

Christian Study

Lesson 231

Be Light

Focusing on Church beyond Sunday

How Can I Know and Understand What the Bible Means?

Understanding the Basic Gospel

Continue growing in grace

Over a lifetime, growing in grace involves God opening our eyes to our need to trust Him in new areas of our lives, or on a new level of challenge and then walking us through the process of learning to turn these areas over to Him. Only this realistic view of growth can account for experiences like this, where the Vietnamese was undeniably growing in his knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of his situation. This is what I meant by the phrase used earlier: "If we are going to grow in grace, we must focus on what God is doing in the midst of what we are doing." Let's face it, if God was waiting around for us to "remove all known sin out of our lives" before beginning the process of growing us in His grace, we would never grow.

In this process, one of the major truths that the Lord always directs us to is our identity in Him. In times when we want to take things into our own hands, God immediately works in our hearts, reasoning with us. So "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you will hear His voice, **8** do not harden your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness," **Hebrews 3:7-8**

The believer's identity in Christ is a truth that we will find ourselves coming back to again and again as we grow in grace. Even though we have laid a solid foundation of this truth, we will reemphasize it often in our study. We never outgrow our need to be reminded of who we are in Christ. It is something that God is trying to teach us from the first day of our Christian lives until the day we go home to meet Him in heaven, and this truth produces a constant standard against which we learn to measure our thinking and response throughout life

Another major truth which provides a track for our journey is our life of dependent faith in the living Christ. When Jesus said "apart from me you can do nothing," he meant exactly what He said. The point which many of us Christians fail to grasp is that this statement applies to our lives both before and after receiving Him. It is sometimes a hard lesson to learn, many of us can speak from personal experience. It is worth it. Jesus Said in **John 8:32** "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Truth is not always pleasant to hear, but truth will always set you free. The same scripture which tells us "Apart from Me you can do nothing." also says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." **Philippians 4:13**. The key words

are *through Christ*. This is totally opposed to a life of self-improvement, self-development or self-control...

After repeated failure to live the Christian life on our own, many of us have lost hope of ever experiencing the reality of the Lord's wonderful promise. Jesus says in **John 10:10** "The thief does not come except to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly." Jesus wants to restore that hope. However, that fullness of life can only be experienced as we learn how to grow in grace. The good news is that growing in grace is not only possible but it is God's desire for us. We can truly know a life of reality and love through abiding in Christ, the vine. It doesn't come through some dramatic behavior or magic prayers. It is a life that we grow in and growing takes time

Attention!!

Don't squander time, because that is what life is made of

It is a journey, a process of growth that takes a lifetime, and God will continue to work on us until we are perfectly conformed to the likeness of His Son. In the meantime as we grow, life presents us countless proofs and reminders that God still has a lot of building in us to do. . Usually these reminders come through those unexpected tests where we fall flat on our faces.

Reminder!!!

"Grace is "The freely given, unmerited favor and love of God"

Also, to grow in grace, we have to break out of the mindset that is taking over the world. Over the past few decades, we have become a society of totally substituting the truth with our various concepts of how things should be. We no longer go out and play sports, such as basketball baseball or football. Instead we sit at home and watch a few people play them on television. Children would rather play video games where they zap villains for hours on end than run and play with other children. Adults would rather seek ideal love and relationships through romance novels or soap operas on television than mix it up with real people in real relationships, where they have faults and irritating qualities as well as attractive points.

Many of us have brought those same tendencies over into our Christian life. We want to study the Bible and learn untold amounts of minute details about the Scriptures rather than applying the truth we learn from the Scriptures. We want to read books about the Christian life rather than venturing into the risky activity of living it. As we have said before, "the Christian life is not a subject to be learned but a life to be lived." God will teach us truth out of His Word and what it means in the middle of everyday life. In a real sense, each of us is on one-on-one with the Lord. No one else can live life for us. Each one of us must go to Him and individually grow in grace as He leads.

No matter how tall your grandfather was,

You have to do your own growing up.

As we go, we must keep our focus on Him personally, because sometimes in total sincerity we can put our emphasis in the wrong thing and or wrong place. We want to "abide" in Christ which is biblical and proper. We can make ourselves nervous wrecks by worrying about how much faith we have and trying to conjure up more, while totally missing Him who is the object of our faith. We are called first and foremost to a person.

In describing the ministries of himself and Apollos, The apostle Paul write in **1Corinthians 3:6** "I planted, Apollos watered and God gave the increase" You cannot make yourself grow, God causes the growth and He has promised that "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." **Philippians 1:6** The grace that saved you is the same grace that will sustain you until Christ comes back. God wants to fill our minds with the knowledge of His love for us so that we will freely present ourselves back to Him to allow Him to work out His plan in our lives. **Ephesians 3:20-21** "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us **21** to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generation for ever and ever Amen."

There is good news in our study together and it is our prayer for you that God will open the eyes o of your heart to enable you understand His love and grace towards you, so you will discover truly abundant life as you grow in His wonderful grace.

Called to a person

Our primary calling is not to serve. The calling that is taught in the New Testament is our calling to Jesus. When we were lost, we heard the good news of how we could come to Him for eternal life. Now, as children of God, we can come to Him for love, acceptance, guidance, comfort, truth, meaning, purpose or anything else our hearts desires according to His will. After we first come to Him to receive and experience the abundance of life that He offers, He then sends us to serve. And because we have first come to Him and experiencing the flow of these "rivers of water" He makes the plea in **Matthew 11:28-30** "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light

In contrast to the religion of the world which offer mankind "ten steps to spiritual fulfillment" or "nine fold paths to enlightenment," Jesus Christ continues to say, "Come unto me" He also says: **John 6:35** "And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes on Me shall never thirst."

John 8:12 "Then Jesus spoke again to them, saying, I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

John 10:9 "I am the door. If anyone enters in by Me, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture."

John 10: 11, 28-30 "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. **28** And I give to them eternal life, and they shall never ever perish, and not anyone shall pluck them out of My hand. **29** My Father who gave *them* to me is greater than all, and no one is able to pluck *them* out of My Father's hand. **30** I and the Father are one!

John 14:6 "Jesus said to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me."

John 15:5 "I am the Vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

John 11:25-26 "Jesus said to her, I am the Resurrection and the Life! He who believes in Me, though he dies, yet he shall live. **26** And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Jesus Christ did not come to show us the way, He is the way. He did not just teach us some truth, He is the truth. He did not just leave us a manual for us to live by, He is our life. Whatever the need for the human heart is, Christ offers Himself as the solution. His eternal answer is "I am"

When you were a small child and you scraped your knee or cut your finger, where did you go? Whose arms and comforting love did you desire above all else? If you are like most people, it was your mother. She would hold you, wipe away your tears and then take you to the medicine cabinet to dress your wound.

Imagine how disappointing it would be for some adult to witness a child's accident and respond this way: "Here is a check list of first-aid instructions. Go into the house read them and dress you wounds. You are on your own." Unless we are talking about a serious injury requiring immediate emergency care, any person with half a heart realizes that love and compassion is the child's deepest need, not a study course in self-help.

Remember this!!

The Lord helps the helpless, not those who help themselves.

A lot of Christian teaching today reminds me of the heartless adult. Everything for him or her is "ten steps to spiritual maturity," "the five-minute Christian parent," or "six ways to overcome grief." It is as if the Bible is nothing more than an instruction manual, a positive thinking guide to success in any area of life with just enough religious talk to calm consciences. In many ways some of us are just like the Jews in Jesus' day to who He spoke about in **John 5:39-40** "You

study the Scriptures, because you think that in them you will find eternal life. And these very Scriptures speak about me! **40** Yet you are not willing to come to me in order to have life.

We must go to the Word of God (the written word) to get to know the Person of Jesus Christ, the living Word. He invites every person to come to Him to experience His love and compassion and to share His resurrected life, just as the mother first gives of herself to her child before taking him to the medicine cabinet. Christ reveals Himself to the seeking believer, giving comfort and hope, before putting light on those areas that require the application of biblical truth that will set us free. I am convinced that the devil doesn't care what our eyes are on, as long as they are not on Jesus, and that includes any one of the hundreds of things we can do on the outside to show others how righteous we are. The apostle Paul had all the background, experience and credentials that religion had to offer and yet this was his final assessment: **Philippians 3:7-8** "But all those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ's sake. **8** Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ "

We are extremely careful to point out to people that we cannot help them, but can only introduce them to the one who can Jesus Christ. We are just like a bunch of sheepdogs that are trying to turn the sheep back to the Shepherd. This illustration makes me think

As we promised on continuing the true story about the Vietnamese who started growing in grace in the latrine condition, he found himself because of being a Christian, he now has a permanent job nobody wants and I am thinking nobody else knew why he was so happy to do it. He was able to find other Christians in the jail and they shared the scripture pages the he was getting from the latrine. After a while, they started planning an escape from the prison. One afternoon, one of the guards came up to him and asked him if he was planning to escape, to which he denied. That evening in his cell, he knelt down and told God that he had lied and if given another chance he will tell them the truth. A few days later the same guard asked him the same question. This time he said: "yes, so are you going to report me to the authorities?" Then the guard said: "No I am not; I want to escape with you too." He was relieved and the guard helped with their escape. At the time he was telling Dr Ravi this story, he was now living in New York studying. If you miss any part of this story, and would like to have the whole story please email santigiemando1@yahoo.com and we will be glad to send it to you.

Do not forget!

It is no secret, what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

Our mission is to help people find strength and security on the foundation that can never be shaken, cracked or shattered. This foundation is the remarkable truth of God's unconditional love and His indisputable grace experienced in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The critics of Christianity have launched a full attack to discredit the person and works of Jesus Christ and

the reliability of His word. We cannot be silent anymore. Let us as children of light, stand firm in the faith, because He who has taken us this far will never forsake us. You are called Christians, be careful of that name. Let not our Lord Jesus Christ be blasphemed on your account

Believe this! "Jesus did not come to make bad people good, He came to make dead people live."

Keep It Simple

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

If you have any questions, comments or you know anybody else who will benefit from this study please feel free to give us their email address and they will be added to our mailing list to receive weekly lessons. The email address is santigiemandol@yahoo.com,

A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle (Ephesians 5:8)

Let's go light another candle