

# BIBLICAL INSIGHTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH - PART 1

Throughout the Word of God, those who are truly saved, are exhorted to grow and to be firmly established in their faith. We see a special emphasis of this in the New Testament epistles. For those who heed these admonitions, there are a multitude of blessings. For those who ignore them, there are consequences, sometimes severe.

## INTRODUCTION

**Before we start our study of this important subject, it needs to be made clear, there can be no growth until there is life. Until we are regenerated by the Spirit of God, there can be no growth because there is no life present.**

Our foundational verses for the study are found in Psalm 1.

Ps. 1:1-3, 6 - How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.

**In our study we will see that one of the most important ingredients necessary for spiritual growth is the Bible. One of the many results of spending time in God's Word is that believers will be established in their faith. The Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of this for all believers. From his perspective, being established in the faith is absolutely essential.**

Col. 1:21-23 - And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Rom. 1:11 - For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established.

Col. 2:6-7 - As you therefore have received Messiah Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

1 Thess. 3:11-13 - Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

Rom. 16:25 - Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus the Messiah, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past.

Gal. 4:19 - My children, with whom I am again in labor until Messiah is formed in you.

1 Pet. 5:10-11 - And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Messiah, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**The word “establish” means to strengthen, to fix, make firm or solid. It contains the thought of making firm or solid by providing a support or buttress.**

**According to the book of Acts, a major priority of those ministering in the early years of the church was to do everything they possibly could to strengthen the new believers and to help them to come to a place of maturity.**

Acts 15:32 - And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.

Acts 16:5 - So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

Acts 14:21-22 - And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Acts 15:41 - And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Acts 18:23 - And having spent some time there, he departed and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

**This strengthening process helps to lay that all important foundation that is necessary for all believers to possess. Without it, they will be subject to falling prey to false teaching, false conclusions about God and a host of other things that will harm one’s development as a believer.**

## **1. THE CALL TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

1 Pet. 2:1-3 - Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

## **A. THE PREREQUISITE**

1 Pet. 2:1 - Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

**The obligation to grow involves the negative duty to remove all hindrances to growth. This must take place before the yearning for the milk of the Word can be realized. It's not a call for perfectionism, but sin needs to be taken seriously and dealt with.**

**1. “putting aside” - This is the prerequisite.**

**a. The word pictures someone flinging off a badly stained garment.**

**b. We can't cover them up, try to hide, or pretend they don't exist. They will hinder our growth.**

**The Apostle Paul used the same analogy when he penned several of his epistles.**

Eph. 4:22, 25 - that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.

Col. 3:8-9 - But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.

**2. What is it that needs to be put off?**

**a. “Malice” - wickedness, evil conduct, basic ill-will toward others. It is an all inclusive word for sin referring to general wickedness and baseness. The Scriptures are filled with exhortations to do away with malice.**

Rom. 1:28-29 - And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

Eph. 4:31-32 - Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Messiah also has forgiven you.

Titus 3:3 - For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

**When it comes to malice, we are to be like babes.**

1 Cor. 14:20 - Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil (malice) be babes, but in your thinking be mature.

**b. “Guile” - deceit, craftiness, bait or a fishhook. It’s the attitude that desires to get the better of another by deception. It denotes dishonesty and falsehood.**

Acts 13:8-10 - But Elymas the magician (for thus his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him, and said, You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?

Matt. 26:3-4 - Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth (deceit), and kill Him.

**c. “Hypocrisy” - It denotes an actor playing a role, or a part that hides his true identity. It refers to insincerity and pretense. The word describes any behavior that is not genuine with what one says they believe.**

Matt. 23:28 - Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you (scribes & Pharisees) are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Rom. 12:9 - Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Gal. 2:13 - And the rest of the Jews joined him (Peter) in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

1 Tim. 4:1-2 - But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.

James 3:17 - But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

**d. “Envy” - It’s the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others. Accompanying envy are feelings of resentment, grudges, bitterness and conflict.**

Matt. 27:18 - For he knew that because of envy they had delivered Him up.

Phil. 1:15 - Some, to be sure, are preaching Messiah even from envy and strife, but some also from good will.

1 Tim. 6:3-4 - If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions.

Gal. 5:19-21 - Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Titus 3:3 - For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

**e. “Slander” - It refers to speech that runs down another by defaming one’s character. It has in it the idea of gossip and backbiting.**

2 Cor. 12:20 - For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there may be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances.

**Peter’s list does not take into consideration every sin that we need to put aside, but it’s sins like these that will hinder the free flow of the Word of God into our hearts that will prevent growth.**

**The removal of hindering vices must be followed by active efforts to promote spiritual growth.**

## **B. THE PATTERN**

**To help us understand how essential the Word of God is for the believer in order for growth to take place, Peter gives us an illustration that most people are very familiar with; a new born baby and its’ desire for milk.**

**1. “Like new born babes” - This is the pattern. Peter says that just like newborn babies need milk, believers need the Word of God. There’s not much else that will satisfy a baby’s need when it’s hungry than milk. It’s boiled down to one dominate desire.**

**\*Peter uses the illustration of a new born baby, but this truth is not singling out new believers. This should be our desire no matter how old we are in the Lord.**

**It’s important for us to understand that, new believers start out on the milk of the Word, but there must come a time when they advance to the meat of the Word. This is not what Peter has reference too. He is merely talking about the desire believers should have for it. But, the Bible does make it clear that there comes a time when we graduate from milk to meat.**

1 Cor. 3:2 - I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able.

Heb. 5:12-13 - For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary 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 not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

### C. THE PASSION

**1. “Long for” - This is the passion. This is a command for believers to strongly desire or crave something. In this instance, Peter says it’s the Word of God we need to long for. We have this same type of longing in other areas of our life, we also need to have it for the Bible. This same word is used several times in Scripture.**

Rom. 1:11 - For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established.

2 Cor. 5:2 - For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.

Phil. 2:26 - because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

Phil. 1:8 - For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Messiah Jesus.

2 Tim. 1:4 - longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

Ps. 42:1 - As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for Thee, O God.

**2. “Pure milk of the Word” - This is what we are to desire. The word “pure” refers to something that is unadulterated or uncontaminated. There’s not too many things that falls into the category of being pure, but that is how Peter describes it.**

**Peter commands believers to desire the Word of God. The one who desires it will read it, study it, meditate on it and spend a lot of time in it. The believer who desires the Word, will not neglect the Word of God.**

### D. THE PRODUCT

**1. “That by it you may grow” - This is the result of desiring the Word of God. Without a steady intake of the Word, believers will not grow. True growth is something which is done by the Holy Spirit. He takes the Word that we feed upon and empowers it in our lives to bring about growth and maturity.**

Eph. 2:19-21 - So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.

Eph. 4:11-16 - And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Messiah; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Messiah. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Messiah, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

**a. What does spiritual growth consist of? How can we measure to see if we are growing spiritually?**

**1. Spiritual growth consists of an increase of spiritual light - a discerning of spiritual truth.**

**\*Growth in rightly understanding God.**

**\*Growth in seeing our sinfulness and pollution of our heart.**

**\*This is something the unsaved person does not have the capacity to do.**

Rom. 8:6-8 - For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

1 Cor. 2:14 - But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

**This light enables us to see God more clearly in His attributes and works. When there is less light in a room, only large objects and obvious clutter can be discerned. When sun shines its rays brightly into a room, we can see in those rays a multitude of dust particles which previously were not visible. Such is also true here. The more we see God, the more we will understand Him in His holy attributes and ourselves in our sinfulness.**

**2. Spiritual growth consists of a desire to have a more persistent and steadfast fellowship with God.**

**\*Our mind and heart will be more inclined to the ways of God.**

**\*Our thoughts will be directed towards God instead of temporal things.**

Ps. 10:4 - The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

Ps. 73:28 - But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, That I may tell of all Thy works.

Col. 3:2 - Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.

### **3. Spiritual growth consists of making the Lord Jesus the center of our lives with more understanding and faith.**

**\*The more we understand that we can do nothing without the Lord Jesus the better.**

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Col. 2:6-7 - As you therefore have received Messiah Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

## **D. THE PERSUADER**

**1. "If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." - Since all believers taste the kindness of the Lord at the time of their salvation, Peter wants us to know that there is much more available. He doesn't want us to stop with a mere taste. Since we were so satisfied with the taste, the logical implication is that we would want to keep on desiring what God has to offer.**

Ps. 34:8 - O taste and see that the Lord is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Acts 20:32 - And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

## **BIBLICAL INSIGHTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH - PART 2**

**We saw in our first lesson that the Word of God is the key to spiritual growth. We are supposed to desire it like a baby craves milk so we can grow spiritually.**

**We also discussed how important this is for the believer and that if the Scriptures are neglected, we will be stunted in our growth.**

**In this lesson we are going to see why we should desire the milk of the Word and we will discuss the important role that the Bible has in spiritual growth**

### **2. THE TOOL FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

**\*Obedience to the revealed will of God is the necessary tool for spiritual growth to take place.**

**The Lord Jesus set the pattern for us concerning what our response should be to the Word of God.**

#### **A. THE PATTERN**

John 17:19 - And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

John 17:17 - Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.

**Obedience to the truth is the key to spiritual growth. Without it, there can be no growth. We go to the Scriptures to find the truth. What are we looking for? Bottom line, the revealed will of God. As we discover the will of God, we strive to obey it. The reason why we desire the pure milk of the Word is so we can discover the revealed will of God and obey it. Obedience to the revealed will of God produces the growth.**

**The Lord Jesus set the pattern for us concerning obedience to the revealed will of God.**

John 4:34 - Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.

John 5:19 - Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

John 5:30 - I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

**Just as the Lord Jesus sought to obey the revealed will of His Father, we should also do the same. We should not only desire the pure milk of the Word, but we should desire it in order to obey it.**

Rom. 1:5 - through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake.

Rom. 6:16 - Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Rom. 16:19 - For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil.

2 Cor. 7:15 - And his (Titus) affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

2 Cor. 9:13 - Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all.

1 Pet. 1:22 - Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.

## **B. THE SOURCE FOR TRUTH**

**The Scriptures are the source for sanctifying truth.**

2 Tim. 3:15-17 - and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Messiah Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

**Notice the strong emphasis that the Apostle John places upon the importance of truth.**

2 John 1-4 - The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus the Messiah, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.

1 John 2:4-6 - The one who says, I have come to know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

3 John 1, 3-4 - The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth.

I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

**I, II, & III John all emphasize that the foundation of all spiritual growth is related to divine truth and the obedience of it.**

**What is the foundation on which we are to build? Jude answers that for us.**

Jude 20 - But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit.

**The foundation is their faith. Not their subjective faith, but rather this is referring to the body of truth laid out in the Word by the Lord Jesus and the Apostles that they now believe. It's that faith that Jude tells us that we need to earnestly defend. Paul teaches the very same thing.**

Col. 2:6-7 - As you therefore have received Messiah Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Messiah.

**As we venture out into spiritual growth, we will discover that there are stages and levels of maturity. But, we must keep in mind, there will be no growth apart from desiring the pure milk of the Word so that we can discover His revealed will, in order to obey it. This should be our life long endeavor as a believer. We never retire from growing spiritually. That's indicated by the tense (present imperative) of the word "grow" in 2 Pet. 3:18.**

2 Pet. 3:17-18 - You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

**Continued spiritual growth was the heartbeat and goal of the Apostle Paul.**

Phil. 3:12 - Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Messiah Jesus.

**We must continue on desiring the Word of God in order to discover the will of God so we can obey it. As we do this, spiritual growth will take place.**

## **BIBLICAL INSIGHTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH - PART 3**

**As we continue our study of this important subject, we need to remember, there can be no growth until there is life. Until we are regenerated by the Spirit of God, there can be no growth because there is no life present.**

**We saw in our first lesson that the Word of God is the key to spiritual growth. We are supposed to desire it like a baby craves milk so we can grow spiritually.**

**We also discussed how important this is for the believer and that if the Scriptures are neglected, we will be stunted in our growth.**

**We discussed in our second lesson why we should desire the milk of the Word. We desire it in order to discover the revealed will of God in order to obey it. We also saw the important role that the Bible has in spiritual growth.**

**In 2 Peter 3:18, he mentions two areas that we need to concentrate on for growth; grace and knowledge. We will look at the first one in this lesson.**

### **3. THE CALL TO GROW IN GRACE**

2 Pet. 3:18 - but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

#### **A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF GROWTH**

**1. We can't make ourselves to grow. We can't will growth into reality. What then are we to do?**

**a. Observe certain conditions which promote growth.**

**We need to realize that certain conditions do exist that promotes growth and we need to find ourselves actively involved in them.**

**What are some conditions that promote growth?**

**\*Being in the Word**

**\*Prayer**

**\*Faithful in Church**

**\*Observing & following the example of mature believers**

**\*Renewing your mind - meditation**

**\*Faithfully exercising you gifts**

**\*Memorizing the Word**

**\*Trials**

**These are about as basic as they get. But, it's things like these that promote spiritual growth.**

**b. We must avoid everything that is harmful to growth.**

**We need to realize that certain conditions exist that are very detrimental to one's spiritual development and purposely avoid them.**

**This is not legalism, this is wisdom. It may even include limiting our freedom for the purpose of spiritual growth.**

**What are some illustrations of this?**

**\*Plants being moved inside or out depending on the weather.**

**\*Animals changing their locations throughout the year because of weather.**

**\*Athletes avoiding things that will weaken their bodies.**

**By the same token, there are many actions that one may do, or places that one might go as a believer, that possibly need changing to promote our spiritual growth.**

**2. Spiritual growth is gradual. It doesn't happen all at once.**

Prov. 4:18 - But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

2 Cor. 3:18 - But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

**3. It is natural for all true believers to grow spiritually.**

**As soon as a living creature is born, it will seek for food in order that he might grow. This is also true for spiritual life. As soon as a believer has been regenerated, he will be dissatisfied with the feeble measure of grace he possesses, and will quickly be desirous to grow.**

**a. God promises that He will cause His regenerated children to grow.**

**Because regeneration brings life to the dead spirit of a believer, the next natural step to follow is growth. This doesn't mean that growth is a straight shot up without any times of slipping backwards.**

Ps. 92:12-13 - The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, They will flourish in the courts of our God.

**It's not merely a good thing for a believer to grow spiritually, it's his nature to do so. Those who profess to be spiritually alive and do not manifest any growth need to conclude it is not well with their soul.**

#### **4. Spiritual growth comes as a believer cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification.**

Phil. 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Messiah Jesus.

Phil. 2:12-13 - So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

#### **5. Spiritual growth takes place differently in different believers.**

\*Some grow very fast and others are amazed at their growth.

\*Some remain small in their growth while some attain great heights in their growth.

\*Some progress steadily.

\*Some produce 30 fold, 60 fold and 100 fold.

### **B. REASONS TO GROW IN GRACE**

#### **1. Growing in grace helps us handle our past.**

**\*Do you ever struggle with guilt?**

**\*Do you sometimes doubt God's absolute total forgiveness?**

**\*Do you find it hard to forgive others that have sinned against you?**

**Growing in grace will help you handle problems such as these.**

1 Tim. 1:12-15 - I thank Messiah Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service; even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Messiah Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Messiah Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

#### **a. Note that God's grace was more than abundant for Paul.**

**It means that there was an exceeding abundant amount. There was more than what was needed. Paul did not exhaust God's grace and neither can we.**

**b. Our Father's ability to forgive sin is endless, because of the payment made by the Lord Jesus.**

**The grace of God rises higher than any persons sin.**

Mic. 7:18 - Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love.

Rom. 5:15 - But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus the Messiah, abound to the many.

Rom. 5:20 - And the Law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

**c. A believer should never feel guilty over past sins that have been forgiven.**

**The only time a believer should feel guilty is when there is present sin that's unconfessed.**

Ps. 32:1-5 - How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; And Thou didn't forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah.

**d. A believer should never refuse to forgive someone who has sinned against them when they ask for forgiveness.**

**Every sin we commit is against God and He is willing to grant us forgiveness.**

Eph. 4:31-32 - Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Messiah also has forgiven you.

Col. 3:12-13 - And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

1 Pet. 3:8-9 - To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

## **2. Growing in grace helps us with our present circumstances.**

**\*Do you ever struggle with trials?**

**\*Do you feel overwhelmed because of sin in your life?**

**\*Are you ever overwhelmed because of persecution for being a believer?**

**Growing in grace will help you handle circumstances such as these.**

**The same grace that is available to help us with our past is also available to help us with our present. It too will be more than sufficient to help us with whatever we are called upon to face.**

2 Cor. 12:7-10 - And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Messiah may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Messiah's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

### **a. A believer should never refuse to utilize this grace that God offers.**

**If we do, we will experience some terrible consequences.**

Heb. 12:15 - See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.

**What about the future? We are not there yet, so no grace is presently needed. But it would be wise for us to always be growing in grace so that when our future becomes our present, we will be prepared to receive the abundant grace that we will then need.**

## **BIBLICAL INSIGHTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH - PART 4**

**We saw in our first lesson that the Word of God is the key to spiritual growth. We are supposed to desire it like a baby craves milk so we can grow spiritually.**

**We also discussed how important this is for the believer and that if the Scriptures are neglected, we will be stunted in our growth.**

**We discussed in our second lesson why we should desire the pure milk of the Word. We do so in order to discover the revealed will of God so we can obey it. We also saw the important role that the Bible has in spiritual growth.**

**We discussed in our third lesson some general principles of growth and then we talked about why we need to grow in grace. We need to grow in grace so we can handle our past and our present.**

**In 2 Peter 3:18, he mentions two areas that we need to concentrate on for growth; grace and knowledge. We will look at the second one in this lesson.**

2 Pet. 3:18 - but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah.  
To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

### **4. THE CALL TO GROW IN KNOWLEDGE**

#### **A. A WARNING ABOUT KNOWLEDGE**

##### **1. There is an inherent danger in acquiring knowledge.**

**Knowledge in and of itself can make us proud. We do not want to grow in knowledge simply to be filled with a bunch of facts.**

1 Cor. 8:1 - ...Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

#### **B. THE IMPORTANCE OF GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE**

**One of the most important things a believer can be doing is growing in the knowledge of God and His Word.**

##### **1. The knowledge of God is the heart of salvation and all true spiritual experience.**

**For one to truly get saved they must know something of the one true God. That's only the beginning. After that, God's will is that growth would begin to take place.**

John 17:3 - And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus the Messiah whom Thou hast sent.

2 Cor. 4:6 - For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Messiah.

1 John 5:20 - And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Messiah. This is the true God and eternal life.

## **2. The knowledge of God is the heart of true understanding in the believer's life.**

**Knowledge of God is the foundation for all other knowledge. If we understand God incorrectly, then we can be sure many other things that we claim to have knowledge in will be found to be lacking in truth.**

Prov. 9:10 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

**Some of the most brilliant men from human standards are shown to be fools when their knowledge is held up to God's truth.**

1 Cor. 1:20-21, 25 - Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

## **3. The knowledge of God is tremendously valuable.**

**Nothing we possess in the material realm can even come close to the value that exists in knowing God.**

Ps. 119:127 - Therefore I love Thy commandments Above gold, yes, above fine gold.

Prov. 3:13-15 - How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding. For its profit is better than the profit of silver, And its gain than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her.

Prov. 8:10-11 - Take my instruction, and not silver, And knowledge rather than choicest gold. For wisdom is better than jewels; And all desirable things can not compare with her.

Prov. 16:16 How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.

Phil. 3:7-8 - But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Messiah. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Messiah Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Messiah.

**4. The knowledge of God is vitally linked to that which God has provided for our life as a believer.**

**Everything that we need that pertains to life and godliness has been granted to us, but it is rooted in the knowledge that God desires for us to have.**

2 Pet. 1:3 - seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

**5. The ability to know God is one of our greatest privileges.**

**Of the vast number of things that one can gain knowledge in, knowing God is in a class by it self. Even though your occupation may require you to be expertly informed about your vocation, you are also charged with the responsibility of growing in the knowledge of God.**

Jer. 9:23-24 - Thus says the Lord, Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, declares the Lord.

**C. FURTHER INSIGHTS FOR GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE**

**1. God alone is the author of our knowledge of Himself.**

**Left up to ourselves, we would be in the dark concerning the knowledge of God. We are dependent upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds in order for us to be able to understand the things of God.**

Prov. 2:6 - For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

John 6:44 - No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God.  
Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.

**2. The Holy Spirit plays a major role in the believers acquisition of knowledge.**

**All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and He is the one who reveals truth to us as we read the Scriptures.**

1 Cor. 2:10-12 - For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.

**No one less than God can bring us true and reliable knowledge about Himself. Knowledge of God is received by believers who genuinely seek to know Him as we demonstrate dependence upon Him through prayer.**

**3. True knowledge of God will not become a reality without heartfelt prayer.**

**Prayer manifests our dependency upon God and this fits well, because knowledge of God is also dependent upon Him.**

Eph. 1:15-17 - For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Col. 1:9-10 - For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

**4. Growing in the knowledge of God will have a major impact upon our walk as a believer.**

**If growing in the knowledge of God does not impact our walk, there is a major short circuit in our spiritual life.**

Phil. 1:27 - Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Messiah; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

1 Thess. 4:1 - Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more.

1 Thess. 2:10-13 - You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

**The more we grow in the knowledge of God, the more we will discover how much we do not know about Him and that we need to keep on growing.**