

# Personal Spiritual Growth

## Week 2 Power to Grow

### Summary

After we realize that the goal of our life in Christ is to grow to be like Christ, to attain perfection. The next question is how are we going to accomplish this goal? Growth is not easy as most of us know from our personal attempts to change a habit, change a pattern of thinking, or shape our personality traits. Part of the good news of Jesus is that God provides both the pattern and the power to grow.

### Week 2 Power to Grow

The power to change comes from God. We simply do not have it in us to overcome sin, if we did then Jesus' sacrifice was not necessary and we can simply place our faith in ourselves. In reality growth is a cooperative process which involves our effort combined with God's power resulting in real growth. We are not passive participants in the change process; God does not simply fill us with an instant dose of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. Transformation requires our intentional effort and focus combined with the power of God. The power of God in us for change is the Holy Spirit and our on-going connection to that power is our relationship with God. We need God's power to know where to change and we need his power to make the changes. Our part of the growth process consists of our will, willingness, persistence, intentionality, and submission.

Our study will look at several keys to connecting to power

### Be connected to God

- ❖ John 14:1-8 – uses the image of a vine and branches to show the relationship between being fruitful in God's kingdom and staying connected to God. The key phrase in this section is "remain in me" which is then connected to the ideas of remaining in God's love, prayer, the Holy Spirit, and obeying God's commands, especially the command to love one another.
- ❖ Phil 1:9-11 – At the beginning of this letter to the Philippian church Paul shares his personal prayer that they would be filled by Jesus to grow in order to bring glory to God.
- ❖ Rom 12:12 – a simple verse which describes three powerful responses to life: joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

### Role of Holy Spirit

- ❖ Rom 8:3f – Describes how the Spirit gives us the ability to fulfill the "righteous requirements of the law" and thus become the people that God wants us to be. It is the Spirit that gives us the ability to live righteous lives
- ❖ Rom 8:12-14 – also describes the Holy Spirit as our weapon against temptation and sin....The Holy Spirit is how we conquer sin.
- ❖ 2 Thes 2:13 – Describes the work of the Holy Spirit as "sanctifying" us. Sanctify is the on-going process of being or becoming righteous.
- ❖ 2 Cor 3:1f – On many occasions Paul uses his own life change from persecutor to preacher as proof of the power and validity of the gospel. Here in 2 Cor 3, Paul uses the change in life of the Corinthians as the proof that the message they believed was from God. He says that their lives demonstrate the Spirit of God written on tablets of human hearts.

### The ideas of "Setting our minds" on the things above

Battle between spiritual forces

- ❖ 1 John 4:1-6 – In this passage John describes a simple test for determining if a "spirit" is from God or from Satan. The test involves recognizing whether the spirit "acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and is from God" This is a clear test of false teaching, but I also think you can take

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this idea as a tool for sorting different thoughts. If the thought honors Christ, it is worth keeping, but if the thought denies God or his power, it is a thought to reject. Another significant aspect of this passage is that John says “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” which gives us confidence that we possess power that is greater than sin.

- ❖ Eph 6:10-18 – This famous passage depicts the pursuit of righteousness as a battle between spiritual forces. The battle is won by relying upon the truth of the gospel message, righteousness, faith, the sword of the Spirit, and being ready. The action of the believer against Satan’s attempts is prayer.
- ❖ Rom 8: 5-11 – Compares the difference between setting our minds on the desires of the flesh versus allowing our minds to be controlled by the Spirit. Being controlled by the Spirit or setting our minds on things of the Spirit means to constantly focus on the things of God, the power of God over sin apart from simply following rules.
- ❖ Col 3:1-4 – This passage is similar to the Romans 8 passage and describes the action of “set your minds on things above.” Imagine the change in power that results from exerting control over your mind so that you think about the things of God rather than the things of this world. How many sins would be conquered if we only exerted control over the direction of our thoughts?
- ❖ Gal 5:24-26 – In the middle of describing how faith and the Spirit replace the function of laws and rules as the means of righteousness, Paul encourages the Galatians to “keep in step with the Spirit.” The image here is that the Spirit is the one leading and guiding us, but we must exert some effort to keep up with the Spirit’s movements. This is how the Spirit reveals to us the places in our lives that need changing and also leads us through the process of change.

## Spiritual Disciplines (as defined by R. Foster)

- ❖ **Prayer** – Interactive conversation with God about what we and God are thinking and doing together.
- ❖ **Study** – The intentional process of engaging the mind with the written and spoken Word of God and the world God has created in such a way that the mind takes on an order conforming to the order upon which it concentrates.
- ❖ **Fasting** – The voluntary abstention from an otherwise normal function (most often eating) for the sake of intense spiritual activity.
- ❖ **Confession** – Sharing our deepest weaknesses and failures with God and trusted others, so that we may enter into God’s grace and mercy and experience his ready forgiveness and healing.
- ❖ **Sacrifice** – Deliberately forsaking the security of satisfying our own needs with our resources in the faith and hope that God will sustain us.
- ❖ **Service** – Loving, thoughtful, active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world, through which we experience the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves.
- ❖ **Silence** – closing off our souls from “sounds,” whether noise, music, or words, so that we may better still the inner chatter and clatter of our noisy hearts and be increasingly attentive to God.
- ❖ **Submission** – Subordination to the guidance of God; within the Christian fellowship, a constant mutual submission out of reverence for Christ.

## A Spiritual Growth Plan

The power for personal spiritual growth comes from God...the act of “connecting” to that power is through the exertion of our energy and intentions to do something for growth. I believe that if we “ask, seek, and knock” on God’s door looking for growth, knowledge, wisdom, etc....that he will be faithful to open the doors of growth. As a tool to set your desire for growth in motion I want to encourage you to consider making a personal spiritual growth plan. I have placed a collection of resources on the web site in the “library” that you can use to help planning out some specific things you can do to grow.

Remember that both the power and the priority of our growth steps come from God, we must first submit and listen before we can set our attention on specific growth areas.