

Subject: God's Plan for Spiritual Growth

Scripture: 1 Peter 2:1-3

In chapter 1, Peter wrote about the new birth. Now in chapter 2, he writes about living the new life in Christ. Where there is spiritual life, there will be spiritual growth. No life—no growth. No growth—no life. Just as God uses His Word to produce the new birth, He also uses the Word to produce spiritual growth. In our text Peter highlights two things that are essential for spiritual growth.

1. Discarding sin from the old life

The Christian's new life won't grow unless sins are put away. When that is done, the Word does it work in us. Sin will destroy our appetite for God's Word and will hinder our spiritual growth. The Bible will keep you from sin and sin will keep you from the Bible. Notice the word "all" is used three times (verse 1). James wrote about laying aside all sin.

James 1:21-22 (NKJV) *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

The text mentions five kinds of sin we must discard or lay aside. This list of sins is not comprehensive or exhaustive, but it is suggestive and representative of other sins.

A. Discard all malice

The verb indicates a once-for-all decision to get rid of these things. There must be a clean break with the past and the way we lived before we were saved. Malice means ill will or harboring evil thoughts against others. It is a word used 11 times in the NT to refer to wickedness that comes from within a person.

Titus 3:3-7 ³ *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.* ⁴ *But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared,* ⁵ *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;* ⁶ *Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior;* ⁷ *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

B. Discard all deceit

This is any kind of dishonesty or deception. God's children are people who know the truth, love the truth, and live the truth. Never are we more like Jesus than when we speak and live the truth.

John 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Never are we more like the devil than when we lie and deceive.

John 8:44 *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

C. Discard all hypocrisy

This refers to pretense or pretending to be something you're not. The hypocrite is a play-actor. He pretends to be a spiritual person on Sunday, but he is worldly on Monday-Saturday. He pretends to be interested in others, but his motives are selfish.

D. Discard all envy

This is jealousy. It has been described as the feeling of displeasure by hearing about or observing the advantages or prosperity of others. Envy is one of the strongest evil forces on earth. **Proverbs 27:4** *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?*

There is a psalm of Asaph (Psalm 73) in which he admits that he was envious of others. Who was this man named Asaph? He was the temple choir director!

Psalms 73:3 *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

E. Discard all slander

This refers backbiting, gossip, or tearing down a person by what we say.

All these things are sins against other people. The true test of whether we really have been born again is the way we treat other people. Paul wrote told believers to “put off” the old man and “put on” the new man.

Ephesians 4:29-32 ²⁹ *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* ³⁰ *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.* ³¹ *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:* ³² *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

John MacArthur comments: “In ancient Christian baptism ceremonies, those being baptized customarily took off and discarded the clothes they wore to the ceremony. Following their baptisms, they put on new robes they received from the church. Exchanging clothes symbolized the salvation reality of laying aside the old life and taking up the new.”

2. Desiring Scripture for the new life

God's children have a new nature because they are born again (from above). This new nature includes a love and strong desire for God's Word. The Bible reveals this strong connection between the true believer and the Bible. What a picture God gives us—a newborn baby craving its milk. Just as a baby craves a mother's milk, we are to crave God's Word. This is a regular desire, a normal desire, and it is an intense desire.

A. The importance of Scripture

The text begins (vs. 1) with the word “Wherefore,” and refers back to 1:23-25. God's Word is the source of salvation and spiritual life. God uses His Word to bring about the new birth. Scripture is the imperishable divine seed that produces new life in the believer.

Romans 10:17 *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

James 1:18 *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.*

2 Timothy 3:15 *And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

Just as the Bible is the source of our new life in Christ, it is the source of our growth in Christ.

B. The intake of Scripture

Joshua 1:8 *This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*

Job 23:12 *I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*

Psalms 1:1-2 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

Jeremiah 15:16 *Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.*

John 8:31-32 ³¹ *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;* ³² *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

Psalms 119:97-104 ⁹⁷ *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.* ⁹⁸ *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.* ⁹⁹ *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.* ¹⁰⁰ *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.* ¹⁰¹ *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.* ¹⁰² *I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.* ¹⁰³ *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!* ¹⁰⁴ *Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*

C. The impact of Scripture

The Word will do its work in us. When we take it in, when we believe and obey it, it will accomplish its purpose. We will grow strong in the Lord and become more like him.

Isaiah 55:10-11 ¹⁰ *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:* ¹¹ *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

Acts 20:32 *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

Romans 12:2 *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

This craving for God's Word begins the moment we are saved (vs. 3). The word "If" is not expressing doubt. Peter is saying "If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious (and you have)." Once we are saved and get a taste of God's grace, we keep coming back for more.