

The Prescription for Growth

We are all fully aware that as Christians we are to grow spiritually. There are several passages that clearly teach that God not only expects but also requires such development. "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12).

Let me suggest to you a few things that are needed in our lives if we are to grow and develop as God commands:

1) There has to be a desire on our part. Look once again at 1 Peter 2:2. The writer says that you must desire the pure milk of the word. In the sermon on the mount, the Lord said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). We have to want to grow! It is not going to happen unless there is that hunger and thirst within us for the things that will help us to progress. One thing that has happened to far too many Christians, they have lost their spiritual appetite. They have become choked with the cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and as the Lord said, "bring no fruit to maturity" (Luke 8:14).

2) It also takes time. When the Psalmist spoke of the man blessed, in Psalms 1:1-2, notice how he spent his time. "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night." We usually make time for the things that we enjoy doing, whether it is fishing, golf or shopping, etc. If we really have the desire to grow, we will find time to study, pray and practice the truth in our daily lives. It may mean that we've got to turn off the TV, not read the Newspaper as thoroughly, or take some time from a hobby that we enjoy. But we will find time and use it to the glory of God. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

3) Effort has to be put forth. Certainly the word of God is that which will build us up and make us stronger. Paul in speaking with the elders from Ephesus, said, "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Not only does it take time to know and understand the word of God; it takes effort as well. This same apostle told Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). The word "diligent" (KJ says study), is defined as "to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, endeavour, give diligence" (Vine's Expository Dictionary Of New testament Words). Those who are growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, take the time and exert the effort and energy to ascertain the meaning of the Scriptures. Practice is the next logical step. Only by doing can we please God (James 1:22,23,25).

4) It will require using some of our money. To be a good fisherman one will buy a good rod and reel, tackle, and maybe a boat along with all the accessories. Don't mind spending the money for these kinds of things. To be knowledgeable of the word of God, we will need a good study Bible, a concordance, a good Bible dictionary, maybe some reliable commentaries, etc. Are we willing to spend money on these type books to help us in our studies? If you really have the desire, will take the time and put forth the effort, you won't mind spending the small amount it would take to buy these study helps.

Want to grow as the Lord commands? Follow this prescription!

- by Jim Mickells

A Friendship Lost

King David once lamented the deep pain of betrayal in Psalm 55:12-14:

"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it... but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

Few sorrows cut deeper than the loss of a trusted friend - especially when that loss comes through betrayal or unjust accusation. David, a man after God's own heart, knew that anguish

well. He had shared close fellowship and spiritual companionship, yet was wounded by one he had trusted. Many of us have felt the same grief.

It is painful when one we have loved and labored beside turns against us. Words that once encouraged now condemn; fellowship once enjoyed now seems broken beyond repair. In such moments, the temptation is strong to grow bitter, withdraw, or even give up. Yet we must not allow the failures of others to destroy our faith.

Jesus Himself endured the pain of betrayal. Judas, one of His chosen disciples, turned against Him for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14–16, 47–50). Still, our Lord remained steadfast, fulfilling the Father's will despite the heartbreak. Likewise, Paul sorrowed over those who had forsaken him (2 Timothy 4:10, 16), yet he continued to serve faithfully.

The loss of a friendship within the body of Christ should grieve us, but it must not defeat us. We cannot control the actions of others, but we can govern our own hearts. We must guard against bitterness (Ephesians 4:31–32) and remain steadfast and unmovable (1 Corinthians 15:58).

When David's heart was heavy, he turned to the Lord: *"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee"* (Psalm 55:22). That same assurance remains for us today. The Lord knows our pain and upholds those who trust in Him. Friendships may be lost, but faithfulness to God must never be.

A friendship lost is a sorrow indeed - but a faith lost would be a far greater tragedy. May we, like David, find our comfort and strength in the Lord, who never betrays and never forsakes His own (Hebrews 13:5).

- by Greg Gwin