

Fundamental Principles for Spiritual Growth

الحق المغير للحياة

Life-Changing Truth

To grow spiritually, there are seven steps you must take. If you do not take these steps, whatever else you do, you will be a failure when it comes to spiritual development. These steps are elementary. I call them the seven fundamental principles for spiritual growth.

Step One: Learn To Forget

Step one in spiritual development is to learn to forget the past. In Philippians 3:13-14 it says "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

To grow spiritually, you must do the things Paul suggests in these verses. Notice Paul doesn't believe he has "arrived" yet. He says he is still pressing toward the mark. The person who thinks he has arrived and knows it all will never grow spiritually. Nobody knows it all! Actually, the more you grow in the Lord and learn about Him, the more you realize how little you know.

You'll never be a successful Christian unless your "forgetter" is in good working order. Forget even the blessings of God that are behind, because if you live on past blessings, you are living on stale manna. If you're satisfied with what happened in the past, you are not reaching toward the future blessings God has in store for you.

There is another side of learning to forget that is important: You must learn to forget your past mistakes, failures, and sins. As long as Satan can keep those past failures before you, he holds you in a position where you will not develop spiritually, and your prayers and faith will not work.

Step Two: Learn To Forgive

Step two in spiritual development is closely associated with learning to forget the past. If you want to grow spiritually, you must also learn to forgive. In Ephesians 4:32 it says "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, EVEN AS God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." It's easy to be kind to those who are kind to you.

It's easy to be tenderhearted toward people who are tenderhearted toward you. It's not so easy to be kind to those who treat you badly. But notice Paul said, "Be kind to one another even as God forgave you." That means you have to forgive fellow believers too. How did God say He forgives? In Isaiah 43:25 He said, "I will blot out your transgressions and I will not remember your sins anymore." To forgive as God forgives means you are not to remember any wrong a fellow Christian might have done to you.

I've had people say to me, "Yes, but you don't know what So-and-so did to me!"

It doesn't matter what anyone has done to any of us. It couldn't come close to the debt we owe the Lord for forgiving our sins. How much more should we be willing to have pity on others, especially on our brothers and sisters in Christ! When you learn God's law of forgiveness, you will grow spiritually!

Step Three: Learn To Pray

Step three in spiritual development is to learn how to pray. You cannot grow spiritually and be a success in your Christian walk without developing a prayer life. A successful prayer life must be built upon the Word of God. In John 15:7, Jesus said, "If YE ABIDE IN ME, and MY WORDS ABIDE IN YOU, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Jesus did not say to ask God for everything you can think of. Asking what you will and having it done for you is conditional on the rest of the verse: "If ye abide in me." To abide in Jesus means not only to be born again, but also to walk in continual fellowship with Him. Look at the other conditional part of that verse: "and my words abide in you." You'll never be successful in your prayer life if you don't know God's Word. God's Word must

abide or live in your heart.

When people ask me to agree in prayer with them about something, I ask them if they know what the Word of God says on the matter. Then I ask them if they are standing in faith for the situation. I ask, "What scriptures are you standing on?" Too often they reply, "Not any in particular." I tell them, "Well, then, that's what you'll get, nothing in particular!" You'll only receive answers to your prayers when your prayer life is built on the Word of God. So when you have a need, find scriptures that promise you what you're praying about. Then you will have a solid foundation for your faith.

Once you have a foundation for faith in the Word, then pray according to the scriptural guidelines Jesus gave us for New Testament prayer. That's part of allowing God's words to abide in you. Pray to the Father in the Name of Jesus. That is the divine order for New Testament praying. It's only as you build your prayer life solidly on the Word of God that you can grow spiritually.

Step Four: Learn To Believe

Step four in spiritual development is closely associated with learning to pray. You must also learn to believe God and His Word. The prayer of faith just won't work unless you believe. How do you believe? It's simple. Jesus said in Mark 11:24: "What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, BELIEVE that ye RECEIVE them, and ye shall have them."

We often fail to receive what we've asked for because we walk by sight instead of by faith in the promises of God. We say, "When it comes to pass, when I can see I have it, then I'll believe it." But that's the "Thomas" kind of faith! Thomas said, "EXCEPT I SHALL SEE in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I WILL NOT BELIEVE." (John 20:25)

On the other hand, we can walk by the "Abraham" kind of faith. The Bible says that Abraham "against hope believed in hope, according to that which was spoken. And being not weak in faith, he

considered not his own body.” (Rom. 4:18,19) Abraham “considered not” the natural circumstances. He believed he had received God’s promise many years before he actually saw the answer to his prayer and his wife bore him a son.

Believe that you receive when you pray, and you will have it. It’s the most difficult thing in the world to make people understand this, because they are usually so bound up in the sense realm with human reasoning. Most people want to have their answer first, and then they will believe they have received it.

Jesus is the One who said, “What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” (Mark 11:24) I didn’t write that verse; I just believe it! Why add to or take away from the Word of God? Why not just take it for what it says?

Step Five: Learn To Worship

Step five in spiritual development is to learn to worship. In John 4, Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall WORSHIP the Father IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23,24)

Hallelujah! That means you don’t have to be in a particular place to worship God. A lot of people think you can’t worship God unless you are in a church building. God doesn’t dwell in buildings anymore. Under the Old Covenant, He used to dwell in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. But under the New Covenant He dwells in us.

Our bodies, not some brick-and-mortar building, have become the temple of the living God (1 Cor. 3:16). So learn to worship God with your spirit, not in some dead, formal way with your mental faculties or your soul. The Lord has enabled us to worship Him in Spirit and in truth because the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

Also, by speaking in tongues we have a supernatural means of communicating with Him (1 Cor. 14:2). Paul said in First Corinthians 14:2: “For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue

speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; how be it in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." Moffatt's translation says, "he is talking of divine secrets in the Spirit."

Thank God for this wonderful means of communicating with the Father! We need times of prayer when we get alone with God and worship Him in other tongues, as well as with our understanding in our native tongue. Take time to worship God. Learning to worship Him will help you grow spiritually.

Step Six: Learn To Give

Step six in spiritual development is to learn the secret of giving. The church needs a general overhaul on this subject to keep from becoming unbalanced. Some people have gone to one extreme in their giving. They only give because they feel it's their duty or obligation (which, of course, it is). But because that's the only reason they give into the Kingdom of God, they miss the blessing giving can be in their lives.

You should give to the Lord because you love Him, worship Him, and adore Him. And you need to add faith to your giving. Tell the Lord you are mixing faith with your giving, and remind Him of the scripture: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6:38)

On the other hand, you can go to the other extreme. You can give selfishly just to get a return, and you won't get one. Some people hear a faith teacher relate how he gave away an automobile and God gave him another one. Then they give theirs away and think, "Now God is going to give me a new car." But He won't. You see, their motive is all wrong. It's selfish. And it's based on another person's experience, not on the Word.

You've got to examine your motives for giving and keep your motives right. You can do the right thing with the wrong motive, and it won't work. Certainly I expect God to keep His Word when I give. And He will, too, if I fulfill my part of the obligation. But I'm not going to give away my automobile just because someone

else did. I would only give it away if the Lord told me to.

Then because I obeyed God, He would bless my obedience. We need balance in this area of giving. If we'll keep our motives pure and give according to the Word and the Holy Spirit's leading, we'll be blessed in our own lives and we'll grow in our Christian walk.

Step Seven: Learn To Witness

Step seven in spiritual development is to learn to witness for the Lord. Jesus stated that believers were to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit so they could become witnesses for Him. That was one of the purposes of the endowment of power from on high: "But ye shall RECEIVE POWER, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and YE SHALL BE WITNESSES UNTO ME" (Acts 1:8).

I am thoroughly convinced that the greatest witness you can be to the world is to live a life that's sold out to the Lord. Like the old proverb says, "What you are speaks so loud, I can't hear what you say."

I believe in personally witnessing to people, of course. I think we should witness as the need arises. But I don't think we should go around trying to push the gospel off on everyone. I think we should be led by the Holy Spirit when we witness to other people about the Lord. Otherwise we'll waste our time, and they won't be open to what we're saying.

You see, the Lord knows who is open to the gospel and who isn't. If you don't wait for His leading, you will do a lot of laboring and never win anyone to the Lord. And many people won't appreciate your efforts. You might even do more harm than good.

In regard to my own mother, brothers, and sister, I never said a word to them about God and the Bible. I never invited one of them to come and hear me preach, even when I was preaching in the same town where they lived. I never said a word to them about Jesus. Not once. (I did to other people, but not to them.) I just believed if my family could see I had something real, they would want it. And do you know what? Every single one of them followed me into salvation. Every one of them were saved and filled with

the Holy Spirit.

I believe the greatest witnessing tool is a life really lived for the Lord. So learn to witness as the Holy Spirit leads you. But first and foremost, be a witness. It's important to your spiritual growth.

So apply yourself to learn these seven fundamental principles for spiritual growth. And don't get frustrated because you won't grow up spiritually overnight. Just take it a step at a time. As you learn to forget, to forgive, to pray, to believe, to worship, to give, and to witness, you will be well on your way to spiritual maturity!

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