

Week 5 Teaching: *The Truth about Spiritual Growth*

Witnessing a person in extreme emotional or physical pain is one of the most difficult things to watch. You want so much to help them get out of whatever caused them to experience such discomfort. As Christians our first line of assistance is prayer of course, but sometimes the person for whom we've prayed doesn't believe in the power of prayer. There are also cases when they do believe, but after much prayer the person doesn't seem to get any better or their troubling situation doesn't appear to let up. These are awfully disturbing circumstances, and many of us continue to question God as to why they exist. Why are there times when hopelessness tightens its grip and gets the better of decent and caring folks?

The answer to that question is too complex and involves far too many dynamics to cover without years of study, but there is one aspect of the answer that is relatively easy to understand. It is the fact that the nature of all pain is cyclical. It will cycle back around, again and again and again, until the root of its existence is extinguished. Cyclonical as well, each time it cycles it gains momentum and strength while destroying bits and pieces of our lives.

We all know someone who swears that bad things track them down and follow them everywhere they go. He or she may feel as though they cannot catch a break and that life has dealt them a pretty bad hand. Well the most dangerous thing that any of us can do is to feed into the belief that we are powerless to reverse this negative cycle. We can change the flow of life's events so that we are not only getting the things we want most in life, but we are also growing and maturing spiritually during the process.

In the previous teaching we learned a very important critical truth, and it is that God values our spiritual growth more than our desires. A critical truth is one that is pivotal to building a foundation of right knowledge. It brings a point of clarity that helps one to cultivate a greater realization of purpose, peace, and inner power. If it's a little bit of a stretch for you to believe that our desires are secondary to our spiritual growth, see how far you will get without walking by the example of Christ.

People can only take the truth in small doses, and their rejection of it is a major source of pain. Often when we hear something that doesn't jive with the perceptions or assumptions we have developed, whether it involves God's Word or something else, we immediately refute, reject, or dismiss it. Thousands upon thousands of opportunities for advancement have been missed this way.

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Truth and spiritual growth go hand and hand. When we are ready to accept and embrace the truth, we are positioning ourselves for the next level of spiritual growth as well. One of the indwelling Holy Spirit's jobs is to guide us in this process. So when there is greater biblical insight to be gleaned or someone tells us something about ourselves that is outside our perception of who we think we are—our first reaction should be to test rather than dismiss it. Be patient and allow the Father to prove whether or not it is true.

The critical question we must ask is why—why is it so important to God that we spiritually grow and that we become more and more like Christ? The simplest answer is that God set up the system, so He knows how we should operate within it to get the best results. The only way to maximize our time here on earth and to squeeze every drop of bliss out of our earthly existence is to follow the greatest example of humanity available. There is no greater example than that of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-14 NLT

11 He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, 13 until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth.

Our goal must be to grow up to be “...full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.” Whenever that is not our focus we will have ventured off the path that God intends us to follow, and we will undoubtedly experience the consequences of doing so. We will lose stamina, momentum, and time on our Christian journey. Stamina and momentum we can regain, but time is lost forever.

It is only when we have taken the steps necessary to grow in Christ that we will recognize the difference between a lie and the truth. Then we will no longer change our minds on a whim. We will no longer hop from one religion to the next, or vacillate in our convictions, but we will be anchored in our faith and spiritual ability through our Lord.

Matthew 11:29-30 NKJV

28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

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Where we are today is a direct result of the Word we live. If we want different results we must be willing to do something different. You cannot grow if you are unwilling to change and to release some of the things you have so tightly clinched for years. They are burdening you down and preventing you from rising to a new level of faith and believing.

Spiritual growth is the name of the game. It is not grievous, but profitable. It is an upward progression that requires us to put off some old things that have been weighing us down and put on the new things of Christ that are light. And not only are they light, but they allow us to become better Christians while assuring that we grow closer to the desires of our hearts.

To grow is to confront. The key to unlock our treasures can be found within ourselves, but it is often hidden beneath many layers of fear, doubt, and insecurity; things that we refuse to face. We derive a certain amount of comfort to leave them in tact because those emotions and feelings have shielded us from what we fear most, the unknown. Paul left behind a very subtle clue in 1 Corinthians 13:12; he said “**now we see...**” That implies the courage to at least look. The work of our souls can be challenging, but we owe it to ourselves to begin this process of excavation and peel back those layers to reveal God’s masterpiece.

How can you love your own soul if you refuse to set it free? The truth of your inner being is a glorious one. Put on the strength of Christ and release the fear of pain. Be patient and love your work in progress, knowing that as you take the smallest step towards spiritual growth it will be greatly rewarded.

Week 5 Prayer

Most Gracious and Heavenly Father,
I humbly ask that You forgive me for the words I have spoken, thoughts I have thought, and deeds I have done that are contrary to Your Will. God, I thank you for being such a loving Father and for making me fit to come before Your throne in prayer through your son, Jesus Christ. Help me to prioritize my life as I understand how important it is to grow in the spirit. And as I seek to make spiritual growth my focus, help me to release those things that keep me from doing so....to release them totally and completely. Help me to be committed while I learn the lessons of patience, and to have every confidence that as I do I will be fully prepared to seize the blessings I desire. Thank You for allowing me to walk in the fullness of Your strength through Jesus Christ. I pray this prayer in his wonderful name. Amen.

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**Scriptures link to
[New Living Translation.com](http://NewLivingTranslation.com)**

WEEK 5 Scriptures:

Day 1: [Isaiah 40:31](#)

Day 2: [Habakkuk 2:3](#)

Day 3: [Hebrews 10:23](#)

Day 4: [Psalm 27:14](#)

Day 5: [Psalm 62:5](#)

Day 6: [Psalm 33:20](#)

Day 7: [Psalm 130:5](#)

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