

As believers in Christ, we must seek to grow spiritually so we strive to live to the likeness of Christ, and this also applies to all aspects of life. That's the principle that Paul described in Gal 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Therefore, to build our faith and let Christ live in us, we must learn from His Word, His teachings, just as children learn from their parents, we learn from our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

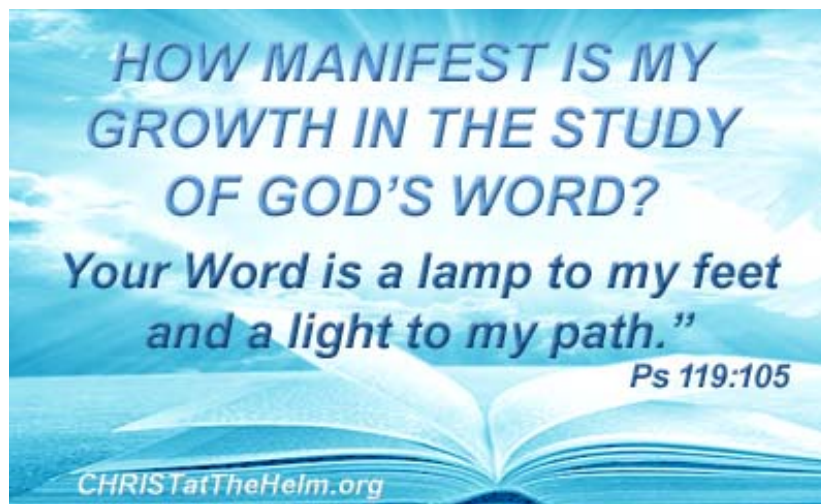
The reason also Paul clarified in Heb 6:1, "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God."

In other words, rather than consistently finding ourselves in sin seeking repentance for lack of growth, we should rather strive to grow in our faith in Christ through His Word.

As such, let's ask ourselves these questions: Does my life evidence spiritual growth and obedience to Christ, in studying His Word, in prayer, in my family relationships, in loving my neighbor, in shining Christ's light?

Without such evidence, the question is: "Do I truly belong to Him"?

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How can we grow in the knowledge of the Lord?

Joshua 1:8: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

Rom 12:2: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Rom 15:4: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

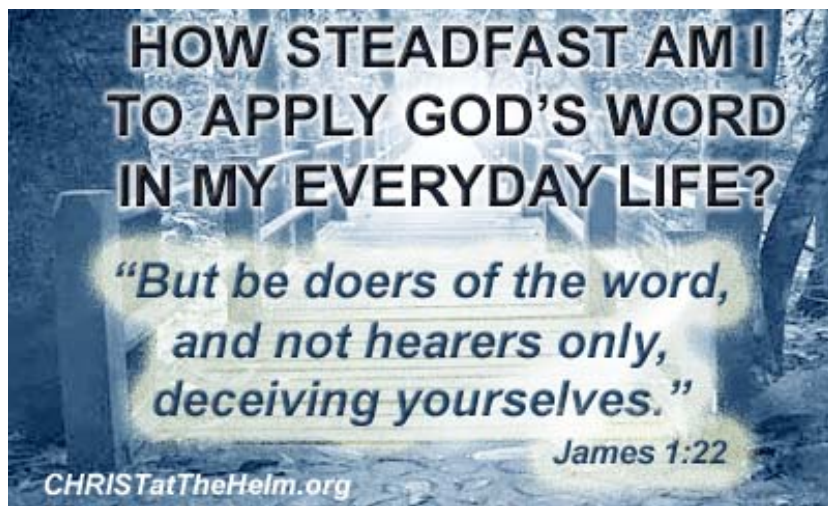
The reason as well the apostle in 1Peter 2:1-2 said, "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."

Why?

Col 1:9-10: "That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Let's ask ourselves, "How much time do I invest daily in studying the Word of God so as to grow spiritually in the knowledge of my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ?"

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While it is of utmost importance we learn from studying the Word of God, it is useless unless it is applied to our lives, right?

Why?

2Tim 3:16: "All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Col 1:10: "That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Col 3:10 clarifies: "Put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

Clearly, the purpose for scripture is to teach us the ways of God so as to live according to His Word and honor Christ.

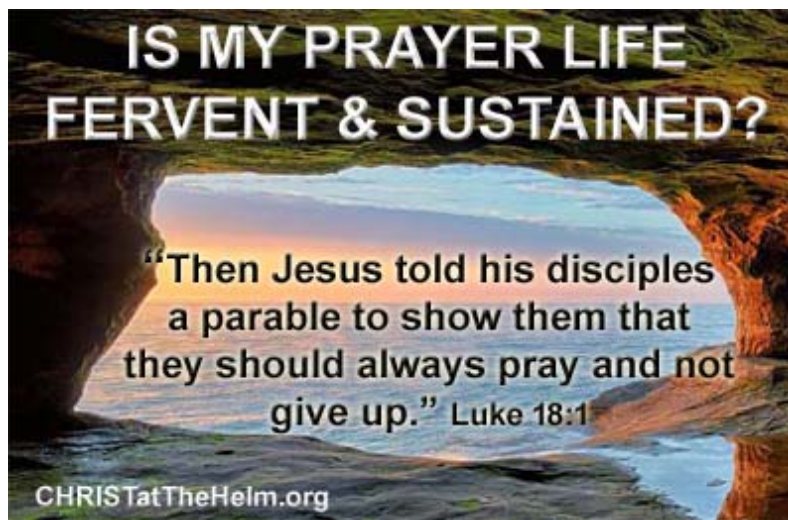
Then, Philip. 2:13 add, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure."

If we strive each and every day to live as God wills for us, what should we then expect?

Ps 1:1-3: "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."

Can we say, "PRAISE GOD"?

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Prayer is an important aspect of our spiritual life that is daily challenged, our minds being consistently driven to responsibilities, as well as the world's distractions the enemy uses to draw our hearts away from God.

However, why must we pray?

Jesus put it clear as crystal in Mat 26:41 saying, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."

Any other purpose for prayer?

2Chron 7:14: "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

How must we pray?

Mat 6:6-7: "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words."

Prayer is obviously not to be an exercise of the mouth, but rather it is a time to fellowship with God from the heart, to receive guidance and inspiration from the Holy Spirit, and worship God in Christ.

Are we committed to fellowship with God in prayer with a pure heart?

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A person's social life, activities and plans shows how dedicated they are to follow God's plan for the family.

Let's ask ourselves: "How do I fare in my relationships with my family? To the husband and wife God says, Eph 5:33: "However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Parents are enjoined to in Pro 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Then we can rejoice, as 3John 4 says: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

To the children Eph 6:1-3 tells us: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

Obviously, the core message of family life is to love one another, just as Paul described in 1Cor 13:4-7: "Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

How much love do we extend to our family right now?

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The first commandment we are given is to love God with all our hearts, minds and strength. The second says that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, and states that this is what the entire law of God is based on.

So, if we say we love God, do we also strive to love our neighbor as ourselves?

Also, how can we strive to so love our neighbor?

Jesus in Mat 7:12 explained, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." Quite clear, right! Yet do we strive to do so? How do we feel about people who have done us wrong, or whose lives are completely opposed to God?

Jesus in Luke 6:27-28 put it in most clear terms saying, "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."

So, in essence, to truly love our neighbor as ourselves encompasses that we desire for people the same blessings we have, and all of this with Christ as our focus.

In all truth, shouldn't the most important blessing to desire for our neighbor be for them to be born again through Christ and receive eternal life?

With that in mind, how active are we in desiring and striving for our neighbor to receive the greatest eternal blessing in Christ, eternal salvation?

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In all truth, to be in Christ encompasses we turn from darkness to light, the reason 2Cor 5:17 states that "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

As such, salvation infers that we received the light of Christ in our lives, so that His light must shine consistently through our thoughts, actions and words.

Jesus in Mat 5:14-16 put this clear as crystal when He said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Why?

Eph 5:8: "For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." Therefore, as believers in Christ, we must apply His Word to our life and must shine His light to the world around us.

1Peter 3:15 add: "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

How bright does the light of Christ shine in our lives right now?

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I once heard a man say that while he believed in Christ for salvation, he didn't find it necessary to share his faith with other people as he wasn't called to be an evangelist. In fact, the person's life focused solely on the world's politics, economy and events.

What does the bible teach us about our duty to serve God?

1Peter 2:9: "But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Acts 1:8: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

1Sam 12:24: "Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."

Let's think for a moment about the believer who shared the message of salvation with us. What if that person had felt it wasn't their responsibility to do so?

I clearly remember decades ago when my youngest brother knowing that I then considered him a Jesus freak, still trusted God to share the message of salvation in Christ with me!

As believers, do we realize the serious responsibility we have to share our faith in Christ?

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