

Title: HABITS OF GROWING BELIEVERS

Text: II Peter 3:18

Intro: Living creatures grow – whether they be plants, animals or humans, growth is a normal part of existence. Jesus wants us to grow, to progress in our Christian life so we become spiritually mature and become good examples. Unlike in the physical world, growth is inevitable as time goes by. In the spiritual world, the passing of time does not guarantee growth. God helping us, we must develop habits to spiritually grow in our Christian life.

Habit #1: Study the Bible (John 5:39; II Tim. 2:15).

The Bible is the truth – the word of God. It is the only tangible thing on earth that closely resembles the nature character of God. It is **living** (Heb. 4:12), **holy** (II Tim. 3:15), **perfect** (Psa. 19:7), **eternal** (Matt. 24:35), **light** (Psa. 119:105), **spirit** (John 6:63) and **sanctifier** (John 17:17). God is bound with His word!

The will, precepts, promises, and warnings of God are written in the Bible. Don't just read, but study it to be wise. Believe it to be strong. It is food for the inner man – soul/spirit. It will guide you all your life and will judge all men in the last day (**John 12:48**). A mature believer will always read, study and meditate the Bible.

Habit #2: Keep on Praying (Luke 18:1; I Thess. 5:17).

Bible study gives us "**LIGHT**" while prayer gives "**HEAT**" in our spiritual life. As children of God, we can request by prayer the provision, grace, peace and mercy that we have as privileges.

In prayer we must: (a) **have faith in God** (Heb 11:6); (b) **be free from iniquity** (Psa. 66:18); (c) **forgive others** (Mark 11:25); (d) **ask according to His will** (I John 5:14); (e) **in the power of the Spirit** (Rom. 8:26); (f) **through Jesus** (**John 14:14**); and (g) **for the Father's glory** (**John 14:13**).

Habit #3: Rely upon the Spirit (Rom. 8:9; I John 4:13).

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come to comfort, guide and teach His disciples (**John 16:13**). At conversion, the Holy Spirit seals and indwells the believer (**Eph. 1:13**). The true Christian is also empowered by the Holy Spirit (**Acts 1:8**).

It is the job of the Spirit to ensure that the believer is brought to a close personal relationship with Jesus. The maturing Christian will depend more and more on God's Spirit, and less on himself. The Holy Spirit reminds the Christian the things that Jesus has taught him (**John 14:26**) so that he can walk right before God.

Habit #4: Bear the Cross (Luke 9:23; Phil 3:10).

To bear the cross means to practice self-denial – which is not punishing your body during Lent as Catholics do. We know that the hardest person to deny is SELF! To deny our self means to abstain from its fleshly lusts and deeds (**I Pet. 2:11**). Self-denial involves detachment from the world and contentment in Christ.

The cross symbolizes SUFFERING for Christ and DEATH to our old sinful nature. Believers are not immune from sufferings esp. for God and His righteousness. Look at Joseph, Job, Stephen, Paul, and our Lord Jesus! Patience in suffering makes us more like Jesus (**I Pet. 3:14**). There is joy even in suffering (**Acts 5:41**).

Habit #5: Live for God's Glory (I Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17).

The Christian life also means stewardship and accountability. We are not our own, we were bought with a price and we belong to God (**I Cor. 6:19-20**). We understand that God will judge us for the ways we use the time, talent, possessions, opportunities, and the very life He has loaned to us (**Rom. 14:12**). If God created the universe, the earth we live in and everything in them, then who is the real owner and master of our life? Because God holds our destiny, we must live responsibly daily in light of our coming face to face meeting with the Lord. May we all have the wisdom to think, say and do all things for His pleasure and glory!

Habit #6: Focus on the Eternal (Heb. 12:2; Tit. 2:13).

Following Jesus also means to keep your spiritual eyes fixed upon Him and His soon return. Since Christ rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is coming back soon, to follow Christ means to focus our hearts and minds on the eternal and heavenly (**Col. 3:1-2**). A believer is supposed to have proper priorities and values. We are to value what is important to God, like winning the lost, loving and edifying the brethren, praying, giving, helping the needy, serious Bible study, making Jesus #1 in all things, etc.

We are still in the world to continue the work the Lord began, but we do not belong to this world. We are just passing by and this sinful world is not our home! (**I John 2:15-17**).

Conclusion: Friends, let's live right and quietly in this world in light of Christ's return. May God help you not to fall in love with this old world! We must choose and decide which will be first in our lives. Will it be this passing world where sin and Satan reigns? Or the best world that is yet to come with Christ as King of kings?