

## 12. Growing through the Word

**Biblical material:** Matt 22:37, 38; Gal. 2:20; 5:14; Eph.4:14, 15; Heb. 4:2; 5:12-14.

### Quotes

- The real influence of the Bible cannot be measured; it is reckoned only in terms of hearts that have been lifted up, decisions that have been changed, the men and women who, in response to its impervious demands, have done justice and loved kindness and walked humbly with God. *J. Carter Swain*
- The Bible rose to the place it now occupies because it deserved to rise to that place, and not because God sent anybody with a box of tricks to prove its divine authority. *Bruce Barton*
- Of all commentaries upon the Scriptures, good examples are the best and liveliest. *John Donne*
- The Bible is to us what the star was to the wise men; but if we spend all our time in gazing upon it, observing its motions, and admiring its splendor, without being led to Christ by it, the use of it will be lost to us. *T. Adams*

### Questions

How does the Bible help us to grow? What kind of changes does God expect in our lives? How can reading stories about others cause change in us? What should we be looking for the Bible to do for us? How does God operate through the Bible? Why doesn't God fix what's necessary? Is wanting to grow absolutely necessary?

### Discussion/Comment

Jesus said he came so we could enjoy an abundant life (John 10:10). This can only happen if we develop and grow, rather than remain stagnant. Change comes harder to some than other, but the renewing, growing experience is essential. In this the Bible plays an invaluable part, in revealing the how and why of God's involvement with human beings in various places and times. In recognizing the principles by which God operates, and the fundamentals of his government, then we too can identify with right for rights sake.

Many of Jesus parables were about change and growth—think of the sower, the mustard seed, the prodigal son. Jesus sought to confront his hearers with the need to change, for without that recognition there can be no repentance and transformation. He reserved his strongest condemnation for those who thought they were fine, but who were in reality like “whitened sepulchres, full of dead men's bones.” His challenge to all was to wake up and recognize that there was no future unless they changed, unless there was a complete transformation. Only with divine renewal would there be hope for the future, said Jesus, and he came as both the catalyst for and provision of that renewing power. Being “born again” has become a cliché in our language, but when considered in its original and shocking context, it really does describe what God wants for us. And having been born again, does God wish us to remain as newborns? No, like our physical life, God wants us to grow in his grace to become mature, developed individuals who understand and identify with their heavenly Parent.

The Bible helps us to see this. In its case studies of those who have known God, as well those who have not, we can learn lessons about growth and development. Growing towards God as did his friends—Moses, Abraham, Job—leads to convictions as to God's benevolent purpose

to all in his universe. The Bible reveals this God to us in many and various ways—even in the “bad bits”!

For these reasons studying the Bible is vital—not as a routine act or as a requirement, but as an essential part of our growth as Christians. It’s not a book, but a life-guide.

Even here it is not a self-help book. Quite the opposite! It points out that we cannot of ourselves save and heal ourselves. That help has to come from outside of us, from God. Nor is it a cookery book on how to bake a life, full of recipes. Rather it just tells the stories, and leads us to come to our own conclusions as to how to apply the lessons learned. Far from being “morality tales,” God graciously presents in his book all the faults and failings of humanity, together with God’s attempts to help. In that they are attempts, because we often limit God in his ability to help, we see that God repeatedly tries to help us to grow and develop. This healing of God comes as much as we allow it, within the context of our own life-experiences. That is why no two lives are the same, and how Jesus had no “formula” for treating those around him. That should help us be understanding too of those we seek to help through the sharing of God.

### **Text comments**

Jesus defines the greatest “law” as loving God—totally and absolutely. This then leads to our loving everyone else, for God is love and does just that himself. (Matt 22:37,38). Thus growing into love will be a consequence of knowing and being with God—it is an inescapable result. This is what Paul describes as Christ living in me (Gal. 2:20), not that we lose our individuality or responsibility, but that like Christ we do not live for ourselves. This is loving your neighbor as yourself (Gal. 5:14). We are called to teach the truth in love, and *grow up!* (Eph. 4:14,15) without being distracted by childish ideas and interpretations. The Bible itself is of not value unless we trust the Bible and the God it reveals (Heb. 4:2). Nor is it supposed to be “baby food,” but adult material designed to help us think and grow.

### **Ellen White Comments**

There should be a living, growing interest in storing the mind with Bible truth. The precious knowledge thus gained will build a barrier about the soul. Although assailed with temptation, there will be a firm trust in Jesus, through the knowledge of Him who hath called them to glory and to virtue.--TSS 12. {CSW 36.1}

Study your Bibles. Read over and over the wonderful lessons that Christ has given to animate you, to strengthen you, and to aid you in spiritual growth. {PCP 13}

Many are very ignorant of Bible truth, and they do not realize the duty and necessity of becoming intelligent Christians.... We are invited to become learners in the school of Christ. We need to acquire all the knowledge possible. We cannot afford to be ignorant of the things that pertain to our eternal welfare. If all would cease gossip and evil communication, devoting the time to contemplation of Christ and the plan of salvation, they would add the knowledge essential to a growth in grace. We are to add knowledge from “whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report.” God wants us to understand why He has placed us in the world, and given us the sacred burden of life to bear. He would have us develop the faculties of mind and body, that we may be a blessing to those around us, and that His glory may be reflected from us to the world. It is not His will that our powers should be bound up in torpid stupidity and ignorance. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” {PCP 17}

