



CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



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Footprints into Africa

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

STUDY 1

GOD'S BLUEPRINT FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Keys to Spiritual Growth - J. Mac Arthur

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF GROWTH

A. LIFE BRINGS GROWTH

Wherever there is life you will automatically find growth taking place, if there is no growth then there is no life **(Eph. 4:13, Php.1:6)**

B. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS A COMMAND (2 Peter 3:18)

C. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS THE WHOLE PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD GAVE GIFTS TO THE CHURCH (Eph 4:11-13)

To prepare people of God for works of service.

D. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS IMPORTANT SO THAT WE NO LONGER REMAIN CHILDREN (Eph 4:14)

- i) He does not want us to be childish - unstable, easily led astray
- ii) He does not want us to be inconstant - tossed back and forth.
- iii) He does not want us to be superficial.
- iv) He does not want us to be in a position where we lack discernment.

2. WHAT DOES GROWTH MEAN?

A. WE GROW IN OUR INDIVIDUAL LIVES

- i) In our knowledge of Christ **(Eph. 4:13)**
- ii) He wants us to grow in faith **(Rom.10:17)**
- iii) He wants us to grow in graciousness - becoming gracious **(2 Ptr.3:18)**
- iv) We are growing, in a sense we are able to speak the truth in love
- v) You are growing in love **(Jn. 13:34)**

B. WE ARE GROWING IN OUR CAPACITY TO MINISTER. **(Eph.4:11)**

- i) To our own members **(Eph.4:11)**
- ii) To the outsider

C. AS A CHURCH THERE WILL BE GROWTH

- i) Numerically
A person is converted and he will invite his friends to come to church.
- ii) In comprehensiveness
As we grow spiritually, we will reach across the board - black, white, rich, poor.

3. CONDITIONS FOR GROWTH

A. WE MUST BE UNITED IN CHRIST - Clear conversion

B. THERE MUST BE TOTAL INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH.

C. HUNGER AND THIRST TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

- i) Bible
- ii) Prayer

D. WE NEED TO EXERCISE

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STUDY 2

HOW DO I GROW SPIRITUALLY

2 Peter 3:18 - Grow in the grace and knowledge of God.

1. WRONG IDEAS

- A. SPIRITUAL GROWTH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR POSITION IN CHRIST.
God sees us as perfect in Christ
Rom.5:1 - We are justified
Rom 8:1 - There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.
Col. 2:10 - We are complete in Him
2 Cor. 5:17 - We are a new creation
- B. SPIRITUAL GROWTH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH GOD'S FAVOUR
God does not love you more or less if you are growing.
Rom. 5:6-10 When we were without strength and ungodly, Christ died for us.
- C. SPIRITUAL GROWTH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TIME -
You cannot measure it against the days of the calendar.
- D. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS MORE THAN KNOWLEDGE.
Unless your knowledge results in conforming you to Christ, it is useless.
- E. SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS NOT JUST AN ACTIVITY.
Spiritual growth is simply matching up your practice with your position, you may call it following after righteousness (**1 Tim.6:11, Rom.12:2**)
Being conformed or perfecting holiness (**2 Cor.7:1**). Spiritual maturity is not mystical or sentimental or the result of a clever secret.

2. WHAT IS THE KEY TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Spiritual growth comes through understanding and practicing the principles given in the Word of God. (**1 Peter 1:23, Heb. 4:12, John 17:17**)

- A. THE BIBLE IS ALIVE IN ITSELF
- B. IT GIVES LIFE (**James 1:18, John 6:63**)
- C. THE BIBLE SUSTAINS LIFE (**1 Peter 2:2, Jer. 15:16**)
- D. THE BIBLE TRANSFORMS LIFE (**Rom.12:2, 2 Cor. 3:18**)

CONCLUSION

PRACTICAL THINGS TO DO

- A. BELIEVE THE BIBLE (**John 6:68**)
- B. STUDY THE BIBLE (**2 Tim. 3:15**)
- C. LOVE THE BIBLE (**Psalms 119:97**)
- D. OBEY THE BIBLE
- E. HONOUR THE BIBLE (WORD OF GOD)

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STUDY 3

THE MASTER PLAN

INTRODUCTION.

The shorter catechism is an answer to the question: What is the chief end of man?

The answer is "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Therefore, the supreme thing in life, the reason why you have been born, is to Glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

J. MacArthur: "Spiritual maturity is simply concentrating and focusing on the person of God, until we are caught up in His majesty and His glory."

1. WHY GLORIFY GOD ?

A. HE CREATED US (Ps 100:3, Rom11:36)

B. HE MADE EVERYTHING TO GIVE HIM GLORY (Prov.16:4)

Ps 19:1 - the stars

Is 43:20 - the animals

Lk.2:14 - the angels

All these bring glory to God, so how much more ought we to.

C. GOD JUDGES THOSE WHO REFUSE TO GLORIFY HIM.

E.g. (Ex.14:17). Pharaoh hardened his heart, but on the last time God hardened his heart.

2. HOW TO GLORIFY GOD

A. WE GLORIFY GOD THROUGH OUR SALVATION

We cannot even begin to glorify God until we have come to Christ, but once we are saved (Eph.1:6) tells us we are to live to the praise of the glory of His grace.

B. WE GLORIFY GOD BY AIMING OUR LIVES AT THAT HIGH PURPOSE (1 Cor. 10:31)

i) Sacrifice of self and self glory - we must deny ourselves

ii) You prefer Him above everything else in life. (family, money, sport etc.)

iii) We are content to do His will at any price.

iv) If need be, we will suffer for Him. (Ps.69:9)

v) We will not be jealous if others outdo us in gifts and honours.

C. WE GLORIFY GOD THROUGH CONFESSION OF SIN (Josh.7:19)

Confession of sin glorifies God because it means you are agreeing with God and that will always lead to repentance.

D. WE GLORIFY GOD WHEN WE TRUST HIM (Rom. 4:20)

E.g. Financial (Php. 4)

During the heartaches of life. (Rom.8:28)

E. WE GLORIFY GOD WHEN WE BEAR FRUIT

When we live a life of good works the world will see and glorify God. (Jn. 15:8,

Php. 1:11, Col. 1:10)

F. WE GLORIFY GOD WHEN WE PRAISE HIM (Ps.50:23)

G. WE GLORIFY GOD WHEN WE SUFFER FOR HIM (1Ptr 4:14-16)

H. WE GLORIFY GOD WHEN WE HAVE ABSOLUTE CONTENTMENT.

I. WE GLORIFY GOD WHEN WE PRAY (Jn.14:13)

J. WE GLORIFY GOD WHEN WE PROCLAIM HIS WORD (Acts 13:48)

CONCLUSION

When we live to glorify God, He responds by giving us overwhelming joy. Our chief purpose in life is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

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STUDY 4

OBEDIENCE

(Genesis 12:1-9)

INTRODUCTION

Luke 6:46 - the key . We have the right to be suspicious of anyone who claims to be a believer, but who fails to obey what the Word clearly teaches.

BACKGROUND - the call to Abraham (12:1)

1. IT INVOLVED HARDSHIP

'Leave' (Ur) his country, he must leave his family and leave his ambitions.

F.B. Meyer "Every step of advance in the Christian life will involve an altar on which some dear fragment of the self life has to be offered or a fire beneath which some cherished idol has to be burned."

2. IT WAS VERY WISE

A. IT WOULD STRENGTHEN ABRAHAM

B. IT WOULD BE A BLESSING FOR THE WORLD

3. IT WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A PROMISE

A. I WILL MAKE YOU INTO A GREAT NATION

B. I WILL BLESS YOU

C. I WILL MAKE YOUR NAME GREAT

D. I WILL BE A BLESSING

E. I WILL BLESS THOSE WHO BLESS YOU

F. WHOEVER CURSES YOU I WILL CURSE

G. ALL PEOPLES ON EARTH WILL BE BLESSED THROUGH YOU

4. HE OBEYED

So Abraham left (**Heb.11:8**) - He obeyed by faith.

C.H. Spurgeon: "Faith is the fountain, the foundation and the fosterer of obedience."

A. HE HAD FAITH IN GOD AS HAVING THE RIGHT TO COMMAND OBEDIENCE

B. HE HAD FAITH IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ALL GOD'S ACTIONS.

God is always right

C. CHARACTERISTICS OF HIS FAITH

i) It was prompt

So Abraham left as the Lord had told him, he did not argue or question, he did not ask God to wait, there and then, he went.

ii) It was practical.

He left, he did not just talk about obedience.

C.H. Spurgeon: “The religion of the brain and the jaw does not amount to much, we want religion of the hands and the feet”.

- iii) It was partial Led to delay and barrenness.
Abraham took with him his family including Terah (his father) and Lot. Because Terah accompanied Abraham it resulted in a delay of five years in Haran. Terah means delay.
- iv) Haran
So Abraham moves with Terah and he stays in Haran for 5 years. Haran in Hebrew means barren. Spiritually speaking, Abraham was barren for five years. (**Acts 7:4**) - Ended when Terah died.
- v) Shechem - Means strengthen (**v.5**)
After five years, Abraham is now able to be strengthened again.
- vi) He encamps near the oak of Moreh - Means instruction
He again enjoyed instruction from God, which for 5 years he had not enjoyed and he erects an altar to God. To him this was a token of recommitment to the Lord and the altar was built with Bethel (house of God) on the west of Ai (house of ruin) on the east.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual maturity comes from obedience, the moment there is only partial obedience it is going to mean delay and barrenness, and until we put to death what is holding us back.

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STUDY 5

THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

This particular study will answer the question. How do I live the Christian life?

And it is going to show you where the power lies, in the Holy Spirit.

1. THE NEED OF THE HOUR

Sadly, one often finds with Christians that while they claim to have been saved, there is the following:

- A. THEIR GIFTS GO UNUSED.
- B. SPIRITUAL FRUIT IS ABSENT
- C. THERE IS NO CONCERN FOR EVANGELISM
- D. THERE IS NO ZEAL TO OBEY GOD'S COMMANDS
- E. PRAYER HAS BECOME A CHEERLESS DUTY
- F. SIN HAS LOST ITS SINFULNESS

So the need of the hour is for the weak to become strong, the timid to become bold, the carnal to become spiritual and that is achieved when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. THE MEANING OF THE TERM (Eph.5:18)

When someone is drunk through alcohol it means that they are dominated, controlled and saturated with drink. When it says filled with the Spirit it means four things:

- A. IT IS THE IMPERATIVE MOOD (be filled)
This means it is a command from God, it is not a suggestion or a recommendation.
- B. IT IS IN THE PLURAL FORM.
This means that it is not the privilege of a select, but is a duty upon all.
- C. IT IS IN THE PASSIVE VOICE
This means that we must allow the Holy Spirit to fill us, the Holy Spirit's control is not automatic but voluntarily invited. We cannot have more of Him than what we have. But the question is how much of us does He have?
- D. IT IS IN THE PRESENT TENSE
This means that it is not a dramatic experience once and for all. We are to keep on being filled.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE FILLING.

- A. EVERY DAY LIFE
To live the normal Christian life we need this filling (**Acts.11:24, Luke 1:67**)
- B. IT AFFECTS OUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.
(**Eph.5:22**)- wives (**Eph. 5:25**)- husbands (**Eph. 6:1**)- children
- C. IT AFFECTS OUR BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS
(**Eph.6:5**) - Employee (**Eph.6:9**) - Employers.
- D. IT AFFECTS OUR ORDINARY SERVICE FOR JESUS CHRIST.
(**Acts 6:3**)

- E. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN GOD USES US FOR SPECIAL SERVICE (Acts 4:8)

4. **THE MANIFESTATION OF THE FILLING.**

- A. YOU WILL BECOME A CHRIST-CENTRED PERSON (Jn.16:14)
- B. CHRIST IS FORMED IN THAT PERSON (Gal. 4:19)
When someone is filled with the Spirit, they will grow more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ
- C. CHRIST IMPARTS HIS POWER (Acts 1:8)

5. **HOW TO BE FILLED**

- A. WE NEED ASPIRATION (Matt. 5:4, Is.44:3, Jn. 7:37)
- B. WE NEED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
I acknowledge that I am not what I ought to be.
- C. THERE MUST BE AN ABANDONMENT OF ALL SIN THAT IS TOLERATED
- D. WE MUST COME TO APPRECIATE SIMPLE FAITH
Lord Jesus please help me.

6. **HOW DO I MAINTAIN THE FILLING**

- A. I MUST KEEP FEEDING ON THE WORD.
John MacArthur: “A Spirit filled Christian is one who is letting the Word of God dwell within.”
- B. KEEP OCCUPIED WITH CHRIST
Always seek to be occupied by Jesus.
- C. KEEP OBEYING THE WILL OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE
- D. KEEP ABIDING IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

SPIRITUAL MATURITY

STUDY 6

CONFESSION (UNLOCKING THE CHAMBER OF HORRORS)

INTRODUCTION:

The background to **Ps. 51** is the tragic story of David and Bathsheba. David was guilty, not only of adultery, but also of murder, theft and of coveting. He blatantly broke God's command - because he was a man of God. He came under tremendous conviction of sin and in this particular Psalm he prays for three things:

1. For the sin that had made him dirty - he wanted cleansing
2. For the guilt that had made him physically sick - he wanted healing
3. For the transgression which had broken joy with God - he wanted restoration.

1. DAVID'S HUMBLE PETITION. (v.1-2)

A. HE APPEALS TO THE MERCY OF GOD

Aware of his sin there is nowhere else to go but to God's mercy.

(Ps.103:17)- God's mercy is eternal **(Ps.108:4)** -God's mercy is boundless.
(Joel 2:13) - It is for the penitent (Micah 7: 18) - It forgives.

B. HE THEN COMES FOR HIS SIN TO BE WASHED

Two verbs wash and cleansed from his sin. A mark of spiritual maturity is a serious view of sin.

2. PENITENT CONFESSION (v.3-5)

A. HE ACKNOWLEDGES IT (v.3)

I know my transgressions, it is always before me says David, he doesn't hide it away.

B. AGAINST GOD (v.4)

He knows it was against God that he had sinned. It was not against Uriah or Bathsheba or himself, but it was against God and that grieved David.

C. ORIGINAL SIN

He acknowledged his total depravity.

3. DAVID REALIZES GOD'S IDEAL (v.6)

He came and realizes God's ideal. (Inner and inmost). David realizes that it is not just the act but also the thought. The motives were he had sinned, instead of being given to depression and suicide he began to pray.

4. DAVID'S PRAYER (v. 7-12)

A. HE ASKS GOD FOR CLEANSING (v.7)

Cleanse me with hyssop, get all the dirt out of my life.

B. HE THEN KNOWS COMFORT WILL RESULT (v.8-9)

Joy and gladness result in rejoicing.

- C. HE THEN PRAYS FOR A NEW HEART (v.10)
This is the strongest request of all, God give me a pure heart. It is in the heart where all the plans and thoughts originate. This request rests assured on God's grace and total pardon.
- D. GOD'S PRESENCE (v.11)
He again longs to experience God's presence in his life.
- E. FULL RESTORATION (v.12)
God restores. This restoration will bring joy because he enjoys God's presence again and there is forgiveness.

5. **RESULTS OF CONFESSION (v.13-19)**

- A. DAVID WILL BE USED AGAIN BY GOD (v.13)
David again will be able to teach and through him sinners will turn back to God.
- B. THERE WAS NOW A SONG (v.14-17)
David begins to sing because of forgiveness, restoration and a new heart.
- C. HE BEGINS TO PRAY

CONCLUSION

The Gospel brings a message of hope and full restoration to those who repent and trust in the mercy of God.

STEPS TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY

STUDY 7

LOVE -THE MARK OF A CHRISTIAN

INTRODUCTION.

Over the centuries people have displayed many different symbols to show the world that they are Christians, they may even go to church and be involved in God's work, they may even be well grounded in the Bible and yet not be truly saved (**Jn.13:33-35**). The mark of a true Christian is love, this mark is portrayed in (**1 Cor. 13**).

1. THE PRE-EMINENCE OF LOVE (v.1-3)

A. GREATER THAN THE GIFT OF TONGUES.

All language whether human or divine is nothing if we do not have love, in fact they are like three things:

- i) Like a sounding brass
- ii) Like a resounding gong
- iii) Like a clanging symbol.

B. IT IS GREATER THAN THE GIFTS OF PROPHECY, KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH.

- i) Greater than the gift of prophecy
In the narrow sense it is the Spirit given ability to preach the Word
- ii) Greater than the gift of knowledge.
You may have a thorough knowledge of the Word of God and doctrine
- iii) Greater than the gift of faith.
So much so that you can move mountains, but if you have not love
I am nothing.

Charles Hodge: "Neither intellectual gifts nor attainments, nor power, without love are of any real value."

C. GREATER THAN THE WORKS OF CHARITY AND SELF-SACRIFICE

- i) It is greater than acts of kindness.
If I give all I possess to the poor.
- ii) You may even become a martyr
Surrender my body to the flames. But if I have not love I gain nothing.

2. THE NATURE OF LOVE.

A. IN RELATIONSHIP TO OTHERS

- i) Love is patient
That means it is not quick to assert its own rights, it will bear with provocation.
- ii) Love is kind.
That means it is always good natured
- iii) It is never jealous.
It does not envy.

B. IN RELATIONSHIP TO SELF.

- i) Love is never boastful
- ii) Love is not rude
- iii) Love is not self-seeking

C. IN RELATIONSHIP TO SIN

- i) Love is not easily angered
- ii) Love keeps no record of wrongs.
- iii) Love does not delight in evil

D. IN RELATIONSHIP TO CIRCUMSTANCES

- i) Love bears all things
- ii) Love always trusts
- iii) Love always hopes
- iv) Love always perseveres.

E. IN RELATIONSHIP TO EVERYTHING

Love never fails!

3. THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE (v.8-13)

A. GIFTS ARE TEMPORARY

- i) Prophecy will cease
- ii) Knowledge will pass away
- iii) Tongues will be stilled

When it says that prophecy and knowledge will be done away with, it means they will cease to exist. Tongues will slowly be reduced to inactivity

B. GIFTS ARE PARTIAL (v.9-10)

Everything is limited

C. GIFTS WILL END (v.10)

That which is in part will be done away with, that will occur when the perfection comes - gifts were rendered in-operative when the Scriptures were finalized.

D. GIFTS ARE INFANTILE (v.11)

Put all childish things away.

CONCLUSION.

Three remain:

- 1. Faith
- 2. Hope
- 3. Love

But the greatest is love.