

THE SEVEN FUNDAMENTALS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH (Requirement 1)

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The Seven Fundamentals of Spiritual Growth
(The First Requirement)
 By Robert Wurtz II

When it comes to spiritual growth there are seven fundamentals that are required for success. The need for spiritual growth arises from the biblical mandate to love the LORD your God with all your heart, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourselves. You will grow into His divine will as we follow these seven fundamentals. You will learn in this series that there are things that can stunt your spiritual growth the same as there are things that can stunt your physical growth.

Spiritual Growth according to the Scriptures.

Throughout the New Testament there is a pattern that can be seen and followed if we put forth the effort. Just as our physical man have needs, so does the spiritual man. When you think about John 3:3, you see a mental picture of a new born baby who is in desperate need of help when it comes to the basic necessities of life. A baby cannot fend for itself, and if left alone without help will perish. So it is with a new born Believer. They are in need of great care, the same way that a newborn baby is. For starters, the baby needs food and water. They are born with a great appetite. If there is no appetite for the things of God in the life a new believer- there is likely no true conversion. Jesus said that His 'MEAT' was to do the WILL of Him that sent Him. Newborn believers can only accomplish simple things in the early stages. Simple acts of obedience such as baptism in water turn a commandment into MEAT for the believer. It is not meat or sustenance spiritually until we move past 'hearing' the word and begin DOING the word. The problem for all newborns is that they are not able to properly digest solid foods, they can only digest MILK. Milk is a combination of food and water designed to provide an infant with all of it's needed nutrition. This milk is the simple things easily to be understood and acted on to become sustenance for growth. For the newborn believers we read these words from the Scriptures... Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 1:22-2:3).

Growing in the Spirit Means Growing OUT of Carnality.

After repenting and being born again, there is a definite plan that God has for us to follow. We are told at the end of verse 2 to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby. This milk often comes to us in the form of preaching and teaching. It is the job of pastors and teachers to feed the newborn children of God with milk. The pastor must take the meat of the word, mix it with his own personal prayer time, and feed it to the congregation. As it is written.... I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal (1 Corinthians 3:2-3). Until a newborn believer grows out of his or her carnality and begins to grow spiritually they will not be able to eat anything other than milk. Scripture is clear on one thing, if you are carnal you will only be able to digest (understand) the milk of the word and will never eat the meat. Babies do not eat meat and potatoes; neither do their metaphorical counterparts, baby believers. Hebrews said it like this...For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:12-14). Due to a lack in spiritual growth caused by their refusal to be a 'DOER' of the word, the recipients of this letter could not understand the most basic elements of Scripture (such as the Priesthood of Melchizedek) in so much that the writer could not advance on the thought he wanted to pursue because he knew they did not have the spiritual growth to understand it. We will look later at exactly what their problem was and why it was hindering and even reversing their spiritual growth. Today the very subjects that the writer to the Hebrews considered as "Milk" are what we would consider as "Meat", which is more than anything a testament to the desperate need for spiritual growth that is widespread in the Body of Christ.

Growing in the knowledge of God

Far too often today there are questions that arise in the minds of believers about spiritual issues that are answered not by personal study, but by a pastor or teacher. This may be the case in situations or questions that are difficult, but it should never be the result of lack of study or prayer on the part of an adult believer. It is necessary for every believer to grow in the knowledge of Christ. As it is written... Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things (doctrinal errors, deceptions, etc.) before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever (II Peter 3:17-18) and again... Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matthew 11:29). Rest to our souls comes when we LEARN OF CHRIST. Failure to study is an invitation to deception and the hall mark of confusion.

NO FOOD NO GROWTH

The first requirement of spiritual growth is EATING. If you do not eat, you will not grow spiritually. Eating is progressive. You start out consuming the MILK of the word, but advance as you grow- to the meat of the word. The milk of the word we have already addressed, but the meat of the word is found in PERSONAL devotions. The progression in spiritual growth is to advance from being, as it were, 'bottle-fed', 'to spoon-fed', 'to self-fed'. The writer to the Hebrews in chapter five was upset because he was having to re-teach something that the people should have already known and was having to "spoon feed" them again. At least it was not as bad as Paul when he wrote to Corinthians having to "bottle feed" the people milk all over again. Are YOU a hearer and DOER of the word? Are you eating the meat of God's word? How long have you been saved? Does your spiritual age and spiritual growth correspond? Have you allowed sin to dumb down your understanding until you can only process the simplest of commands? What do you need to change in order to get the process of growth started again?

The MEAT of God's Word

Biblically, meat is not a term for beef or pork; it simply means "strong food." Spiritual food comes in the form of hearing and acting in faith (obedience) towards God's Word. Jesus told the people of Israel.....Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (John 6:31-35). And again... It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life... and again... Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Corinthians 5:7-8).

Christ our Passover

When Paul told the Corinthian Church that Christ is our Passover it brings into play all of the before mentioned Scriptures. Passover is a feast that consists of primarily unleavened bread and lamb. It is a celebration of God's mercy in Egypt and at Calvary. There was to be for each household a lamb that was slain and the blood of it placed on the door posts. The people were then instructed to cook and TOTALLY consume the Passover Lamb...And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover (Exodus 12:7-11). God did not ask the people if they liked what they were to eat, they were

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told to eat it all whether they liked it or not. So it is with the meat of God's word. We are to consume it, all of it, and are not to pick and choose. We are to prepare it God's way and not our way, just as we interpret the scriptures rightly and rightly divide them.

The Sacred Message Does Not Have a Sacred Method

However you prefer you should get the Word of God into your heart. Whether it be reading, bible tapes, bible CD's, word for word VCR or DVD programs, or having a person simply read the bible to you; get the word into your heart and begin to act on it! There are few people who can actually find excuse for not having received the word of God in the 21st Century. Cultivate an appetite for the word by abstaining from things that suppress the appetite such as worldliness and sin. The more you hear it and ACT on it- the more you need and want it. Soon you are on your way to spiritual growth and are eating meat as opposed to drinking milk.