

## BIBLE STUDY LESSON OUTLINE

### **The Importance of Growing in the Lord-2: Service, Obedience and Prayer**

*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*

We began our study on Growing in the Lord by reaching into the depths of the Word and Worship. Here, we will discover more aspects of growing in the Lord, and those aspects are Service (Ministry), Obedience, and Prayer. These three aspects of growth are all intricately woven together and make for a spiritual experience of Growth in the Lord that is unrivaled in proving the intimate relationship with God through Christ.

*Service (Ministry), Discipleship, and Prayer* are unequivocally tied at the hip when it comes to spiritual growth and development. Ministry is the work of the church that involves serving others and fulfilling the command of the Lord to compel men, women, boys, and girls to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Upon receiving those whom the Lord has called to Himself, our responsibility is to disciple them in the word, opening them to the path of enlightenment and spiritual growth. This spiritual growth then blesses the same to be an informed, inspired, and true worshipper of the Lord our God, worshiping him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Yes, it is true, the importance of Spiritual Growth can be seen in all three of these key aspects in our lives, and it is these areas that we will spend our time learning the importance of Growing in the Lord.

#### **A. Service (Ministry)**

Service is altogether one of the more significant disciplines because it defines not only what we do but who we are. A Servant is the person, and service is the act rendered by the servant for the master. Ministry is the totality of acts of service by the servant that is in compliance with the wishes of the Master, which, as we will see later in this lesson, fulfills itself by being recognized as obedience. Because Ministry is a more all-inclusive expression, for the remainder of this lesson, we will make reference to service interchangeably with the discipline word Ministry.

Ministry is a selfless act of obedience that tends to benefit others, and it is all to the glory of God. Know this, that whenever and whatever the servant does in ministry that brings glory to God, the servant is always blessed by the Master for obedience. Scripture affirms the benevolence of the Lord to the obedient servant in this way, in Matthew 24:44-46 “*44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. 45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*”

The faithfulness of God's servants was put in the words of a song, by the late great Sis. Lucie Campbell in 1933, and she expressed servant ministry by writing...

Verse 1.

*If when you give the best of your service,  
Telling the world that the Savior is come;  
Be not dismayed when they do not believe you;  
He understands, he'll say, "Well done."*

Refrain:

*Oh, when I come to the end of my journey,  
Weary of life and the battle is won,  
Carrying the staff and the cross of redemption,  
He'll understand and say, "Well done."*

As it is with Worship, Ministry is an essential and integral part of Spiritual Growth. Ministry is the work of the church that involves servicing others and fulfilling the command of the Lord to compel men, women, boys, and girls to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

One of the reasons ministry is integral to the discipline of spiritual growth is that ministry can be hard, difficult, and downright complicated. The irony is that ministry is key to spiritual growth, because it is more the idea of doing and serving others that helps the spiritual growth of the individual ministry participant. In short, your ministry to someone other than yourself is as much for your benefit as it is for theirs. When you minister to others, God can see the level of unselfishness within you. Are you in ministry to be seen, to be spoken of in high regard, for it to be known that you helped a particular person less fortunate than you? What are you doing ministry for? Ministry, when done in its proper context for the right and righteous reason(s), can be one of the greatest catalysts for spiritual growth and development.

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### **The Meaning of Ministry**

The very definition and biblical context for ministry undergirds the supposition that it is needful and necessary for Growing in the Lord. To properly contextualize the meaning of ministry, we need to consider, along with the word ministry, another word that binds it together as a discipline for growth: servant.

The common New Testament term for the ministry is diakonia (pronounced, *dee-ak-on-ee'-ah*), and along with it we find *diakonos*, "minister," he who ministers," and *diakonein*, "to minister." All these words have a very extensive application within the New Testament and are by no means restricted to denote service only within the Christian church; even when so restricted the words are used in a great variety of meanings: for example...

(1) discipleship in general (*John 12:25-26*);

(2) service rendered to the church because of the "gifts" bestowed (*Rom 12:6-7*), and

- hence, all kinds of service (*Acts 6:3-5; Matt 20:26*);
- (3) specifically, the "ministry of the Word" (*Eph 4:12*), and most frequently the "apostleship" (*Acts 1:17; 20:24; 21:19*);
- (4) such services as feeding the poor (*Acts 6:1; 11:29; 12:25*), or organizing and providing the great collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (*Rom 15:25; 2Cor 8:4,19*);

Ministry alone is just an act of service waiting to be performed. Ministry has to have someone to carry out this spiritual discipline in order to become an underpinning of spiritual growth. Spiritual growth happens here because the *minister/servant* is fulfilling a command of the Lord; this, in turn allows one to experience firsthand the way in which Jesus himself served others; you get to see how the Lord makes provisions for everything you have committed to do in his service; seeing the provisions of the Lord is a direct enhancement to the growth of our faith in the Lord. Every servant of the Lord experiences personal spiritual growth and development because of doing ministry. This is the essence of Growing in the Lord!

So, the question now is, what is a servant? Better still, in this study, it is necessary for us to ask, are we a servant that will carry out the biblical discipline of ministry? Let's now define who we are to be.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## SERVANT

**sur'-vant** ('ebhedh; doulos): A very common word with a variety of meanings, all implying a greater or less degree of inferiority and want of freedom:

- (1) The most frequent usage is as the equivalent of "*slave*" (which see), with its various shades in position (*Exod 21:5; Matt 10:24; Luke 17:7*); but also a hired workman where "hired servant" translates Hebrew and Greek expressions which differ from the above.
- (2) An attendant in the service of someone, as Joshua was the "servant minister" of Moses (*Num 11:28*).
- (3) As a term of respectful self-depreciation referring to oneself, "thy servant" or "your servant"
  - (a) in the presence of superiors (*Gen 19:2; 32:18*);
- (4) Officials of every grade are called the "servants" of kings, princes, etc. (*2Sam 16:1; Prov 14:35*).<sup>1</sup>

Collectively, the meaning of ministry encompasses both a person (the servant) and the acts of servitude that they render. Now that we have an understanding, although cursory, of ministry, which in short is the act of doing for others, let's now construct the fullness of its understanding by associating the person (servant) who performs the act of ministry with the act itself.

To solidify this understanding of ministry, our best examples of what and how to grow spiritually through the act of ministry are to observe those who exemplified the works of

<sup>1</sup> The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, an article by William Joseph McGlothlin

ministry as servants in the bible. The list here is by no means exhaustive, but only representative to the extent that the object of our lesson is solidified. The point is that ministry is done by those who are servants, and their spiritual lives grow exponentially because of how God relates to them in the assignment given by the Lord and undertaken by willing individuals.

- ❖ **Moses—Exodus to Deuteronomy.** Moses entire life was one of service and ministry. Moses' ministry began at birth, with God having ordained his salvation from Pharaoh. He was then raised and nurtured in Pharaoh's family, only to be the minister and servant that God would use to free the people of Israel. Did not Moses' ministry and service to God serve as the impetus for his spiritual growth and development? Moses got to speak practically face-to-face with God, hear the voice of God, spend length periods of time in the presence of God (*Ex. 33:11, Deut. 34:10-12*). Moses saw God do things that you and I can only dream of. Wouldn't this level of intimacy bode well for growing in the Lord?
- ❖ **Joseph—Genesis Ch. 30 to 50**—the servant and minister who exemplified ministry to family, friends, and foes. Joseph was the deliverer for his family in a time of famine as a servant in the house of Pharaoh. He ministered to those who came to be his friends in prison as he served the captain of the prison. Joseph's participation in ministry directly contributed to his spiritual growth and development. Joseph was used of God mightily to bring salvation and nutritional substance to the remnant of Israel who would ultimately become the nation known and the people of God (*Gen. 45:1-8*). Joseph's intriguing and difficult life in ministry surely contributed to his spiritual growth. Joseph saw God do things in and through him that he acknowledged could only be done by Jehovah God Himself.
- ❖ **Ruth—The book of Ruth.** The life of Ruth is truly one of the most unselfish acts of ministry and service in the bible. Ruth, in her youth, denied herself the pleasures of taking another husband to minister to and serve her Mother-in-law Naomi. Ruth's ministry was for and to Naomi, and to see that she was taken care of as a widow. Ruth gave herself to working in fields, gleaning from others' leftovers, all just to serve and do ministry. Ruth's unselfish act contributed directly to her spiritual growth by putting herself in a position to see God do something in her life that she could have never imagined. Her life of service and ministry became one where she would become the wife of the Kinsman Redeemer in her family's lineage, to probably having servants and being ministered to herself.
- ❖ **Samuel**—from his very conception, which was of the Lord, he was destined to live a life of service and ministry. That was the very thing his mother committed to the Lord if, in fact, He blessed her with a son (*1Sam. 1:11, 24*). True to her word, his mother Hannah brought him to the temple to serve under Eli the priest. A life of ministry and service begins with the Lord's call upon our life, and not to an office (*1Sam. 3: 1-10*). This account would serve as an incredible example of how God's call begins a life of intimacy with him and untold levels of spiritual growth. Samuel served the Lord, Kings Saul and David, and the entire nation of Israel as one of the most revered men of God ever in the bible. Samuel's service and ministry allowed him to hear direct from God himself, and be the oracle of Israel.

There are many more servants of God who, through their ministry and service to the Lord, have grown exponentially in their walk with the Lord. Here we will list a few others for discussion, but what's more, add to this list of biblical personalities whom you believe to have served admirably, whose ministry enhanced their spiritual growth.

❖ <i>David</i>	<i>Hosea</i>	<i>King Hezekiah</i>	<i>Hosea</i>
❖ <i>Jonah</i>	<i>Rahab</i>	<i>John the Beloved</i>	<i>Paul</i>
❖ <i>John the Baptist</i>	<i>Mary, Mother of Jesus</i>		<i>Esther</i>

These are but a few examples of how a life of ministry through service is not only beneficial to the person or persons to whom you serve, but what is more important are the spiritual lessons learned about God. Ministry is spiritual growth and development. Without it, many of us are left to live shallow, selfish, unfulfilled, and meaningless lives.

## B. Obedience: The Will of the Father

Obedience is a very broad and far-reaching discipline of the Christian Faith. However, suffice it to say, for the purposes of this study of Growing in the Lord, it is nothing short of whole-hearted yielding of oneself to the will of the Father. Obedience in and of itself is inherently suited to the idea of *Growing in the Lord*. It is on full display in our earthly familial relationships. Obedience builds faithfulness, fidelity, trust, loyalty, fealty, and a bond between the servant and their Lord.

Listen to Christ as he lays out the essence of fealty and obedience to God... *John 5:30* “*I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*”(KJV) The question now is, relative to the quest of this study is, “Is the Discipline of Obedience Working in You?” Consider these primary scriptures on the discipline of Obedience: Deuteronomy 13:4; 1 Samuel 15:22; Jeremiah 7:23; John 14:15; 2 Corinthians 10:5. Now, ask yourself the following questions relative to Obedience, and based upon your answers, it could reveal why your Growth in the Lord is thriving or barely surviving.

*Notes:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### *Is the Discipline of Obedience Working in You?<sup>2</sup>*

1. How do I exhibit a life of Obedience in my daily life now?
2. How can I develop the willingness to be more disciplined as one who is faithfully obedient to Christ as LORD?
3. What blocks Obedience from working and being exhibited in me?
4. How can I initiate Obedience and discipline myself to carry it out?
5. What can I do to make Obedience function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.discipleshiptools.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=37282&columnid=>

If you want to know what obedience looks like biblically and spiritually, look at the lives of...

- Noah Gen. 6:22                      Abram Gen 12:1-4; 22:3,12                      Caleb Num 32:11-12
- Hezekiah 2Ki 18:6                      Josiah 2Ki 22:2                      Zacharias Lu 1:6
- Joseph Mt 1:24                      Wise men Mt 2:12                      and Christ Luke 22:41-42

The Discipline of Obedience helps us keep our eyes on God, not on people! If you only seek God for your "felt" needs, you will never understand or rely on God for your "real" needs! Neither will you understand yourself, nor His wonderful plan for you (John 17:22)! Your faith will be on your terms only. How sad that would be! How much you would lose (Gal. 2:20-21)! This Discipline helps us confine our motives, obedience, and perseverance to His precepts so we can continue to be in love with Him! Seek His presence, and be persistent in your prayers. If you fear this, take comfort and realize it is a journey of a lifetime; go to Him, and as you draw closer to Him, you will learn the right things to ask and do. Prayer is persistence and learning! <sup>3</sup>

In speaking of prayer, it is the final discipline in this study for Growing in the Lord. We have before undertaken bible studies that dealt specifically and at length with prayer. For our purposes here, let's simply allude to the significance of it for growing in the Lord, and refer you to the other studies for a more in-depth study of the discipline.

### C. God's Will about Prayer

Every believer needs to know and understand that *it is God's will that we pray*. Jesus declared so in Luke 18:1. Not only is it God's will that we pray, but also that this should be a regular and ongoing part of our lives. Follow the scriptures as we are led to accounts of frequent, regular, and fervent prayer.

Romans 12:2; 1 Thess. 5:17; Col. 4:2; 1 Pet. 4:7 and Matt. 26:41. \_\_\_\_\_

What significance do these verses and others have if it is not the will of God that men should pray?

Saints of God, if you can successfully integrate prayer with the faith that the God of this universe gives to every believer, you are not yet even aware of the power that is available to you, and just how much you will grow in the Lord.

#### The Value of Prayer

The space occupied by prayer in the Sermon on the Mount indicates its value to Christ and the importance it holds in His system. Many important principles are discussed in a few verses. The Sermon consists of 111 verses, and 18 are about prayer directly, and others indirectly (many of which will be addressed in later lessons). Is there not a better line within a song that expresses the privilege of prayer than "What a Friend We Have in Jesus..."

*What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit, O what need-less pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry Ev 'ry-thing to God in prayer!*

<sup>3</sup> 2007 R. J. Krejcir Ph.D., Into Thy Word Ministries [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org) [www.discipleshiptools.org](http://www.discipleshiptools.org)

...be careful reading this next stanza...

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged-Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our ev-'ry weakness-Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

Prayer is a privilege, a sacred, princely privilege. Prayer is a duty, an obligation most binding and most imperative, that should hold us to it. But prayer is more than a privilege, more than a duty. It is a means, an instrument, a condition. Not to pray is to lose much more than to fail in the exercise and enjoyment of a high, sweet privilege. Not to pray is to fail along lines far more important than even the violation of an obligation.

### *Prayer Accomplishes God's Purposes<sup>4</sup>*

The possibilities of prayer cover the whole purposes of God through Christ. God conditions all gifts in all dispensations to His Son. "Ask of Me..." God the Father said to the Son, as His Son was moving earthward on a mission for the world's salvation, "and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession" (Ps. 2:8). Hinging on prayer were all the means, results, and successes of that wonderful and divine movement for man's salvation. Broad and profound, mysterious and wonderful, was the scheme.

### *God draws us closer when we Pray*

The answer to prayer is assured not only by the promises of God, but also by God's relation to us as a Father. Matt. 6:6 \_\_\_\_\_ Matt. 7:11 \_\_\_\_\_

God's part in prayer is that of a loving, caring and giving Father. Those who are closest to the Father stand, or should it be stated, kneel, with the assurance that when we arise from a posture of prayer, we are ushered into the position of faith that our Father will hear and answer our prayer.

---

Thus, we conclude the study on Growing in the Lord by bringing together the disciplines of Ministry, Obedience, and Prayer. Individually, they are important, but together, they are powerful!

---

<sup>4</sup> E. M. Bounds, *Thy Will Be Done: Teach Us To Pray*, Whitaker House 2000

## **Ministry and Servant texts to live by for Spiritual Growth...**

God's word is our guide. Ministry is a work of God that must be fueled and directed by Him and His word. The following are scriptures central to the precepts of ministry as a discipline for spiritual growth and development.

**Matt 20:26** But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

**Matt 20:28** Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

**Matt 25:44** Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

**Mark 10:43** But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

**Mark 10:45** For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

**Acts 20:24** But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

**1Cor 16:15** I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) **16** That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.

**1Tim 1:12** ¶ And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

**2Tim 4:5** But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. **6** For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. **7** I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Ultimately, the greatest example of ministry and service is our Lord, Jesus Christ. Having given his life for us all, there is no greater precept in doing for others. We close the lesson with this, if you want to grow spiritually, then it is an absolute must that you be a participant in ministry as a servant of the Lord. In do so, you will experience untold spiritual intimacy with the Father that you would in no other way have encountered Him. Let your ministry and service be your witness, and let your witness testify to the fact that ministry and service IS spiritual growth.

When all is said and done, the true statement of our spiritual growth in ministry and service will

be to hear, *“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Matt 25:23.”*

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## The Importance of Spiritual Growth: Ministry

**2Co 8:4** Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. **2Co 8:5** And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

**2Co 8:19** And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind: **20** Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: **21** Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

**1Co 16:14** Let all your things be done with charity. **15** I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) **16** That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. **17** I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

**1Co 16:14** Let all your things be done with charity. **15** I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) **16** That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. **17** I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

**Mt 20:26** But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; **27** And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: **28** Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

**OR**

**Mr 10:43** But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: **44** And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. **45** For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

**Ex 21:4** If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. **5** And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:

**Mt 10:24** The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

**Nu 11:28** And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

**Ge 19:1** ¶ And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; **2** And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.

**1Sa 3:8** And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. **9** Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. **10** And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

**2Sa 16:1** ¶ And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him...”

**1Ki 12:6** And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people?

**7** And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.

**Jos 1:1** ¶ Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

**2** Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

**2Ki 8:16** ¶ And in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign.

**17** Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. **18** And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.

**19** Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children.

**Da 6:20** And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

**2Ti 2:24** And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

**Joh 8:34** Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.