



SPRING 2018 DEVOTIONAL

“Praying for Spiritual Growth”

WEEK 6: June 18th – June 22nd



**PUTTING PRAYER
IN PRACTICE**

THE SERIES

**Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church
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Monday, June 18, 2018

You and I need Spiritual Growth

⁹ For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰ That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; ¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Colossians 1:9-12 (NASB)

As a kid I loved basketball and always wanted to be taller. I remember praying to God and asking Him to make me taller, so that I might play in the National Basketball Association (NBA). Thankfully, God did not answer that prayer. As I began to take my relationship with God more seriously, I realized I was not as mature spiritually as I should be. At the directing of the Holy Spirit, God led me to Colossians 1:9-12 and challenged me to grow up.

Paul, in Colossians 1:9-12, tells the church two things. First, he tells them he has not stopped praying for them. Secondly, he tells them neither has he stopped asking God to grow them up. The purpose for the request is so they can please Lord in every area resulting in Godly results. When you and I pray, our prayer requests are not typically centered around asking for more wisdom and knowledge on how to please God more.

For many of us, our lives have become filled with immediate requests, as a result of poor choices or needs and wants that we believe God must honor. While God does care for us, and as believers in His Son Jesus Christ, we can come to Him and ask in prayer anything, we must not overlook or undervalue God's ultimate desire for us, and that is to become more like His Son Jesus Christ. Paul's words to the Colossian church should challenge us to reevaluate our reason and the tone of our prayers. Are our prayers directed at spiritual growth or are they more self-centered? One other observation noted is that Paul was actively praying for others. Part of spiritual growth is realizing our needs are not the only needs that God is dealing with. We should always pray for others and their need for spiritual growth as well.

Take the time today as you pray and examine how and what you pray for. If you find that your prayer life is more about your personal agenda, then you may need to spend time in prayer asking God to grow you up.

Remember Spiritual growth is intentional.

– Min. Michael Brown

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

Stay the Course, Finish Well

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

Florence Chadwick was an accomplished distance swimmer. She was the first woman to swim both ways across the English Channel. On July 4, 1952, Chadwick attempted to become the first woman to complete the 21-mile swim from Catalina Island to Palos Verde, California. Her victories in other distance swimming challenges left no doubt that she was definitely gifted enough to add this accomplishment to her resume. As is normal during that time of year, a thick fog hung over the Southern California coast. As Chadwick progressed towards the coast, the fog showed no sign of lifting. Eventually, she grew despondent because she could barely see the support boats that followed her, let alone the shore and stopped swimming only to find out she was a mere half mile from land. Had she stayed in the water only a few minutes more, she would have completed her goal.

Following Christ can sometimes feel like that. We live in a broken world, and every day we are reminded that we indeed live in evil times and it gets difficult to walk the path that God has set before us. In Psalm 73:2-3, Asaph envied the prosperity of the wicked, and that he almost slipped until he went into the sanctuary of God (Psalm 73:17) and discerned their end. Sometimes, living the Christian life feels like swimming in endless fog, against the current. With no end in seemingly sight, working against the

constant pull of our flesh, the temptation to give in becomes very real.

But that is where grace kicks in. The same grace that saved you can sustain you. Ephesians 2:10 says, the every believer is the result of God's workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we may walk in them. More than this, in Ephesians 1:3, Paul wrote that "*God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.*" God knows the Christian life is difficult; it is not a journey meant to be travelled alone. That is why He lives in you as the Holy Spirit. God is faithful, and by His grace, you get to know Him and the more you get to know Him, the more effectively His grace works in your life, transforming you into the image of Christ so that His work in you will be completed in your life and the lives you touch when Christ returns.

Life can sometimes be hard, but God is faithful to complete the work He began in your life, when you were first saved. Pray for continuing growth in the knowledge of Christ for strength to complete the work for which God uniquely equipped you. Nothing happens by accident; every circumstance of your life is part of the course that God has laid out for you, one that leads to goodness for you and glory to God (Romans 8:28). As you navigate life growing in Christ, you will see again and again the evidence of God's faithfulness and through meditation on God's word and prayer, you will find strength to complete the course God has ordained for your life.

This week, pray for continued growth in your relationship with Jesus Christ, so that as God's grace is multiplied in your life, you will find strength to continue your walk as a disciple of Christ.

Don't quit before the miracle happens!

– Min. Russell De Pina

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Effective Spiritual Growth

⁵For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:5-8 (ESV)

A man once asked a boy how old he was. There was no hesitation from the boy who said, "I'm twelve, going on thirteen, soon be fourteen." That boy was eager to grow up! Most Christians want to grow in the Lord, especially when they are new in the faith. But often, as time goes on, the enthusiasm to grow begins to fade. Oftentimes, we settle into a routine and grow spiritually complacent.

We must be intentional when it comes to our spiritual growth, and you cannot grow without deliberate discipline and effort. It's interesting that Peter, a man known in the gospels for his impetuosity, here sets forth a deliberate, disciplined approach to spiritual growth. If Peter the impetuous fisherman could become a disciplined, godly man, then anyone else can do the same.

Faith must be more than belief in certain facts, it must result in action, growth in Christian character, and the practice of moral discipline, or it will die away. Peter lists several of faith's actions: learning to know God better, developing perseverance, doing God's will, loving others. These actions do not come automatically; they require hard work. They are not optional; all of them must be a continual part of our Christian life and growth. The way in which Peter lists these actions or qualities does not mean you must finish one before starting the next, but we must work on them all together. God, of course, empowers and enables us, but also gives us the responsibility to learn and to grow.

Why are these qualities important for our spiritual growth? Peter says, "they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." They help our spiritual growth to be effective, rather than unfruitful. God desires to produce His character in us. We were saved so that we can grow to resemble Christ and so we can serve others.

If we are to effectively grow spiritually, God demands our discipline and effort. Spiritual growth must be intentional, and daily we should examine ourselves to identify areas of improvement. Remember, spiritual maturity does not

happen overnight, but with constant and steady effort to be more and more like Christ.

As we obey Christ, Who guides us by His Spirit, we will develop qualities of effective spiritual growth.

Continuous Spiritual improvement is effective spiritual growth.

– Min. Shad Comeaux

Thursday, June 21, 2018

GROW UP!

¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:15-16 (NIV)

“Don’t judge me!” “Church people are so judgmental!” “The church is full of hypocrites!” “See, THAT’S why I don’t go to church.....”

I’m sure you’ve heard at least one of these recently, probably from someone whose actions or lifestyle appeared to contradict the word of God or the expected lifestyle of a believer. And the ammunition used to divert

attention from their issue is to point out the issues of the person who “attacked” them. In our “zeal” to right the wrongs in our world, to see others live the best lives they can, our approach sometimes can be harsh, even judgmental. Paul addresses this in the Scripture...speaking the truth in love.

In the verses prior to this command, Paul writes about unity in the body of Christ. He urges us to “*live a life worthy of the calling you have received*” (Ephesians 4:1). This life is one in which we are humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love, and making efforts toward unity. Paul reminds us that we all serve the same Lord and are part of the same body; that we are equipped for works of service, “*so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*” Rather than be spiritually immature and easily deceived, we are to speak the truth to one another, with love, so that we can all grow in maturity. The “love” referred to in this verse is *agape love*, a self-sacrificial love that works for the benefit of the loved one. We speak truth in order to build up. Our words should be beneficial to the hearers.

Speaking the truth in love is not as much about having a gentle demeanor as it is about the way truth and love go hand-in-hand. Because we love one another, we must speak the truth. Because we know the truth, we must be people characterized by love. As Jesus’ disciples who are being conformed to His image, our character should be as his, full of grace and truth.

Jesus said, “Don’t judge one another,” and here is the point: admonishing one another is not judging one another.

Judging is when I see something in your life that disagrees with my opinion. Admonishing is when I see something in your life, or you see something in my life, that doesn't align with Scripture and I come to you or you come to me and we honestly speak the truth because we care that you get the very best, that you become all God wants you to become.

Today we gather together as Christians to worship our God. We are blessed with teaching that equips us to speak truth to one another. This is how we serve and protect one another doctrinally. This is how we build up one another and build unity in our churches. This is how God gives grace to others through us. We speak the truth in love when we care enough to speak the gospel into the lives of those around us. This is God's everyday calling for every Christian, including Sundays.

A true sign of spiritual maturity is how we communicate to one another.

What words do you use that reveal you spiritual immaturity?

- Min. Mark Taylor

Friday, June 22, 2018

Always Do Your Best!

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (ESV)

The drive to be the "best you can be" is seen throughout society. This drive is most recognizable in the world of sports, where athletes "go all out," in whatever their sport, to reach their full potential and to help their team win. In other areas of society, people will generally "go all out" to be the best at what they do. They may attend workshops (seminars, training classes, etc), to help sharpen their knowledge and skills; they may even attach themselves with a mentor or personal coach, who can help them reach their full potential, to become the best they can be. This drive is for personal development, a way for people to assess their skills and qualities, consider their aims in life and set goals in order to realize and maximize their potential. Abraham Maslow defines this as self-actualization, which refers to the desire that everybody has "to become everything that they are capable of becoming."¹ Unfortunately, just having the desire to reach your potential is not enough. This desire must be coupled with some effort and resources, if a person has any chance of reaching their fullest potential and becoming the best they can be. Wow! How true is this of the Christian life? God desires that we Christians reach our potential in Christ and so should we.

¹ Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

In today's focal text, the apostle Paul instructs his protégé, Timothy, and all Christians, as to the motivation and the method on how to become the best Christian that God desires them to be. The motivation is that God is ultimately the only person that we are accountable to, for how we live the Christian life. We live for an audience of One. Therefore, we should be more concerned for what He says about our Christian walk, rather than anyone else. We must make this our highest priority, pouring ourselves into the task of living in a manner that He approves. God has begun the process of conforming us to the image, or representation, of His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29); this process includes all of the situations, circumstances, and trials we face in life.

The method to ensure that God approves of our spiritual growth progress in His conforming process, Paul states, is to take care in how we handle God's Word, "*the word of truth.*" Later in chapter 3 verses 16 and 17, Paul tells Timothy, that, "¹⁶*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,* ¹⁷*that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*" The proper way to handle "*the word of truth*" is to allow it to teach us what is right; what is not right; how to get right; and how to stay right. A Christian on the path to reaching their full potential in Christ is, as described in verse 17, one who is capable and proficient in the sense of being able to meet all demands and lacking nothing, because God supplies everything we need to accomplish everything He wants to do in us and through us.

God's approval always requires that you do your best with what He supplies: His Holy Spirit and His Holy Word.

How intentional are you at becoming the best Christian you can be?

– Min. Mark Slone