

HOW TO GROW IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Spiritual maturity takes time. It is a lifelong process in which we grow closer to God as we spend time with Him every day, getting to know Him better. We need to be attentive and responsive to what He is saying to us through His Word and through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. We communicate with Him through our prayers, sharing what's on our hearts. The Navigator ministry uses a wheel diagram to show the principles necessary for Christian growth. There are four spokes in the wheel. The vertical spokes (Bible study and prayer) deal with your relationship with God. The horizontal spokes (fellowship and witnessing) deal with your relationship with others (believers and nonbelievers). This week we will look at each of these four areas. Ask God to show you which areas you need to strengthen in order to grow spiritually and develop a balanced Christian life.

Memory Verse for the Week: 2 Peter 3:18 (Write it here in your favorite translation. I encourage you to memorize verses **17 and 18** if you can.)

DAY 1: TIME IN THE WORD

LOOKING UPWARD

1. How much time do you spend in the Bible (God's Word) each day? How do you spend that time?
2. Why is time in the Bible necessary for spiritual growth? How does it impact your life when you are not in His Word?

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

1 Peter 2:2 (NASB 95)

"Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation..."

3. How does the "pure milk of the word" help you grow in respect to salvation?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB 95)

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

4. What does it mean that "all Scripture is inspired by God"? Why would that make it especially powerful in our lives?

5. List each of the four ways God's Word is profitable in your life. Explain how you have seen Scripture used in each way, either in your own life or someone else's life.

6. What is the difference between reproof and correction?

7. What is the overall purpose of God's Word in our lives?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

You cannot grow spiritually if you do not spend time consistently in God's Word, feeding on it, listening to His voice, learning what He desires of you and for you.

- Do you long for the Word like a newborn baby longing for milk? Why or why not?

- What hinders you from spending time in the Word?

- What can you do to overcome those hindrances?

- Will you commit to spending time each day in His Word – reading, studying, or meditating?

- Thank Him for His Word.

- Meditate on the memory verse of the week.

DAY 2: THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD

Today we will continue our focus on the importance of being in God's Word. Ask God to give you a longing for His Word.

LOOKING UPWARD

1. How well do you know Scripture? If all of your Bibles were taken away, how much of the Word could you feed on by memory?

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

Hebrews 4:12 (NASB 95)

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

2. What does it mean that the Word of God is . . . ?

"living" –

"active"

"sharper than any two-edged sword"

"piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit ... "

"able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart"

Psalm 119 focuses on the Word and the impact it has on our lives. It is an acrostic poem, divided into twenty-two sections, each one having eight verses. The author of this Psalm is uncertain. Because this is a lengthy passage, we will just look at a few sections. Feel free, however, to study the entire Psalm.

3. As you read Psalm 119:1-24, what other words does the psalmist use for the Word of God?

4. In verses 1-24 and 41-48, list his different responses to the Word. For instance, in verse 14, he says, "I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies"

5. According to verses 97-104, how did God's Word impact the psalmist's life?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

“The goal is not for us to get through the Scriptures. The goal is to get the Scriptures through us.”¹ – John Ortberg

- Meditate on a few of the verses that particularly spoke to your heart today. You may want to look at the entire Psalm.
- Write your own psalm to the Lord concerning His Word and what it means to you.

- Meditate on the memory verse of the week.

¹ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 188.

DAY 3: TIME IN PRAYER

LOOKING UPWARD

1. How would you describe your prayer life?
2. How does prayer deepen your relationship with God?

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

3. What are some principles for prayer that you observe from Philippians 4:6-7?
4. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul instructs the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing." What does that mean? How does one pray without ceasing?
5. Paul exhorts the Ephesians in Ephesians 6:18, "With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit . . .". What does it mean to "pray in the Spirit"?
6. What is the difference between prayer and petition (supplication)?

7. When a disciple asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He responded with the prayer recorded in **Matthew 6:9-13** (NASB 95). What elements did Jesus include in this model of prayer?

“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom
and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]”

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

- How much time do you spend in prayer each day? How much of that time is spent praying for your needs, and how much time is spent praying for others? How much time is spent praying “kingdom prayers”?
- Is there something you are anxious about today? Take it to the Lord. Tell Him what is on your heart. Pray, ask; give thanks for what He is going to do. Spend some time today using the model of prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.
- Meditate on the memory verse of the week.

Some suggestions to help you pray:

- Keep a list of prayer requests and divide requests up per day or several days of the week.
- Pray through Scripture.
- Pray out loud, or pray together with someone else.
- Write out your prayers in a journal.
- Pray while you take a walk.
- If you are discipling a new believer who is not sure how to pray, spend time with them in prayer. God is not so concerned with the eloquence of our words, as He is with the sincerity of our hearts.

DAY 4: FELLOWSHIP

Spending time with God in His Word and in prayer strengthen our vertical relationship with the Lord. Fellowship and witnessing strengthen our horizontal relationships with people. Today we will look at the importance of fellowship.

LOOKING UPWARD

1. What is true biblical fellowship?
2. Can a Christian have fellowship with a non-believer? Explain your answer.
3. Is there such a thing as "negative fellowship"? If so, what does it look like?
4. Why is fellowship with other believers a necessity to spiritual growth?

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

5. Mark the exhortations or imperatives found in **Hebrews 10:24-25** (NASB 95). From this passage, what "ingredients" are necessary for biblical fellowship?

"And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Acts 2:42-47

6. Describe the fellowship among the Christians in the first-century church. What stands out to you about these believers?

7. The Old Testament also encourages us to fellowship with one another. How does Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NASB95) encourage us toward fellowship?

“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.”

8. You may be going to church on Sunday mornings and gathering with other believers for worship. Is that enough to accomplish the purpose of fellowship? Why or why not?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

“How inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those who by God’s will are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians.”

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- How are you doing in the area of fellowship with other believers? What changes, if any, do you need to make?

- What is one thing you can do this week to actively fellowship with another believer or group of believers? Initiate it. After the time of fellowship, write down how that time impacted your life.

- Meditate on the memory verse of the week.

DAY 5: WITNESSING

LOOKING UPWARD

1. How does sharing your faith strengthen your relationship with the Lord?

2. What holds you back from sharing your faith?

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

3. How do these verses (NASB 95) support the importance of sharing Christ with others?

Matthew 4:19 – “And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Mark 16:15 – “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

Luke 19:10 - “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Acts 1:8 – “but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

1 Peter 3:15 – “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

4. In order to share Christ with others, you must know what to share. We will look at this in detail in a few weeks, but **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** is the gospel plain and simple. What are the main points of the gospel that need to be communicated according to these verses?

5. As you continue reading verses 5-11, list all those to whom Christ appeared.

6. Why are these details of the appearances significant?

7. Describe Paul's attitude toward preaching and sharing the gospel with others in verses 8-11.

8. Paul stated in Romans 1:16 (NASB 95), "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." What observations do you make concerning Paul and the gospel from this verse?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

- When was the last time you shared Christ with someone or talked to someone about the Lord?

- Does your life reflect that you are ashamed of the gospel in any way? If so, how?

- Confess your fears to the Lord. Ask Him for boldness. He has given you all that you need in order to share Christ.

- Begin praying for those God has placed in your life who need the Lord. Take the initiative to talk to someone about Christ this week. Ask God to open a door and give you a "divine appointment." Journal about your experience.

- Meditate on the memory verse of the week.