

Personal Spiritual Growth

Week 5 Finding my place

Week 5 – Summary

Growing in Christ means learning to place others above ourselves, learning to give instead of receive, learning to help instead of waiting to be helped. Each of us brings a valuable set of life experiences, skills, gifts, talents, and resources to the work of Christ. Part of our maturation in faith is learning where we fit into the work of Christ, what ministry and mission aspect we are molded for and how we can contribute to the work of the congregation and the overall cause of Christ. Every Christian is called to be holy and live a righteous life. In addition, each of us have special gifts, skills, abilities, and motivations for specific roles or ministries. It is important that we not only live as “good people” but that we pursue using our gifts, skills, abilities, and motivations for God’s purposes.

We are all called to live holy lives and grow.....

Notice in these passages that there is an expectation of growth and a reason for the growth. The reason for growth in faith and holiness is best expressed in Eph 4:11f with the saying, “to prepare God’s people for works of service...” Our spiritual growth is much more than a personal improvement plan, it has a purpose in the plan of God. As we grow we become more and more useful to God and to the working of his church. We are like tools being sharpened for a task.

- ❖ **2 Cor 7:1f** *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*
- ❖ **Col 1:28f** *We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*
- ❖ **Eph 4:1f** *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*
- ❖ **Heb 5:11f** *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. 12 In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*
- ❖ **1 Pet 1:5-11** *...5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

Discerning God’s Specific Will for My Life

Beyond the general calling to grow and be holy, God also works through us individually in unique and personal ways. Part of our personal spiritual growth is learning our unique contributions to God’s kingdom and submitting to the will of God for our lives. While the command to be pure and holy is clear and certain, the call of God to specific service in his kingdom is a process of discernment. I want to explore this personal discernment for God’s will into two categories. The first will deal with understanding our unique design, the second will deal with listening for God’s call.

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Understand your unique design

It comes as no surprise to realize that God has made each of us with unique combinations of personality, gifts, strengths, talents, abilities, and motivations. These combinations are not simply a matter of random or biological processes; they are in fact part of God's unique design for every individual. Our individual gifts, skills, and abilities are an expression of God's grace which He distributes as he sees fit...and all for the purpose of advancing his kingdom. Notice the following passages.

- ❖ Rom 12:1-8 – Here Paul connects the idea of gifts and ministry together emphasizing the fact that our abilities are granted for a purpose in God's kingdom.
- ❖ 1 Pet 4:8-11 – Peter admonishes the Christians to be responsible with the gift of grace God has given them by “faithfully administering” those gifts as if they were serving God and not for their own glory.
- ❖ 1 Cor 12:1-31 – In this passage Paul uses the analogy of a body to describe the variety and distinctiveness of our personal gifts. At the same time Paul warns us to guard against comparing one another based on our gifts recognizing that every gift is given by God and all are needed to make the body function properly.

There are many ways to discover your gifts:

1. Pay attention to things / activities that “come naturally” to you. Where do you feel most comfortable? Most confident?
2. Pay attention to those areas that others notice your abilities. Sometimes our strengths are noticed by others before we recognize them
3. There are “gifting” tests that can provide clues. One free test is available at www.churchgrowth.org/analysis/intro.php I would caution you that if you take this online test that you use it as a guide not the gospel. I would encourage you to follow your online test with a conversation about the results and language of the report. Give me a call.

Being Led by God

Simply knowing your gifts and abilities does not completely answer the question of understanding God's will for your life, we need to listen to God. Does he have a special ministry in mind for your gift of administration? Does he want you to serve a specific group of people? Has your background, experiences, education, and gifting prepared you to be used by God to a specific end? These questions can only be answered by discerning His will.

- ❖ **“Here Am I” Attitude** (1 Samuel) – Samuel displays the attitude of a servant ready to be used by God. God cannot use us if we are not willing. The first step to being led by God is being willing to be led by God.
- ❖ **Live a Spiritual Life** (Phil 1:9f, Rom 12:2, 1 Cor 2:7-15) – All of these passages indicate that the ability to understand God's will for our lives increases as we grow spiritually. We must devote ourselves to understanding God's ways through reading and prayer.
- ❖ **Get Busy** (Philemon 6) – Describes the essence of praxis. Praxis is the process of learning through doing. Paul tells the Christians to do something so they will learn more. It is good advice, if we want to understand God's will for us we need to be doing, not simply waiting.
- ❖ **Pray** (James 1:5) – encourages us to pray for wisdom.
- ❖ **Unsettled Spirit / Urging / Sticky Topics** – (Acts 20:22) – Paul travels to Jerusalem “compelled by the Spirit” despite the fact that it is clear he will face persecution there. Watch this carefully so that it is not simply an expression of what you want being labeled with the idea that “God placed it on my heart.” Be sure it is God who placed it on your heart.
- ❖ **Act before Confirmed** – Faith leads us to act BEFORE we know all the answers to our questions. God's confirmation often follows our stepping out in faith.
- ❖ **Existing / New** – Don't be afraid to join an existing ministry and work. Don't be afraid to dream big dreams for God and start something new.