

## DISCIPLESHIP

### LESSON FOUR: A NEW PERSPECTIVE – FORMULA FOR GROWTH

**INTRODUCTION:** We all know that if we want to be healthy, we must follow certain disciplines. We must watch what we eat, allow our bodies rest, and get plenty of good exercise. If we are negligent in any of these areas we more than likely jeopardize our physical growth.

The new Christian has to be careful too, if he wants to grow and become a strong warrior for the Lord. As with our physical bodies, there are things that will either help or that will stunt his spiritual growth.

In our lesson today, we will see spiritual truths that will help us understand spiritual development. We will then be able to take positive steps toward living a healthy life as disciples of Christ. This will, in return, enable us to be a good example for others.

EPHESIANS 4:22-24 speaks of this process of spiritual growth. We cannot look at things, or think the way we did before we became believers. Each day we need to practice the process of (1) "taking off the old man", (2) having a renewing mentality, and (3) "putting on the new man". As we practice this process, we will soon see positive results and will know that we have grown spiritually.

We must understand that even though we are children now (in the spiritual sense), we will soon cease to be children, because we will be exercising the formula for growth that will help us to grow to be strong, powerful disciples of our Lord.

#### I. CHILDREN MUST GROW

No matter what age you are, when you receive Christ as your Savior, you are *born again*. You are simply a child when it comes to spiritual matters. In fact, the only thing you really know, is that you have been saved because you have repented of your sins and have accepted Jesus.

In 1 CORINTHIANS 13:11, the Apostle Paul explained that while a person is a child, he talks and thinks like a child. It is natural that you have questions concerning your new life in Christ. For your older brothers and sisters - those who have been saved longer than you - some of the questions you will ask will sound childish. But you must not let this discourage you. Nor should you fail to ask questions. If we do, we will cease to grow.

There is one thing we can be sure of; *there are no shortcuts in christian growth*. You cannot sleep with a Bible under your pillow and wake up as a spiritual "giant". Even Jesus had to grow physically, mentally, and spiritually. If there were no shortcuts for Him, there will be none for you. If you are going to grow, you will need to force yourself to push forward, being very careful as you go along.

It is important that you understand that, as a brand new believer, you are at the most vulnerable time of our christian life. Your knowledge of spiritual things is limited, and you will have difficulty defending yourself from Satan's

schemes and attacks. *But the Lord is not going to abandon you*. He has placed His Holy Spirit in your life to lead you and protect you. In addition, the responsibility of helping you grow rests with your older brothers and sisters in the Faith.

Many of them have not accepted this responsibility because no one ever felt responsible for their growth. Even though they might *feel* that it is not their responsibility, that does not change the truth. MATTHEW 28:19 is very clear concerning the fact that our responsibility is to make disciples of *all nations*, baptizing them and teaching them to keep all the commandments of our Lord.

If there is no one willing to disciple you, you might have to grow in the Lord on your own. You can do so if you will be obedient to the direction given to you by the Holy Spirit. As you are obedient to the Spirit's leadership, you need to be very careful of your enemy, the devil. Satan is not going to wait around until you learn how to defend yourself. He is going to attack you, and he is going to begin immediately after you are saved, while you are still a baby Christian.

When Satan attacks you, he will do it with a well thought out plan. He will not come as your enemy, but as an "angel of light". He will tell you half-truths and half-lies in order to seduce you and make you fall into his traps. As you walk forward in the footsteps of Jesus, you must be very careful to listen closely to what the Spirit tells you.

#### II. LEARNING TO WALK

When a child is learning to walk, he is afraid because walking is a new experience for him. He is even more afraid after he falls down. As a new Christian, you are only able to "crawl". But eventually, you will earn to "walk" and even to run because you are constantly maturing.

As a new believer learning to walk, there are two things upon which you can hold: the Bible, and God's precious Holy Spirit. These are necessary because Satan is always near you doing everything he can to deceive you.

Because of the churches endeavor to grow, Satan has not been able to fight it from the outside, but from the inside. In other words, he *joined* the church. This is why there are hundreds of organizations today who call themselves "Christian," and who practice exactly the opposite of Christianity. These organizations claim to have the truth, and most of them have leaders who are smart and enthusiastic. This is why 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11 says that we must be very careful because even though they look and sound good, they are actually false "apostles" who can lead you astray if you allow them. How can we tell if they

are true or false? *By measuring their lives with the Bible.* If what they are teaching is not scriptural, then they are false teachers, and you must not hear them. Remember that these teachers are intelligent, and will feed you half-truths in order to mislead you. 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4 teaches us that there is coming a time when false teachers will teach only what people want to hear. That time is here.

2 PETER 3:16 shows us that there are a few doctrines in the Bible that are somewhat difficult to understand or explain, and that because of this there will always be someone willing to twist and turn these doctrines to mean whatever they want. You must be very careful that you do not do the same. As a disciple of Jesus, your responsibility is to assure that the spiritual things you learn are based upon the Word of God. This is the only way you can be sure that you are walking the way God wants you to.

As you study the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will help you to understand what you read, and will impress upon you the need to make changes in your life so that you can grow. JOHN 14:26 explains that the Holy Spirit has been sent by the Father to teach us all things and remind us of Jesus' teachings. He will lead us to the formula we need to grow up strong and healthy in spiritual matters.

### III. THE FORMULA FOR GROWTH

In order for you to grow spiritually, you must place yourself on a special, balanced diet consisting of four ingredients: (1) Bible Study, (2) Prayer, (3) Fellowship, and (4) Witnessing.

(1) *Bible Study* is important because it is the only way by which you can learn about our Lord and what He expects of you, His disciple. The Bible is the "manual" by which you live. In it you can find the steps that you need to take so that you can live the way your heavenly Father wants you to live. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17 tells us that the Bible is inspired of God, and is designed to instruct us, so that we can be totally prepared to serve God.

While you are learning to walk, you can hold to a minimum the number of times you make mistakes or "fall down" by knowing the scriptures. In MATTHEW 22:29, Jesus had an encounter with the Pharisees of His time where He told them that the reason they made so many mistakes, was because they were ignorant of what the Bible taught.

(2) *Prayer* is important because it is the way by which we communicate with God. We all know that the way to build a strong relationship with someone is by having good communications with them. Likewise, the way to have a strong relationship with our Lord is by communicating with Him.

This communication must be constant. 1 THESSALONIANS 5:17 tells us to *pray without ceasing.* Your mind should always be in communication with God. You must always think of Him, thank Him, ask for His help, and be obedient to

Him. Remember, though, that if there is habitual sin in your life, your prayers will be hindered. You must always try to keep yourself as pure as possible. When you make a mistake, you should confess it and ask God's forgiveness so that it will not be a hindrance to your prayers.

(3) *Fellowship* with other believers is important because, like you, they have a spiritual nature, something you can identify with. No one can understand you and know what is going on in your life better than a fellow brother or sister in Christ.

GALATIANS 6:1-10 gives good advice concerning fellowship with other believers:

- It teaches that you need to help your brothers or sisters who have fallen into sin. But while you do so, be careful not to fall into the same sin.

- You should help other believers with their burdens. By doing this, Christ's kingdom can move forward.

- You should never feel self sufficient or that you do not need the help of others. If you do, you are only fooling yourself.

- You should not measure your spirituality by comparing yourself with others. The only way you should measure your spirituality is by comparing yourself to the task God has given you to do. If you have been obedient, and have accomplished the work given to you, then you will feel good about doing your task and will not need to compare yourself to others.

- You must share your blessings with those who teach you spiritual things. It is good for those who disciple you to know that their work has been productive, and that "fruit" has been produced as a direct or indirect result of their teaching. This will encourage them to continue their work.

- Anyone who does service for God, only to be seen or recognized by others with whom they fellowship are doing so only to draw attention to themselves, and not for spiritual gain. They are not fooling God. Those who fellowship for spiritual gain will be blessed with spiritual gain.

- The benefits of your good deeds will not always come immediately. Sometimes years will pass before you see the fruit of your work for the Lord. You should never be discouraged or give up because the fruit of your labor *will* come. You must always continue to do good, knowing that the "crops" from your labor will one day be harvested. And when they do, you will be richly blessed.

You must always do good to others, especially when the opportunity is given to you. This is especially true concerning your "Faith Family". Even though you are to do good to everyone, your priorities must be toward your spiritual family.

(4) *Witnessing* is important, because your testimony is the only thing the world can see to identify you with Christ. Through it they will see the difference

between your life and theirs. If your life is not clean, then they will see no difference, and will not understand their need for Jesus.

In MATTHEW 5:16, Jesus said that our lives must shine before men so that they would glorify God. When people look at you, they should see the change that Jesus has brought to your life, and then want to have the same thing happen to them. TITUS 2:7-8 says that we must be a good example in everything we do. You should never give the world a chance to speak bad of you.

COLOSSIANS 3:23 says that we must do everything "whole heartedly," as if we were doing it for God and not for men. In other words, no matter what you do, you must do it to the best of your ability, as though what you are doing is being done for the Lord. If you live by this principle, you will always set a good example for others to follow.

**CONCLUSION:** Remember that there must always be a balance of these four ingredients. The formula must be taken in equal proportions so that our growth is normal. *No ingredient must be left out.* This is the only way that we will ever be able to know God's power in our lives. This is the only way that we will ever be the disciples that Jesus wants us to be.



## **SPIRITUAL NOTEBOOK**

**BIBLE STUDY:** (One verse per day)

1. 1 Corinthians 3:1-13...Should a child of God remain a "baby" forever? Why is Paul upset in these verses? What are you going to do to grow spiritually?

2. Mark 9:42...What does Jesus say about those who make His little ones fall? Could you make a younger brother stumble or fall? Why?

3. Matthew 24:24...How many people are going to rise and say they have the truth of God? Will these people be able to do miracles? How will we be able to tell if they are from God or not?

4. John 15:4-5...Can a Christian who does not "remain in Christ" produce fruit? What kind of fruit are we talking about here? What does Bible Study, Prayer, Fellowship, and Witnessing have to do with remaining in Christ?

5. **REVIEW:** Go over your Scripture studies this week and write down what you learned from them.

**PRAYER:** Write down the person or things for which you prayed for today.

**FELLOWSHIP:** Write down the name of the believer you had fellowship with and what you did.

**WITNESSING:** Write down the name of the non-believer you witnessed to and how you did it.

**Baptist Church Centro of Life**  
**DISCIPLESHIP, by Pastor Ricardo Róbinson.**