

SPIRITUAL GROWTH – Lesson #2: The Word of God.

- *The Bible is a vital source for our spiritual growth.* Jesus quoted the OT: “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” The Bible is as necessary to sustain spiritual life as food is to sustain physical life. In Jn. 6 Jesus portrayed Himself as the living bread from heaven, which gives life. Then, He summarized how He comes to us as bread: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (Jn. 6:63). In His prayer the night before the cross, Jesus prayed for us, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” (Jn. 17:17). To sanctify means to set apart to God. The more we take the words of the Bible in a proper way, the more our lives are set apart to God and to His will.

- *Coming to the Bible for life.* The best way to absorb life from the Scriptures is to come to them with an open heart seeking after Christ Himself, wanting to hear Him and learn of Him. 2 Cor. 3:15-18 show us that when our heart is turned to the Lord Himself, the Bible is unveiled and the Spirit is ministered to us. Another wonderful verse is James 1:21: “Therefore, rid yourselves of everything impure and every expression of wickedness, and with a gentle spirit welcome the word planted in you that can save your souls.” This verse is very instructive. It tells us this: for the Bible to affect us spiritually, we must come to the Word with an attitude to put away sin, and with a humble and meek spirit we should welcome the word, which planted in our hearts has the power to save (that is, deliver) our souls from any sin and selfish living. Similarly, Jesus spoke: “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (Jn. 8:31-32) The freedom mentioned here is freedom from the power of sin (see 8:33-35).

- *Meditating on the Word.* An effective way to gain life from the Word is by meditating on it (see Ps. 1; 119:15; Josh. 1:8). This differs from just reading it. In meditation one goes over the phrases of each verse slowly, usually repeatedly, and with consideration. The Hebrew verb for “meditate” means to make a low sound. So in meditation one may repeat the phrases of a verse in prayer softly to God, spontaneously thanking God for the truths, or turning them into prayers for one’s self or others (See Eph. 6:17-18). One may also meditate silently in the heart over verses. Meditation is similar to a cow chewing the cud over and over, breaking the grass down to get its nutrients. The word will feed us this way, and we can move along in a passage phrase by phrase as it seems good to us. A time set aside first thing in the morning for being in God’s word prayerfully was the habit of so many great Christians throughout the centuries.

- *Reading the Word.* Every Christian should read through the entire Bible regularly. God can teach us and speak to us different things from many passages and stories. Familiarity with the Bible gives God an opportunity to speak to us in our daily lives from things we have previously read in the Scriptures. Knowing the Scriptures through reading them equips us so that we can help others (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

- *Diligently studying the Bible.* All believers should study the Bible in order to know the truth. The truth not only helps us live free from sin’s dominion (Jn. 8:3-1-36), but also helps safeguard us from error and false teachings. The Christians in Berea are a good example for us, checking Paul’s teaching by studying the Scriptures for themselves (Acts 17:10-12). As a result, they trusted Christ and were saved! There is just as much false teaching around today as in the early church. Without a very good knowledge of the Bible, Christians are easily led astray by clever and deceiving false teachers. Paul’s word to Timothy is a good word for all of us, especially for those who are caring for the flock: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15). Shepherds of the flock are responsible to guard the flock against false teaching (Acts 20:28-30).

- *The Bible feeds our faith.* The one way to strengthen our faith is to be in the Bible with our heart open to God. “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” (Rom. 10:14) The remedy for weak faith is to spend more time reading, considering and meditating on, or even memorizing, the Word of God.