

GROWING IN CHRIST

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

Joshua 1:8

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

Psalms 119:9

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

2 Peter 3:18

Every Christian individual must manifest the evidence of spiritual growth. Salvation is not the end; it is rather the beginning. The believer should continually be conforming to the image of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it is impossible to be spiritual without being scriptural. Spiritual growth cannot be separated from our knowledge and application of the Scriptures.

According to **II Timothy 3:13-17**, we have learned that:

The Holy Scriptures Are **Inspired** – **2 Timothy 3:16**

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

The Holy Scriptures Are **Indispensable** – **2 Timothy 3:16**

“...and is profitable for doctrine...reproof...correction...instruction in righteousness.”

The Holy Scriptures Are **Intrinsic** – **2 Timothy 3:17**

“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

The Holy Scriptures Are **Intact** – **2 Timothy 3:15**

“...from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures...”

Ultimately, the goal of Biblical understanding is to bring about a change in the life of a believer. The Word of God does not bear fruit when it is understood, only when it is applied. The Bible was **NOT** written to satisfy our curiosity; it was written to transform our lives. The ultimate goal of Bible study, then, is not to do something to the Bible, but to allow the Bible to do something to us.

I. THE PREREQUISITES FOR GROWTH IN CHRIST

We will consider five prerequisites for spiritual growth. If we are not growing spiritually, we should examine our lives in light of those prerequisites.

A. A Sure Salvation

An individual cannot understand the Bible without first having been born-again.

The natural man receiveth _____ the things of the Spirit of God. The things of God are _____ discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14, *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

It is only given to the spiritual man to know the Word of God. Scriptural understanding can only be gained by Spiritual discernment.

The believer has been given all things that pertain unto life and _____ by the power of God.

The believer has been made a partaker of the _____ nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world.

2 Peter 1:2-4, *“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”*

R.A. Torrey said, *“One must understand divine language in which it was written as well – the language of the Holy Spirit. A person who understands the language of the Holy Spirit, but who does not understand a word of Greek or Hebrew, will get more out of the Bible, than one, who knows all about Greek and Hebrew, but is not born again, and consequently, does not understand the language of the Holy Spirit.”*

B. A Sincere Surrender

A man must do His _____, in order to _____ His doctrine.
John 7:16-17, *“Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”*

Truth obeyed always leads to more truth learned. On the other hand, truth disobeyed destroys the capacity for discovering truth. The Bible is not a book that was written to appeal to the intellect of man. The Bible was written to be obeyed.

The believer is to put off the _____ man, and put _____ the new man.

Ephesians 4:22-24, *“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”*

According to **Ephesians 4:25**, we understand that to put off the old man means to put away lying. In contrast, to put on the new man means to speak truth. In the context Paul is dealing with the spiritual growth of the believers.

C. A Submitted Supplication

The believer must pray for his eyes to be _____.
It is when our eyes are opened that we can _____ wondrous things out of God’s law.

Psalms 119:18, *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”*

If we lack wisdom, we are to _____ of God.

James 1:5, *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”*

There are always two extremes when it comes to the study of Scripture. Some rely on the **Spirit** to the neglect of the **Scriptures**, while others will rely on their **study** to the neglect of the **Spirit**. The Bible student must be **diligent in study** as much as he is **dependent on the Holy Spirit**. **Diligence** and **dependence** always work together for the glory of God!

D. A Supplied Spirit

The Spirit of truth will guide you into all _____.

John 16:13, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

The believer has received the things which the Holy Ghost _____.

1 Corinthians 2:12-13, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God...Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

The anointing received of him _____ in you.

The same anointing _____ you all things.

1 John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

E. A Serious Simplicity

The Father is revealed unto those who come as _____.

Matthew 11:25, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Peter and John were known as _____ and _____ men.

Yet, it is evident that Peter and John had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

If we were to examine the message of Peter on the day of Pentecost, we would find it filled with Scripture! It did not take a lifetime to master an understanding of Scripture. We do a great disservice to the Bible when we try to look beyond its simplicity.

No prophecy of the scripture is of any _____ interpretation.

2 Peter 1:20, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

Our minds can be _____ from the _____ that is in Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:3, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”*

II. THE PRODUCT OF GROWTH IN CHRIST

The teaching of the Bible produces growth in Christ. We cannot separate spiritual growth from scriptural knowledge and application.

A. That the Believer Might Be Fruitful

The branch is to bring forth _____ fruit.

John 15:5, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”*

Who and What must abide in us? _____.

John 15:7-8, *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”*

The Lord desires the believer to bring forth fruit that should _____.

John 15:16, *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”*

We learn that bearing **fruit** is first noticed, and then it brings **glory** to the Father. It goes without saying that without **fruit** in our lives, the Father cannot be **glorified** through our lives.

Following the Beatitudes, we find that the disciple is to be a **light** in the world, that he might **glorify** the Father by his good works.

Matthew 5:16, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

B. That the Believer Might Be Faithful

When our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted of the devil in **Matthew 4**, we learn that Christ simply quoted the Scripture, thereby showing us the importance of God’s Word in our lives.

Timothy was to _____ in the things learned.

2 Timothy 3:14-15, *“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a*

child thou hast know the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

C. That the Believer Might Be Furnished

The believer who knows the Bible will be completely equipped for the Christian living and service for the Lord.

The scripture makes the believer perfect, thoroughly _____ unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:16, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

In **Doctrine** – what we believe and teach

In **Reproof** – where we are wrong

In **Correction** – what is right and how to correct the wrong

In **Instruction in Righteousness** – how to go about doing good

D. That the Believer Might Be Formed

Our supreme goal should be Christlikeness. When the Word of God is preached, it should be preached that the Christian might become like Christ. When the Word of God is personally read and studied, it should be read and studied that the Christian might become like Christ.

The believer needs the Word of God that he may become more like who?

Ephesians 4:11-13, *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ..."*

We have been predestinated to be _____ to the image of Christ.

Romans 8:29, *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."*

III. THE PRACTICE OF GROWTH IN CHRIST

There are three elements that we will consider in our daily practice. All three of those are necessary for our spiritual growth. **James 1:22-27** instructs us to be "doers

of the word, and not hearers only.” In this section is intended to be a practical guide towards the application of Scripture.

A. The Practice of Reading

There is where it all begins in reading the Word of God. It is difficult to grow in Christ without reading the Word of God.

The blessed man _____ in the law of the Lord.

Psalm 1:1-3, *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”*

The Christian must be aware that such a habit is developed and does not come naturally. Do not expect to spend two hours every morning reading the Bible. Begin with a chapter a day, and you will soon find yourself desiring to read more. Always be realistic with your goals.

One of the main reasons why people do not read their Bibles is because they have often set unrealistic expectations.

B. The Practice of Understanding

After they read the law of God, they gave the _____, and caused them to _____.

Nehemiah 8:8, *“So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”*

Read **Acts 8:30-35** and answer the following questions:

Was the eunuch reading the Bible? _____.

Was the eunuch understanding the Bible? _____.

What did the eunuch need? _____.

Christ opened their understanding, that they might _____ the scriptures.

Luke 24:44-47, *“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise*

from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

We have so many tools at our disposal that can help us in our study of the Word of God.

INTERNAL HELP

RULE 1: Be Faithful to The Context of Scripture

This is the most important rule that must be applied in order to understand Scripture. Most false doctrine comes from a false teacher who expounds on a verse without consideration of the context.

Consider the Immediate Context

This is the text which we find immediately surrounding the verse or word in question. This is a study of the paragraph of a verse or word.

Consider the Surrounding Context

This is the text which we find before the current paragraph at hand. There is often a logical progression that we must give our attention to. By not paying attention to the progression of a book a student can easily find himself interpreting a verse out of context.

Consider the Book Context

We are here referring to the context of the individual book as whole. The purpose of the book is sometimes plainly declared in the book itself. We can ask the following questions: Why was the book written? By whom was the book written? To whom was the book written? When was the book written?

Consider the Bible Context

There is not one part of the Bible that is disconnected from the whole of the Bible. The Bible has perfect continuity.

RULE 2: Be Faithful to Compare Scripture with Scripture

Comparing Scripture with Scripture is essential for developing sound doctrine. If Scripture is interpreted in an isolated fashion, the result will often be a wrong interpretation.

“The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible.”

A.T. Pierson wrote, *“Partial examination will result in partial views of truth which are necessarily imperfect; only careful comparison will show the complete mind of God.”*

RULE 3: Be Faithful to The Clarity of Scripture

Always remember that God gave the Scripture to reveal truth to man, not to hide it or confuse it. The literal and grammatical interpretation must always be sought.

If the literal sense is not followed, no one can be certain of the meaning. The allegorical method make the interpreter the authority.

Dr. David Copper said, *“When the plain sense of Scripture make common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.”*

EXTERNAL HELP

A Dictionary - the *American Dictionary of the English Language* by Noah Webster, 1828. Modern dictionaries are often inadequate in giving a proper meaning of Bible words.

A Concordance is also a helpful tool such as the *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*. It is a tool to use in understanding the words of the King James Bible, and links the English words to a helpful dictionary of the Hebrew and Greek terms underlying the King James Bible.

C. The Practice of Applying

Little Scriptural knowledge faithfully **practiced** is always better than **much** Scriptural knowledge only **possessed**.

God’s Word is a _____ to my feet, and a _____ to my path.
Psalm 119:105, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*

God’s Word must be hid in the heart, so as to not _____ against God.
Psalm 119:11, *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”*

God’s Word will help us to examine our own hearts.
Psalm 4:4, *“Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.”*

TO HELP ME APPLY

First, Set Time Apart.

Second, Have a Reading Plan.

Third, Have a Notebook to Keep Record.

Fourth, Ask the Lord to Help you Apply the Bible to your life.

The following are examples for us to use as we study the word of God:

- Record Knowledge gained on God's Promises
- Record Knowledge gained on God's Precepts
- Record Knowledge gained on God's Person
- Write Down Sins to Confess
- Write Down Sins to Avoid
- Write Down Service for the Lord
- Write Down Verses to Memorize
- Write Down how God has spoken to you

Nothing will be dynamic in our Christian life until we become specific.

REVIEW QUESTIONS:

What is the goal of biblical understanding?

Fill in the blank: The Bible was not written to satisfy our _____; it was written to _____ our lives.

What are the five prerequisites for spiritual growth?

- A Sure _____.
- A Sincere _____.
- A Submitted _____.
- A Supplied _____.
- A Serious _____.

What brings glory to the Father according to **John 15:7-8**?

Who needs to be formed in the believer? _____

Should the Christian be content with merely reading the Bible? Why?

What is the most important rule to consider if the believer is to properly understand the Bible?

What are two helpful external tools that can be used to study the Bible?

Should the Bible student always look for some hidden secret meaning in his Bible study?

What is the best commentary on the Bible? _____