

BIBLE STUDY LESSON OUTLINE

The Importance of Growing in the Lord: Word and Worship

*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. 2Peter 3:18*

Scripture is clear, growing in the Lord is not an option, but a biblical mandate for every believer. The idea of growing in the Lord bears the image of intimacy and closeness with the Lord. One that brings us closer to him day-by-day. It should be the desire of us all to embrace the directive of our central scripture from 2 Peter 3:18: “*Grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior...*” The essence of this spiritual discipline of growth is captured by an excerpt from the Family Bible Notes commentary...

Grow in grace; increase your knowledge of Christ, and your likeness to him. The grand safeguard against the seductions of error, and the most powerful means of increase in holiness, is increasing knowledge of Jesus Christ; that experimental knowledge which is obtained under the teaching of the Holy Ghost by daily searching the Scriptures, and which prepares us to unite with saints on earth and in heaven, saying with the heart, "To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."¹

Although the importance of growing in the Lord is a wonderful ideal and goal to ascend to, for some there is this note of caution, because so many begin walking with the Lord, but tend to stagnate themselves for so many different reasons. Consider this analogy from the Albert Barnes Commentary...

[But grow in grace] Increase in the image and favour of God; every grace and Divine influence which ye have received is a seed, a heavenly seed, which, if it be watered with the dew of heaven from above, will endlessly increase and multiply itself. He who continues to believe, love, and obey, will grow in grace, and continually increase in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, as his sacrifice, sanctifier, counsellor, preserver, and final Saviour. The life of a Christian is a growth; he is at first born of God, and is a little child; becomes a young man, and a father in Christ. Every father was once an infant; and had he not grown, he would

¹Family Bible Notes Commentary on 2 Peter 3:18

have never been a man. Those who content themselves with the grace they received when converted to God, are, at best, in a continual state of infancy: but we find, in the order of nature, that the infant that does not grow, and grow daily, too, is sickly and soon dies; so, in the order of grace, those who do not grow up into Jesus Christ are sickly, and will soon die, die to all sense and influence of heavenly things.

There are many who boast of the grace of their conversion; persons who were never more than babes, and have long since lost even that grace, because they did not grow in it. Let him that readeth understand. ²

Male or female, youth or adult, we are all along this spiritual progression at some point or another. The importance of Growing in the Lord is to find that place in your relationship with the Lord and dutifully move beyond that place. The importance of growing in the Lord can in no way be overstated. We now begin this progression together, to understand and attain to, *The Importance of Growing in the Lord*.

Growing in the Lord has a number of key elements that serve as the underpinnings of this growth. They are: *The Word, Worship, Obedience and Service*. In this first section of the bible study, we will examine the importance of Growing in the Lord through the Word and Worship.

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I. GROWING IN THE LORD: THE WORD

The importance of growing in the Lord through the word is usually mischaracterized as simply reading and studying the bible. This is not necessarily so when speaking of growing with and in a person. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” According to scripture, ***the Word is a person!!!*** Everything about scripture indicates that the word is more than just a compilation of letters and words that we read, study, and memorize. The Word embodies the holy trinity, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the word and the word of God that causes everything else to come into being. Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*” Then, in verse 3, “*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*” To know God, is to know the person who is the creative power that caused all that there is to come into being simply by the use of His Word. Let there be no doubt, the importance of Growing in the Lord is getting to know the omnipotent one who is incomparable in might, majesty and meaning for life.

² Albert Barnes Commentary on 2 Peter 3:18, Grown in Grace.

The importance of getting to know the Word of God as a person is to know what the person, God, has said, is saying, and desires to say to us. Therefore, to know the person is to know what God says.

The bible says so much about its importance, but here is one that we can not avert, 2Tim 2:15 *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* The word of God encourages us to seek the scriptures and read them. To read and know the scriptures is to know the one of whom they speak. The Study of God’s word Enjoined and encouraged: Deut 17:19, Isa 34:16, John 5:39, Acts 17:11, Rom 15:4. Reading the word is like reading his letter to humanity. In it, you get to know his heart, his love for us, his commands, his admonitions, his directives, but most importantly, you get to know God. There are no shortcuts to growing in the Lord, and getting to know God, and that is through the reading and study of his word.

Another aspect of getting to know the word, is through how God chose to manifest himself to us, and that is the person of his son, Jesus Christ. To know God, now that we know Christ as God’s son, and incarnate in the flesh, means for us to know God is to know Christ. John 10:30, Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” So to get to God, it must be through His word and a relationship with Christ, according to John 14:6, *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

The message here is simple: the importance of growing in the Lord is to know God through his son, Jesus Christ. The reasons, blessings, benefits, and whys are innumerable. We do know that God’s word is central to knowing him. Take in this commentary from Eason on God’s word, the bible:

The Bible is so called because the writers of its several books were God's organs in communicating his will to men. It is his "word," because he speaks to us in its sacred pages. Whatever the inspired writers here declare to be true and binding upon us, God declares to be true and binding. This word is infallible, because written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and therefore free from all error of fact or doctrine or precept. All saving knowledge is obtained from the word of God. In the case of adults, it is an indispensable means of salvation, and is efficacious thereunto by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit
John 17:17; 2Tim 3:15-16; 1Pet 1:23; Heb 4:12

From our time in the word, we now transition to the second aspect of this lesson that speaks to the importance of growing in the Lord, and that is Worship. The word and worship are inextricably woven together as significant to growing in the Lord because the

Word (God and what he speaks) impacts our worship. Let's consider this one person, Abraham, because he represents what we see of others in the Bible, even without listing them all. In Genesis chapters 12-22, whenever Abraham heard a word from the Lord, or in the presence of God or God's angel, or messenger, the bible indicates that Abraham built an altar and worshipped (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:4; 13:18; 22:9). Our worship MUST be in the presence of and a witness to the Word. You cannot worship without a Word, THE Word. It is impossible. The importance of growing in the Lord ultimately is relational. You and the Word; You and God; You and Christ; You and the Holy Spirit. *It's relational*. It is the Word that ushers you into His presence. Now, we can consider worship as the next matter of importance in Growing In The Lord.

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II. GROWING IN THE LORD: WORSHIP

The discipline and compulsion to worship the Lord as referenced in Hebrew 10:25 begins our study on the importance of Spiritual Growth. In this scripture, it is spoken that by the assembly of the saints we exhort one another, "...and so much more,". Yes, there is spiritual growth in worship. But to understand the principles of spiritual growth in worship, let us do a study of what worship truly is.

WHAT IS TRUE WORSHIP?

Worship is reverent devotion and allegiance pledged to God. The English word "worship" comes from the Old English word "worthship," a word that denotes the worthiness of the one receiving the special honor or devotion. It can also be expressed that worth is a stated value or some equivalent assessed to the item or in this instance, person. Worship then becomes the expression of that reverent devotion to the person for their value and how much they mean to the person.

For instance (as we have already seen)...Abraham built altars to the Lord and called on His Name (Gen. 12:8, 13:18). After God's appearance to Moses and the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the foundations of Israelite ritual were laid. Through Moses, God established the form and principles of Israelite worship (Exodus 25-31; 35-40).

However, worship did not stop with the Old Testament. New Testament worship was characterized by joy and Thanksgiving because of God's gracious redemption in Christ. This early Christian worship focused on God's saving work in Jesus Christ. True worship was that which occurred under the INSPIRATION OF GOD'S SPIRIT (John 4:23-24; Phil. 3:3).

The fullness of a worship experience is that which we do both privately and publicly. If you are lacking one or the other, then you are not wholly and fully worshipping God.³ It is in the worship experience that we have the beginnings of understanding the significance of what spiritual growth is all about. Not only do we worship God corporately, with prayer, reading of the word, singing the songs of Zion, but there is the preached word that heightens the element of the importance of Spiritual Growth. *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

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Typically, the worship experience is usually accompanied by some level or degree of praise. Because it is inevitable that the question arises about praise when discussing, studying or in the act of worship, it is fitting that we also complement this supposition of worship as important to Growing in the Lord with a brief address of Praise.

Praise—A Prelude to Worship

Praise: "psalm," "praise," "confession" "thanksgiving," shabach, "to praise" "glorify," "to stretch out the hand.

1. Its Meaning:

The word comes from the Latin pretium, "price," or "value," and may be defined generally as an ascription of value or worth. Praise may be bestowed upon unworthy objects or from improper motives, but true praise consists in a sincere acknowledgment of a real conviction of worth. Its type may be seen in the representation given in the Apocalypse of the adoration of God and of the Lamb, which is inspired by a sense of their worthiness to be adored (Rev 4:11; 5:12).

The Duty of Praise

Praise is everywhere represented in the Bible as a duty no less than a natural impulse and a delight. To fail in this duty is to withhold from God's glory that belongs to Him (Ps 50:23; Rom 1:20 ff); it is to shut one's eyes to the signs of His presence (Isa 40:26 ff), to be forgetful of His mercies (Deut 6:12), and unthankful for His kindness (Lu 6:35). If we are not to fall into these sins, but are to give to God the honor and glory and gratitude we owe Him, we must earnestly cultivate the spirit and habit of praise. From

³ Reference: International Standard Bible Encyclopedia

holy men of old we learn that this may be done by arousing the soul from its slothfulness and sluggishness (Ps 57:8; 103:1), by fixing the heart upon God (Ps 57:7; 108:1), by meditation on His works and ways (Ps 77:11 ff), by recounting His benefits (Ps 103:2), above all, for those to whom He has spoken in His Son, by dwelling upon His unspeakable gift (2Cor 9:15; compare Rom 8:31 ff; 1John 3:1).

2. IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRAISE AND WORSHIP?

Actually, the two go hand in hand. In “worship” we recognize what is of highest worth-not ourselves, others, or our work-but God. “True Worship comes from within. It’s an inner attitude. Only the highest divine being deserves our highest respect. Guided by the Scripture, we set our values in accord with God’s will and perfect standards. Before God, angels hide their faces and cry, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts” (Isa. 6:3).

“*Praise*” is an act of “*worship*”. The praise of God toward people is the highest commendation they can receive. Such an act of praise reflects a “true servant’s” heart (Matt. 25:21, 1 Corin. 4:5, Eph. 1:3-14).

Our praise toward God is the means by which we express our joy to the Lord. We are to praise God both for who He is and for what He does (Ps. 150:2). Praising God for who He is, is called “adoration”; praising Him for what He does is known as “thanksgiving”. Praise of God may be done in song or prayer, individually or collectively, spontaneous or prearranged, originating from the emotions or from the will. In the words of David “My praise shall be continually of You...And I will praise You yet more and more (Ps. 71:6,14).

In our next lesson, we will explore Obedience, Service(Ministry) and Prayer as to The Importance of Growing in the Lord.

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