

What is the key to "growing in the Lord?"

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The normal process for a person's physical, mental and psychological growth starts with conception. King David said that God formed him in his mother's womb. Psalms 139:13.

This Psalm speaks of the intricate details that God uses to form a baby and if you read the whole chapter, David tells us that God numbers our days and after they end, we will be with our Creator. How are we to use the time that God gives to us?

Just as that baby grows and develops, becomes independent and then starts a family unit of his own, so it is with spiritual development. We are to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord and to make all of our days count.

People need to heed the counsel of the word of God to grow spiritually and be fruitful in the work that God has given them to do.

Many people miss the mark because they don't have sound doctrine, they have no inclination to study for themselves, and they lean on their own carnal understanding for the path that they choose to take.

If you read the story of the fall in Genesis, Eve was deceived because she didn't take God at his word. She looked at the fruit and when she saw that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was good for food and pleasant to the eye, she dismissed the warning of God and ate of it and gave it to her husband and they both sinned against God. The Bible is specific on the things that are an abomination to God, yet people find ways around it by partaking of it because there is pleasure in sinful activities. Many of them go to church and profess to be Christians, yet they live contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ and that which was given to the apostles. Their consciences have been seared over as with a hot iron. 1 Timothy 4:2. Moses chose to suffer with the Children of Israel rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Hebrews 11:25.

Paul addressed the Corinthian church because of their lack of spiritual growth. He pointed out to them that they were still infants in spiritual matters in so much that he had to feed them milk rather than the meat of God's word because they were not able to handle weightier doctrines. He recognized their lack of maturity in Christ because of their envying, strife, and divisions. These people also took pride in the fact that they were disciples under Paul and some were disciples under Apollos. He explained to them that both he and Apollos were mere servants of Jesus Christ and that both he and Apollos sowed seeds and watered them for the building up of the church of Jesus Christ. Neither was better than the other for their work was in vain except that God honored it and brought the increase. He wanted them to understand that we are all laborers together in Jesus Christ and He is the one who gives the rewards for the labor that we are involved in for his glory. Paul explained that God called him to be a master builder. He laid the

foundation of the truth that God imparted to him and he cautioned people to be careful how they built on that foundation. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are commanded to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

In 2 Peter 3:11, Peter spoke about the second coming of Jesus Christ. After giving an exhortation on the fact that there will come a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness, he asked the question, "In light of this knowledge, what kind of people ought you to be? He answers by saying, "You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of the Lord and speed its coming."

2 Peter 1, Peter begin this book by stating that he is a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. He continues his exhortation by stating that faith is precious and grace and peace are ours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

In verse 3, it tells us that we are kept by the power of the Holy Ghost. We are given everything we need to live a godly life to be pleasing to Jesus Christ. It is through his own glory and goodness that we can overcome the sinful desires of the old nature and can be elevated to victory living in the divine nature.

This past week, on the internet, a group of my family members and their friends were discussing the harmlessness of smoking marijuana versus drinking alcohol. Some of these people had been involved in both of these habits for many years. They were making jokes about the warnings that have been stressed about the use of weed and how that they are not fuzzy brained because of it and a lot of other jesting concerning the two substances.

I wrote a comment saying that I have never felt the need to use either of these artificial "spiritual highs" for I have a relationship with Jesus Christ and he satisfies my heart's desires without having to use anything that could cause addiction or harm to my body and peace of mind. No one commented on my post.

Peter continued his teaching by saying that because of the power of God to keep us, we should make every effort to add to your faith, goodness and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge self-control and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance godliness and to godliness, mutual affection and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those who do not possess them are nearsighted and blind forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

He continues with these words: "Therefore, my brothers and sisters make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Peter stated that he was preparing to die for God had revealed it to him. He wanted to remind people of the things that matter in this life so they would receive a full reward when Jesus Christ returns and we stand before him. He reminds us that no Scripture is of

private interpretation but they all have been revealed to godly men by the Holy Spirit and they were inspired to write them down for the world to understand the will of God for the earth and its inhabitants.

Galatians 5:16 says to walk in the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. The flesh desires the things that are contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit is contrary to the flesh.

The Bible clearly states that without holiness, no man shall see God. Hebrews 12:14.

In 1 Peter 1:3-13. Peter gives praise and glory to God for his mercy that he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. Peter then speaks about the trials that people had been facing and he states that these come to prove the authenticity of our faith- of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire- may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Verse 8 is powerful and it reads like this: Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end results of your faith, the salvation of our souls.

He continues by stating that the prophets of old searched intently and with the greatest of care trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but serving those that came after and they longed to understand what the Holy Spirit revealed to them and inspired them to write. Even angels long to look into these things.

We are urged to keep our minds alert and fully sober and to set our hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. As obedient children, don't conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. The Scriptures say, "Be holy as I am holy."

I assure you that Satan, our adversary will do whatever is within his power to turn our thoughts and hearts away from the eternal glory that God has prepared for those who love him. The glitter and glamour of this world will beckon and call in hopes of leading people away from the cross and eternity with the saints of God from the beginning of the ages. The Bible says that even the very elect will be deceived if it was possible.

We cannot trust our judgment for choosing good and evil; we must depend on the word of God to lead us to the path of goodness that He has planned for us. When Lot and his family were being led out of the city of Sodom and Gomorrah, they were told not to look back, but to move away from the cities that were going to be destroyed. Lot's wife's heart

was back there in that city. That had been her home and she only thought of the good that she had known while living there. She looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. Even Solomon with all of his wealth and wisdom did not choose "goodness". He chose heathen wives who led the people into idol worship. We cannot lean on our own understanding. Peter even failed the test when he rebuked Jesus concerning the details of his death on the cross. Jesus said, "Get behind me Satan for you are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the concerns of God but merely human concerns."

Be careful when you think that what you perceive is "good" is what God sees as good. The tower of Babel was considered "good" by the people who made the plans and worked to construct the tower. But God looked down and came down, confused their language and scattered them throughout the earth because it was "good" in his sight.

Romans 8 reveal that the mind governed by the flesh is hostile towards God. It does not submit to God's law nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. Believers do not work in the realm of the flesh, but in the spirit. Without the spirit of God, a person is not one of his. Those with whom Christ abides in their hearts, even though they are subject to death because of sin, the spirit gives life because of righteousness. If the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, it will quicken your mortal body and because He lives, we can live also.

To be a child of God, you must be led by the Spirit! Look to the Light of the world and He will guide you to eternal life.

Galatians 5 NIV

19The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20**idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21**and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23**gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **24**Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25**Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. **26**Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 5 KJV

19Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, **20**Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, **21**Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. **22**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, **23**Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. **24**And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. **25**If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. **26**Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Love: Love is one of the most profound emotions known to human beings. There are many kinds of love.

Joy: The emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires

Peace: Freedom from disturbance; quiet and tranquility

Forbearance: The quality of someone who is patient and able to deal with a difficult person or situation without becoming angry.

Longsuffering: Having or showing patience in spite of troubles, especially those caused by other people.

Kindness: The quality or state of being gentle, considerate and generous.

Gentleness: is the quality of being kind and careful, especially, mildness of manners or disposition.

Goodness: Uprightness of heart and life, giving and forgiving.

Faithfulness: True, devoted, staunch, constant, loyal imply qualities of stability, dependability, and devotion.

Faith: Strong belief or trust in someone or something. Belief in the existence of God: strong religious feelings or beliefs.

Gentleness: the quality or state of being gentle especially: mildness of manners or disposition.
Meekness: having or showing a quiet and gentle nature, not wanting to fight or argue with other people.

Self-control: the ability to control oneself, in particular one's emotions and desires or the expression of them in one's behavior, especially in difficult situations.

Temperance: Moderation in action, thought, or feeling, restraint.

NIV

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

KJV

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith
23Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

GALATIANS 5

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT. Contrasted to the acts of the sinful nature is a single-minded lifestyle called "the fruit of the Spirit." This is produced in God's children as they allow the Spirit to so direct and influence their lives that they destroy sin's power, especially the acts of the sinful nature, and walk in fellowship with God (see Ro 8:5-14, note; 8:14, note; cf. 2Co 6:6; Eph 4:2-3; 5:9; Col 3:12-15; 2Pe 1:4-9). The fruit of the Spirit includes:

(1) "Love" (Gk *agapē*), i.e., a caring for and seeking the highest good of another person without motive of personal gain (Ro 5:5; 1Co 13; Eph 5:2; Col 3:14);

(2) "Joy" (Gk *chara*), i.e., the feeling of gladness based on the love, grace, blessings, promises and nearness of God that belong to those who believe in Christ (Ps 119:16; 2Co 6:10; 12:9; 1Pe 1:8; see Php 1:14, note);

(3) "Peace" (Gk *eirēnē*), i.e., the quietness of heart and mind based on the knowledge that all is well between the believer and his or her heavenly Father (Ro 15:33; Php 4:7; 1Th 5:23; Heb 13:20);

(4) "Patience" (Gk *makrothumia*), i.e., endurance, long-suffering; being slow to anger or despair (Eph 4:2; 2Ti 3:10; Heb 12:1);

(5) "Kindness" (Gk *chrēstotēs*), i.e., not wanting to hurt anyone or cause them pain (Eph 4:32; Col 3:12; 1Pe 2:3);

(6) "Goodness" (Gk *agathōsunē*), i.e., zeal for truth and righteousness and a hatred of evil; it can be expressed in acts of kindness (Lk 7:37-50) or in rebuking and correcting evil (Mt 21:12-13);

(7) "Faithfulness" (Gk *pistis*), i.e., firm and unswerving loyalty to a person to whom one is united by promise, commitment, trustworthiness and honesty (Mt 23:23; Ro 3:3; 1Ti 6:12; 2Ti 2:2; 4:7; Tit 2:10);

(8) "Gentleness" (Gk *praütēs*), i.e., restraint coupled with strength and courage; it describes a person who can be angry when anger is needed and humbly submissive when submission is needed (2Ti 2:25; 1Pe 3:15; for gentleness in Jesus, compare Mt 11:29 with Mt 23 and Mk 3:5; in Paul, compare 2Co 10:1 with 10:4-6 and Gal 1:9; in Moses, compare Nu 12:3 with Ex 32:19-20);

(9) "Self-control" (Gk *egkrateia*), i.e., mastering one's own desires and passions, including faithfulness to one's marriage vows; also purity (1Co 7:9; 9:25; Tit 1:8; 2:5).

Paul's final comment on the fruit of the Spirit indicates that there are no restrictions to the lifestyle indicated here. Christians can—in fact, must—practice these virtues over and over again; they will never discover a law prohibiting them from living according to these principles.