

Read Your Bible, Pray Every Day, and Grow, Grow, Grow!

The lyrics to the simple children's song are: "*Read your Bible and pray every day, and you'll grow, grow, grow.*" While the words are simple, the truth behind them is profound. Spiritual growth does not happen by accident. It comes from daily, intentional time spent with God.

God's word is spiritual nourishment. Just as our bodies cannot thrive without food, spiritual growth cannot happen without taking in God's word. Peter urged Christians to "*desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2). Neglecting the Bible leads to weakness, but feeding on it leads to strength, stability, and maturity.

Prayer is how we communicate to God. Through prayer we express dependence, seek wisdom, confess sin, and give thanks. A life without prayer is a life attempting to stand on its own strength. Paul reminds us to "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), showing that prayer should not be an occasional action, but a continual one.

In this simple children's song there is a promise that is confirmed by scripture, when we read and pray, we grow. When we neglect these important spiritual actions, growth stops. Faith deepens through daily habits. Small, consistent efforts lead to lasting spiritual maturity. If we want our faith to be stronger, try this simple method: Read your Bible. Pray every day. By God's grace, you will grow, grow, grow!

- by Josh McCord

What About My Father And Mother?

"A man said to me, 'Brother, I can't take the doctrine you preach that one must be baptized to be saved, because it damns my father and mother who were not baptized.'

"Well, let us see. Do you think one must believe in Jesus Christ to be saved? 'Oh, yes,' he answers. Very well, I will just change my subject from baptism to faith. A Jew comes around and says, 'Mr. Preacher, I can't accept the doctrine you preach, that faith in Jesus is necessary to salvation, because my father and mother died without believing in Christ.'

"The Jew thinks as much of his father as you do of yours. By the same argument with which you eliminate baptism, because perchance it damns some of your ancestors, he also eliminates faith in Christ. Then I preach that the knowledge of God is necessary to salvation and a Chinese comes around, and says, 'I can't take the doctrine you preach, because it damns my poor father and mother, who died without the knowledge of God' -- and there you see the whole plan of salvation is nullified by contingencies.

"Friends, I suggest that we leave the matter of clemency to the judge (a judge only has the power of clemency) and let us observe the law. I have no authority to preach clemency -- I must preach what God commands men to do to be saved -- and I know what the law says."

- by Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

"Numbers" versus Real Growth

I have an uneasiness about any great emphasis on statistics in measuring the growth of churches. I am skeptical because numbers can so often mask what is happening to people. The ultimate goal of our Father for His children is both spiritual and personal. He wills that we be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). Success or failure in this enterprise cannot be measured by mere statistics. A far more important question to raise as numbers change is how individual saints are faring in their effort to be more Christ-like. Churches only truly grow as the individual members of those assemblies grow. What is the glory of our numbers if people are not prepared to go to heaven?

- by Paul Earnhart

Hunting for What Matters Most

Several among us are avid duck hunters. We invest a great deal of time, energy, and money into the pursuit. We study the weather, scout the fields and sloughs, set decoys before daylight,

and endure cold, wind, and long hours of waiting. And yet, the results are often disappointing. Occasionally there is a good day when things seem to come together just right, but more often the hunt ends with tired hunters and little to show for our efforts. Still, we keep going back, hoping the next trip will be better.

There's a potential spiritual lesson in that. Jesus said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). If we follow Him, we must be engaged in the same work – the same 'hunt', if you will. Seeking souls takes time, effort, patience, and persistence. We teach, invite, answer questions, and sometimes face rejection. And like hunting, the results can be discouraging. Jesus warned that "few" would find the narrow way (Matthew 7:13–14).

But we do not quit. Why? Because souls matter. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Paul said he labored that he might "by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Notice that word "*some*." Paul understood that not all would respond, but even one soul made the effort worthwhile.

Jesus spoke of a shepherd who searched for one lost sheep and a woman who swept her house for one lost coin (Luke 15). There was effort - and there was joy when what was lost was found.

So we keep seeking. "Let us not be weary in well doing" (Galatians 6:9). This is the 'hunt' that truly matters. May we give ourselves to it with patience, hope, and determination.

- by Greg Gwin