of other people.

By comparing what we hear to the truth of Scripture, we can learn to recognize the familiarity of God's tone and voice.

III. WE GROW IN YOUR FAITH IN GOD

Spiritual growth is directly connected to our faith in God will get stronger.

The Bible says, "*So **faith** comes by **hearing** [what is told], and what is heard comes by the preaching [of the message that came from the lips] of Christ (the Messiah Himself)" **Romans 10:17, (AMP)**.*

- The Greek term here for "word" is **rhema** [utterance; saying; speech] not **logos**.

- **John 3:34** For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.
- **John 14:10** Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.
- **Acts 11:14** Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian *language*, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"
- But Christ accompanies this preached word by His Almighty "voice," as we know from **John 5:25**: "The hour cometh, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." It is a "quickenened" word, that creates living *faith*.
- Faith indeed comes from a report; and there must be a *message* and a *messenger*, sent of God; as we have seen.

- When one spends time in the word of God, they will hear Him speak
- As a result, their faith in God will get stronger and stronger.
- They will have the strength and courage to trust God when they are dealing with difficult circumstances.

Paul's detailed description of responding to the gospel sets the stage for him to make a very practical case for the Romans to support his ministry.

- Certain things must happen for someone to accept the gospel.

The sequence here is as follows: (1) messengers are sent; (2) they declare the Word; (3) sinners hear the Word; (4) sinners believe the Word; (5) they call upon Christ; (6) they are saved!

The argument here is simply that sinners cannot be saved apart from the Word of God, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (V. 17, NKJV)

BIBLE ESSENTIALS

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