

Growing in the Word

We have been examining the place of God's Word in our lives. It is a firm foundation of truth with every word inspired of God. It fills us with faith. It is attacked by the world in its rebellion. We don't just have a singular spiritual encounter with God through the Bible. We don't just read the Bible but study the Scriptures in the context of the whole Bible before we make any rash assumptions. This message is part two to last week's sermon. We continue to grow through our study of the Bible. This is similar to the problem that Jesus faced in that people met Him, were impacted by His message, but then failed to follow through.

You would think that after all the miracles Jesus did and wisdom He dispensed that people would have thronged Him and protected Him from the scheming corrupt leaders of their day. The fact that they would crowd Him for a little while and then start to drop off is an indication that they just really didn't understand Him. They treated Him just like a popular leader is treated today: he is abandoned when people ignorantly accept the prejudice against him. Jesus made His opinion clear about such people. At other times, people were happy to follow Him until they found out it was going to cost them some effort.

Luke 9:57-62 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I

will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Even though people walk away from Christ out of the same laziness or human prejudice today, we are blessed with 2000 years of history, debate, failure, success, and clarification about the Bible and Jesus Christ that makes us more accountable. There is no reason why a Christian should remain in the dark. It would be a shame to us if we did not grow.

Luke 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

We appreciate the difference between the truth of God's Word and the way the world spins the truth into lies. We acknowledge not just the absolute truth of the Bible, but also that every word was given by inspiration. Because of this, we trusted the message of salvation in the Bible and its rule for our lives. We recognize that the world and Satan want to twist or destroy the Bible. We also recognize that it is not just that we should *study* the Bible, but derive an *organization* of the doctrines of the Bible. *With all that in place*, we are ready to *grow* through the Word of God. When Satan tempted Christ to make bread out of stones, Jesus quoted the book of Deuteronomy:

Matt 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

2Tim 3:16-17 All scripture is

given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

In order to grow spiritually, the Bible was given to us for doctrine, to reprove us when we are doing wrong, to correct us, and to give us instruction in righteousness.

1. Laying the foundation -

Whether you choose rice, potatoes, or salad for supper might not be something you need to consult a Bible verse for. For many other decisions, it is very appropriate to ask, "What does the Bible say?" Bible reading is not enough. Once we read the Bible, we need to practice *applying* the Bible. We need to do this way more than we actually are doing it. More of life should have a Biblical basis. The Bible must become the foundation of our lives that we then build on.

Luke 6:46-49 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

- First, we choose life's foundation.

Josh McDowell made this

statement about choices. He said, "You can choose your choices but you can't choose the consequences" (of your choices). Choice is inherent in Jesus' words. He observes that some people will hear His Words, pay close attention, and respond accordingly — and some will not. The foundation we lay down is a choice.

- Secondly appearances can be deceiving.

If you were to examine two new identical houses built near each other, you'd have a hard time determining that one had a foundation sitting on bedrock and the other rested on 20 feet of fill dirt. The way Jesus tells the story, both houses would have looked the same from the ground up — from outward appearances. We won't know the reality of things until later.

We often fool each other outwardly. Two people come to church. Both talk about Christ and Scripture. Each one can quote a verse, or explains something from the Word. Both might even teach Sunday School or lead a Bible study. Both sound equally sound and secure.

- But thirdly, storms reveal the nature of the foundation we choose.

And of course, by the time the storm arrives, it's too late to do anything about the foundation. As Jesus described them, both houses experience the same sort of storm. Torrential rain, gale-force winds, a wicked unrelenting storm that tests each house down to its very core. One passes the test and the other doesn't. What Jesus says is, life is going to show up, in all its brute force, and when it does, it will show up your core. Life happens.

— Dean O'Bryan, Trinity Baptist Church
March 26, 2006

Make the Bible your standard by which you evaluate all things. As you "rightly divide" the Bible, you will discover many verses that relate to every area of your life.

2. Practical ways to grow -

Here are some practical ways to make growing in the Word possible.

- Read the Bible
- Read the Bible everyday personally
- Read the Bible everyday as a family
- Read the Bible according to a plan

Even though there should be times of study, *just reading* the Bible will begin to educate you. The Bible is usually difficult when you start, but remember that it is not a newspaper. It reveals God's mind to us. As you read it will grow on you because you will have the Holy Spirit show you what you need.

John 16:7-14 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

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.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall

shew *it* unto you.

- Fellowship with the church

Here, I decided not to say "go to church." Church is not just a little ceremony that you add on to appease God just in case you want to avoid Hell. First, if you are truly a Christian then you don't have to worry about Hell because Jesus' work on the cross was perfect, you are saved forever. *Fellowshipping* at church implies how you are part of a social group. Some people might go to church but their social group is the bowling league where they don't have any interest in starting their bowling game in prayer. The bowling group doesn't care what John 3:16 says. It's not wrong to go bowling, but know the difference between *fellowshipping* and doing *outreach*. Don't get committed to something that will displace your true fellowship group. To be part of church as a social group means that you share a common interest with them to understand the Bible and put that understanding to practice. If you actually want to grow in the Word you will do something about it. *Then* you can go bowling, not to have fellowship with people who don't care about the Bible, but to reach out with the Gospel. If they fail to respond, don't lock yourself into a group that is going to keep you from moving on to others who will respond.

When it comes to fellowship at church, you will get the benefit of the Bible training and understanding from preachers, teachers, and conversations with other believers. We end up discipling each other. Ray had a moment when he was talking to someone about trucking. He had some advice from his experience that I would never have been exposed to. It takes all of us to be here for each other. Sometimes your conversation will be about different issues in life and not the Bible itself. You can be sure the conversation will be influenced by Bible principles. All of that will be about growing in the Word. Paul referred to this as he addressed the Romans:

Rom 1:11-12 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

12 That is, that I may be comforted together **with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.**

- Pace yourself

Going to church and understanding the Bible should be done organically. When we interact with others and their Christian experience, attend the different services that each have a different kind of emphasis and kind of study, we will learn the Bible through different avenues. God teaches us as we go along in life. He shows us what we need *when we need it over time*. He doesn't just flood us with information that we can't handle.

John 16:12-13 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

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.

- Share the Bible with others

Don't just sit back and be a pew warmer. When you share the Bible with others, you find out how much you don't know! When you hear a Bible lesson, you might recognize everything being said. When you share the Bible is when you *really* learn. Especially at the Bible studies, people are given the opportunity to share their thoughts and not just ask questions. Even better would be to take an assignment to prepare some thoughts on a subject.

You have come to the moment when you have had the Gospel explained to you and you made the decision to get saved. You certainly are saved because of that decision...but can you explain the

Gospel to someone else? Too many Christians think this is difficult to do that but it shouldn't be!

- Keep notes

There are actually many *more* ways to study the Bible. Keeping notes is a great way to start off. There are about 10 great topical headings including the study of the Bible, God's nature, The Holy Spirit and angels, Jesus, Man, Sin, Salvation, the Church, the End Times, and Christian Living. There are certain topics Nancy keeps in her Bible as she reads. She keeps these handy because of questions she regularly gets. As you read the Bible, analyze what you are reading and make notes in your book. Where would you put all of John 3, for instance? Where would you place 1 Cor 13? What verses about salvation lasting forever might be included in the study of Salvation? My sermon notes are online available for print. If you were to print out the last five sermons, where would you place them in your notes?

- Become aware of false doctrines

It is important to also be able to explain how certain teachings are false because you might hear something you have to correct to protect *true* Bible doctrine.

Thomas Paine wrote *Common Sense*, a pamphlet that was used widely to encourage people in the American Revolution. Later, he used his talent as a propagandist to write against Christianity. He said:

"Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the bible is filled, it would seem more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the Word of God. It is a history of wickedness that has served to

corrupt and brutalize mankind."

— Thomas Paine (1737 - 1809)

Poor Tom Paine. He has a different understanding of the Bible now. Yes, indeed, the Bible is a history of the wickedness of mankind. But as a propagandist, Paine was wrong because he only presented one side of the issue. God does not present sin like you would read in some gossip magazine today. He presents the bottom line wickedness of man *and* the justice of God *and* the salvation of God. It is the history of salvation.

Rom 16:17-18 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

- Read to apply the Scriptures to make a change in your life

In order for God to use us to the full potential He placed in us, we need to read the Bible with a view to making a change in our lives.

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Years ago, the State of Kentucky had a law that every classroom in its in public schools had to post the 10 Commandments. The Supreme Court ruled against the state of Kentucky ordering it to take down all of the copies, saying: "Having the commandments on the wall may induce a student to read, meditate upon, and actually obey what is therein written." The Supreme Court of the United States of America recognized that the Word of God had the ability to transform the character of people who read it.

Acts 20:27,28,32 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood...

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

- Memorize God's Word

David commented that he had hidden God's word in his heart so that he might not sin against Him.

Ps. 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

No book has had so important and so high a use as the Bible. It has shined in the minds of past generations to guide the ways of men; to make them strong for duty, patient in suffering, upright in life, resigned in death.

It is the one book in which righteousness sounds its admonitions from beginning to end...in which divine character is set forth as pure, free from human passion, and centered in love and benevolence. The best thoughts of men are expressed in the Bible, and the best thoughts, best actions, best motives and feelings...have been made possible by it.

It is a living book, shooting out rays of light and heat into all the world. He who knows only the print and type of the book, knows only a painted sun. No other book has the power to change human nature, to inspire a desire to be free from sin, to

develop righteousness.

– Henry Ward Beecher

Have you laid the Bible as the foundation for your life by giving your heart to Jesus? Or, are you satisfied enough with how you are on your path to Hell without God? Are you with those who think that the Bible was written for a bunch of shepherds living in tents wandering around the desert? Or would you like to take the time assimilating the Bible and discovering its rich truths and growing in your relationship to God, Himself? You can't escape the hardness of this life, but you can grow in the Word to face it with not just wisdom but true Godliness.

Luke 9:57-62, Luke 12:48, Matt 4:4, 2Tim 3:16-17

1. Laying the foundation - Luke 6:46-49
2. Practical ways to grow - John 16:7-14, Rom 1:11-12, John 16:12-13, Rom 16:17-18, John 17:17, Acts 20:27,28,32, Ps. 119:11