

A Need To Grow Spiritually

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[0 : 00] It's good to be here this morning and appreciated the word that came to us already. I want to greet you all in Jesus' name.

The one that wants to be revealed to us. He wants us and desires for us to have that deeper revelation of himself.

Well, it's a blessing to be here and have your family here, Joanna. And it brings back a lot of memories, good memories.

It's a blessing to see you. I'd like to share a message this morning here on the need for spiritual growth and maturity.

You know, there's a real need, I believe, that we grow spiritually. And that we come to a place of more maturity, if I can say it that way.

[1 : 10] Why is it so important that we grow once we have been born of the Spirit? You know, if a baby that is born in the natural doesn't grow, we become alarmed.

And we say, there's something wrong with this baby. It needs to see a doctor. But so must we grow when we become born of the Spirit, born again.

And the burden of my message is simply that we continue in our life ever deeper, ever more free, ever more pure with the Lord.

You know, it's amazing how quickly we can hit a dry spell, so to speak, in our Christian life. But it's amazing how quickly we can slip backward.

After a fire had been burning in our heart, how easy is it to just, that just kind of goes away. And we need to be drawn back.

[2 : 24] And thankfully, God does that for us. He does draw us back if we allow Him. And I believe that battle is the same for all of us.

I'm no different than you. I'm speaking to myself as much as anyone. But I believe that as a body here, as a body here at Crossbridge, God wants us to receive this exhortation or this admonition today.

That we would look at our own lives. In Corinthians it says, And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

I have fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are able.

What a word there for the Corinthian church. Almost as a rebuke. I wanted to feed you milk, Paul said.

[3 : 41] I mean, sorry, meat. But I just had to bring you milk. You weren't really growing. There's something wrong. You're not really where God wants to bring you.

I wonder sometimes how many of us might find us in that state.

We think we're spiritual. We think we are growing. We pretend like we are. But are we really? Are we really? I'm not saying we aren't.

I think we are. If I can be honest, I think we are. But we do need this challenge. We do need this word from the Lord that inspires us to continue to grow.

And I want to look at some things as to what hinders that, what hinders our spiritual growth, and also what helps in a practical way.

[4 : 54] We need to stay in the word. We're going to read some scripture here. If you want to turn to John, the Gospel of John, chapter 15.

But we're going to hear this word abide. Abiding. And to abide in Christ. Christ is the only source of the life that we're talking about.

In Christ is the only place that you will find life. I had to think as we were singing here this morning, you know, God can't die.

We know that. But if God would stop existing, we'd all be dead. There would be no life. Immediately.

All life. Thank you. All life comes from God. In Him, all fullness dwells. The very essence of life. There's a few verses in Psalms.

[5 : 54] Just hold your place there in John. But in Psalms, there's a few verses. The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree. He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. They shall be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright. He is my rock.

And there is no unrighteousness in him. There is no unrighteousness in him. This is what God wants. That the righteous flourish like a tree.

Like a cedar in Lebanon. God wants His people to bear fruit. Are we bearing more fruit than before?

Is our life filled with joy and love and peace that is attractive to those that are seeking for answers? And there's a lot of people looking for answers.

[7 : 05] So in John chapter 15, verse 1, Jesus says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman, or the caretaker.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purges it, and that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me, ye can do nothing.

[8 : 07] If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. So shall ye be my disciples. I think in that verse, we get a glimpse of what the heart of God is, in this whole abiding, in this whole bearing fruit, is that the Father is glorified.

It's for the glory of God. Verse 9, As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Continue in my love.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love. Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. We see here that keeping Christ's commandments, commandments, is the true test of our love for God.

Do we care whether we keep and obey the word of God? Verse 11, These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

[9 : 34] This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. Is our joy full this morning? Jesus said it can be.

That's His will for us. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.

Henceforth, I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what the Lord doeth, but I have called you friends. For all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordain you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever you shall ask of my Father in my name, he may give it you.

Verse 17, These things I command you, that you love one another. You know, it's God's heart that there's a love flowing from the vine, through the branches, in the body of Christ, that His love can flow freely.

[11 : 05] There are things that will hinder that from happening. Probably the most common thing would just simply be selfishness.

It's a blockage. You know, sin, going my own way. The importance in a body to work together, to have unity, unity, true unity, unity of the Spirit of God.

Where there's unity, God commands a blessing. This is the will and the purpose of God. Where Christ's power and authority can be established is when there's that unity and that love flowing through the vine, through the branches, and truly, it is the body of Christ.

He goes on and he talks about how the world will hate us because it has also hated Him if we follow Jesus. If we are attached to Him, if we are in the vine, then we will be hated because the world hates Him.

that's okay. Jesus said, beware when men speak well of you, when all men.

[12 : 42] I'd like to turn to Luke chapter 8 and look at the Word of God there in our hearts.

in the parable of the sower. You know, back to this abiding. If we abide in Christ, we will grow spiritually.

We won't have an option. We will grow because we're attached to life. When we're detached is when we die.

when we are no longer abiding there. We will experience death. Let's look at what Jesus says here in the parable of the sower.

Luke 8 starting in verse 4. And when much people were gathered together and were come to Him out of every city, He spake by a parable.

[13 : 42] A sower went out to sow his seed and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside and it was trodden down and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away because it lacked moisture.

And some fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. And other fell on good ground and sprang up and bare fruit and hundredfold. And when He had said these things, He cried, He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

Do you think there was anybody there that didn't have ears? They probably heard Him. They probably all heard Him. What was Jesus saying?

He was asking them to understand with their hearts. Verse 9, And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God but to others in parables that these things that seeing they might not see and hearing they might not understand.

Now the parable is this, the seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved.

[15 : 14] They on the rock are they which when they hear receive the word with joy and these have no root which for a while believe and in time of temptation fall away.

And that which fell among thorns are they which when they have heard go forth and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection.

So far it's not the greatest in fruit bearing here. He tells us about what happens. Starts good but things come up.

pleasures of life cares worry riches and there's just no fruit. But then we have verse 15 but that on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart have heard the word keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.

Keep it. Those that keep it they have a right heart a heart that is positioned right with God a heart that is turned towards God that is a heart where the word of God can have an impact and a change where fruit can come forth.

[16 : 45] I think we'll keep reading here in verse 16 no man when he hath lighted a candle covereth it with a vessel or putteth it under a bed but setteth it on a candlestick that they which enter in may see the light for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest neither anything hid that shall not be known and come abroad take he therefore how ye hear for whosoever hath to him shall be given and whosoever hath not to him shall be taken away taken even that which he seemeth to have then came to him his mother and his brethren and could not come at him for the press and it was told him by certain which said thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to see thee and he answered and said unto them my mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of

God and do it we are his family there's the key there in that verse as well and do it are we committed to not be hearers only but to do it to be followers of Christ to be obedient to his word that's when we will produce fruit I believe that God in this day is looking for fruit in believers there are many that say Lord Lord many that start many that begin many that want to be a Christian they don't want to go to hell so they but fruits just are kind of optional being in the will of God and and seeking and growing you know looking back five years where have we come from are we growing are we in a place that is different than before have we gone deeper with the

Lord I trust that we are you can turn to Matthew if you want you don't have to but I'm going to read in Matthew 25 a couple more parables I just love these parables about abiding and about being prepared and about growing and being right with God Jesus spoke I didn't realize how many parables I didn't count them but maybe somebody here knows but there are so many parables given to point out what Jesus wants us to understand but in Matthew 25 read about the ten virgins in verse one Jesus said then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom and five of them were wise and five were foolish they that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps while the bridegroom tarried and they all slumbered and slept and at midnight there was a cry made behold the bridegroom cometh go ye out to meet him then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps and the foolish said to the wise give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out but the wise answered saying not so lest there be not enough for us and you but go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves and while they went to buy the bridegroom came and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage and the door was shut afterward came also the other virgin saying

Lord Lord open to us but he answered and said verily I say unto you I know you not watch therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the son of man cometh you know we could talk about this from different angles and get different points out of it but what I get out of this is that these were these five foolish were those that they wanted what was right they were with the other five they were going to go where they were going they wanted to be what they were but they weren't prepared they didn't take it seriously they didn't have the oil they needed they knew that in fact it's obvious they came and asked for oil from those that had but they weren't prepared they didn't

I don't believe they were committed they weren't abiding they didn't have I look at that oil as the life of God the Holy Spirit very possibly what do you suppose were some of the hindrances in those five and what do you suppose was the reason the other five had enough think about that just let your mind think about that why did they have enough what was the difference in the five or in the ten I'd like to I think I'll just continue reading here does this bother you a little bit that glares with some of your eyes maybe looking up here

[23 : 18] I might need this board then as well in a little while let's continue reading there in Matthew 25 verse 14 for the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods and unto one he gave five talents to another two and to another one to every man according to his several ability and straightway took his journey then he that received the five talents went and traded with the same and made them other five talents and likewise he that had received two he also gained other two but he that had received one went and dig in the earth and hid his Lord's money after a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them and so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents saying

Lord thou deliverest unto me five talents behold I have gained beside them five talents more his Lord said unto him well done thou good and faithful servant thou has been faithful over a few things I will make thee ruler over many things enter thou into the joy of thy Lord he also that had received two talents came and said Lord thou deliverest unto me two talents behold I have gained two other talents beside them the Lord said unto him well done thou good well done good and faithful servant thou has been faithful over a few things I will make thee ruler over many things enter thou into the joy of thy Lord we see here that the one that had only two got the same exact words as the one that had five and gained five they both doubled both of them had fruits both of them gained verse 24 then he which had received the one talent came and said

Lord I knew thee that thou art a hard man reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strawed and I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth lo there thou hast that is thine we might look at this man almost as somebody with a humility almost like he's not worth very much he really didn't have any gifts any talents but let's keep reading and see what the Lord says his Lord answered and said unto him thou wicked and slothful servant thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not and gathered where I have not strawed thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury at the very least there should have been interest is what

Jesus is saying take therefore the talent from him and give it unto him which hath ten talents for unto every one that hath shall be given and he that hath an abundance and he shall have abundance but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath and cast ye that the unprofitable servant into outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth can we use this parable to consider the need to grow spiritually is that taking it out of context can we use that that we need to gain we need to not be where we were five years ago or ten years ago or maybe even last year but that there's a growing in the

Lord that the Lord gets more from us later as we as time goes on from the day that we turn to the Lord the day that we became born again to continue to endure until the end Jesus said they that endure till the end shall be saved you know there's this thing of growing spiritually and why it's so important I want to point out is that if we don't grow spiritually we die is that board usable or does that not clean off so many people try to just live a straight life and nothing changes this is very simple but

[29 : 00] I don't think that exists a straight line a straight life is down the only way that we're going to make it is when we're going up this will always end up going down that idea to just be neutral to just be a Christian but nothing changes I'm not changed from glory to glory like the Bible teaches if we're not being if that's not our experience then it's going to be death there is no neutral in the Christian life you can't just coast into heaven you will drift down in Ephesians if you want to turn to chapter 4 of Ephesians a few more scriptures in verse 13

Ephesians 4 13 till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ we heard this morning about the revelation of Christ and we teach that we all need that revelation we all need that personally our children as they grow up they need that revelation of who Jesus is verse 14 that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slate of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive but speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things which is the head even Christ from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love where we grow up into him in all things it says in verse 15 in him which is the head even

Christ verse 17 this I say therefore and testify in the Lord that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind having the understanding darkened by alienating from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart the blindness of a heart will keep us from the life of God who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness that word I believe means a license to sin to work all uncleanness with greediness but you have not so learned Christ if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lust and be renewed in the spirit of your mind and that ye put on the new man which after

God is created in righteousness and true holiness there's that word holiness without which no man will see the Lord true holiness the true riches of Christ knowing Christ there's so much in those verses there in Ephesians Ephesians is such a book that is so practical for the church but oh to abide to abide in the Lord to grow in him to have that life of Jesus coming through will we go on with the Christian life ever deeper in him are we surrendered to him as Lord of our life so that he can do anything with us anything he wants this is the only place to be where we can where he can produce real fruit in our lives is a place of complete surrender you know what does

Jesus really think about this thing of bearing fruit it is very important to him it is very important in Matthew 21 we read about the fig tree what happened to the fig tree I'll read just those two verses and when he saw a fig tree now this is because Jesus was hungry and his disciples he saw a fig tree he came to it and found nothing thereon but leaves only and said unto it let no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever and presently the fig tree withered away it was a miracle and when the disciples saw it they marveled saying how soon is the fig tree withered away it just dried up Jesus was making a point he wanted that in his word for us today what does

[35 : 18] Jesus see on our tree he seeing fruits is he satisfied with the fruits is he going to say well done thou good and faithful servant I think one of the most common ways to grieve the Holy Spirit is when there is little or no fruit in those that say they believe because he is there longing to help us longing to produce that in us longing to make us into the image of Christ but we're not willing to lay it all down we're still hanging on to those thoughts of our own those things of our own but he wants us to come to a place of total surrender I believe the Holy Spirit is grieved because

Christ is not getting all that he paid for when he purchased us I'm just laying these thoughts out as a challenge the need for complete surrender some of the things that hinder us are found in the parable of the sower the love for the world is possibly foremost in there John says that if we love the world the love of the father is not in us remember the seed the cares of this life the love for pleasure those things that spring up and choke the word and it doesn't grow we hear it it's great oh we were in church we heard a message that was great now let's go play you know and forget about it let's not allow it to come into our hearts too much it might not feel comfortable right but let's welcome the word let's receive the word with joy many in the early church received the word with gladness they were blessed they allowed the word to do its work and to take root like to look at some things that help us to abide in

Christ some things that will enhance a vibrant Christian walk one of the first things that came to my mind as I was thinking about this is that we need to surround ourselves with men and women that love God and his word choose carefully who you hang out with so to speak who you fellowship with who your friends are who do you associate with the bible says that God is not mocked evil communications do what corrupt good manners evil communications corrupt if you don't want your heart to become corrupted then this point really matters you know

I've used this illustration before but when we have out here in Montana we often have fires in the evening and we like sitting around campfires in our homes or wherever and I've used this illustration before but what's the best way if you don't have water what's the easiest way to put out a fire you've got these logs all standing together or laying together and the fire is burning hot the easiest way the quickest way to die down that fire is to separate them roll the logs apart from each other and almost always they will go out the way to keep the fire burning the hottest is to bring them all together and they burn from each other and I don't know a better illustration than that for a church body surround yourself with men and women young people too that love the word of

God they love Jesus and they love to talk about him that'll help you abiding in Christ next one is remain faithful in prayer and in the word personal time alone with God is so important there's so many distractions today we could name a lot of them but when we sense that dryness or that lukewarm heart wanting to creep in a time to spend alone with God when we sense that coming that's when we really need to pray that's when we really need to say I need time time out I need to be alone with the Lord it's not easy because that that time you don't feel like it right but that's when we really need it spend that time alone with the

[41 : 35] Lord and you know God never changes we're the ones that change we're the ones that drift away but Jesus says to draw near to him and he will draw near to us another one is to choose to love and surround yourself with the things of God putting the kingdom first in your life be involved no one's going to force you to be involved in spiritual things it's a choice this is something you choose another one is to see the world as Christ sees it we know in John 3 16 for God so loved allow the life that God has put in you to flow out we need that's something we need to learn I believe to learn how to do that to speak to others help others

I know James shared when he was in Alaska and Enos you got to talk to some of the people up there about their spiritual condition and that's something that yes we need to continue in is to allow that flow to others to the lost and dying world around us you know I read a quote that I'd like to read somebody sent me this quote or it was on a group chat I guess from William Booth I looked up William Booth who is he you probably know some of you he's the one that he's the founder of Salvation Army and he lived in he was born in 1829 died in 1912 so about 110 years ago he would have passed away this is a quote that he said and this was a something he saw coming he said

I consider the chief dangers which confront the coming century that would have been now this century behind us that there will be religion without the Holy Ghost Christianity without Christ forgiveness without repentance salvation without regeneration politics without God and heaven without hell those are things that he saw coming wow that just gives me the chills because that's the world we live in today it was a true quote a true word I believe but it doesn't have to be that way doesn't have to be that way with us

I believe God has a remnant of people that are still on fire for him today that still have that life flowing through and when he comes back he will find that it's up to us doesn't have to be religion without Christ religion without Christ by the way is very harsh and very cruel it is the true church that has Jesus alive and well Lord help us you know there's there's many many in our past that we can look back and say well this this man or these people have been a blessing they have influenced us

I just want to give a blessing to brother Noah and many years ago that we were in the same church together and as I think of him and also James your other your father in law Horace those were men he's no longer with us but those were men that had a real influence in my life they probably never knew it but their faithfulness their stability their walk with the Lord brought a lot of security into my life and I just want to bless you with that and your walk faithfulness still serving the Lord still love Jesus I'm sure is a fruit to God's glory that's a fruit and if I can just impact somebody in that kind of a way that's my desire and I think that should be all our desire that we can be used by

[47 : 14] God that we can continue and pass on that torch to the next generation keep it going keep it burning shall we pray Father we just thank you this morning for your goodness your mercy and love Lord I pray that you would give us a vision of what you want Lord a vision for our lives that we would continue to grow and the necessity of growing spiritually of being changed day by day growing closer and closer to you Lord Jesus and more and more like you Lord if we haven't been growing and if we've been stalled or stumbling Lord help us to repent quickly and to receive you and to abide in you Lord help us to continue in faith Lord I pray that you would just bless us here as a congregation as a group here this morning that believe in you Lord

Jesus I pray that your spirit would be upon us and show us our need of you Lord show us how to continue to walk help us Lord show us how to love each other and to inspire each other and exalt each other in our walk Lord that we would be more like you for your honor and glory for your heavenly purposes Lord that we would bring glory to your father Lord just be with us and I pray that you would give us that victory that we seek Lord we love you we thank you Lord for loving us in Jesus name we pray amen Lord bless you allseason amen amen amen amen wenn