

Growing in God

Chapter 1

Memory Verse:

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Psalm 119:105

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

1 John 5:14

The Bible

The Bible is the word of God. It was written by man but was inspired by God. As Christians, the word of God is the final authority on what we believe and how we live.

The Bible was written over 1600 years by 40 different authors. It is made

up of 66 books and is divided between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament contains the books of Genesis through to Malachi and was originally written in Hebrew.

The New Testament contains the books of Matthew through to Revelation and was originally written in Greek.

The purpose of the Bible

The Bible is our handbook for living the Christian life but more than that, in it God outlines His plan of redemption for mankind and also reveals Himself to us, His nature, character and heart for us.

By reading The Bible, we get to know who God is and what He has done for us. We read accounts of great men and women of God that give testimony to His faithfulness and provision and how God has used them to fulfill His purpose and promises to his people.

We also learn that God is Holy and Righteous, a God who brings justice and judges sin. We learn that while God is a God of judgment this is in tension with him being a God of love, mercy and grace, demonstrated by His love for mankind and His plan of salvation and redemption through sending His son Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Reading the Bible

We should develop a daily habit of reading God's word. Just like we need to nourish our physical bodies with food, we also need to nourish our spirits by feeding on the word of God. This is what Jesus meant when he said "Man does not live on bread alone but on every word which comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)

The Bible is a large book and can be quite overwhelming. A good place to start is the four Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They give an account of Jesus' life on earth and contain His words and teachings.

Get a copy of 'How to Read the Bible' booklet and begin to work through it. It will give you an overview of the Bible and take you through reading a number of books from both the Old and New Testaments. It will teach you how to approach reading the scriptures and how to identify key ideas in a book. It will also show you how to apply what you have read to your own life.

Making God's Word a priority

Start to make time each day to read God's word. This is a habit you will need to develop and continue for a lifetime if you want to grow in spiritual maturity. There is no substitute for reading the word of God. Sermons, Christian books or DVD's or even input from fellow believers are all good and necessary but they should never take the place of you reading the word of God for yourself and getting first hand revelation from Him for your life.

Prayer

Along with taking time to read God's word we need to also make time for prayer. Both together make up a healthy balanced spiritual diet.

Scripture tells us we can have confidence that when we come to God in prayer, He hears us. (1 John 5:14)

Prayer is powerful. God chooses to work through the prayers of His people which is why prayer is so important. Prayer is how we can affect change in our lives and in our circumstances and in the world around us.

What does James 5:16 say about the prayers of the righteous man?
They are _____ and _____

What is a righteous man? As Christians we are declared righteous before God. Righteousness concerns the relationship between God and man. Righteousness is not based on works, or our own effort to be good. It cannot be earned. We are made righteous through Jesus and his sacrifice for us on the cross. God declares those who believe and trust in Jesus 'righteous'.

God promises that when we pray to Him, He hears us. Sometimes though, we do not always get an immediate answer. Sometimes the answer is "yes", sometimes "no" or maybe it is just that the timing is not right for what you have asked and God is saying neither yes or no but "wait" or "not yet".

Read Luke 18: 1-8

What does this parable tell us that we should do?

Sometimes God wants us to _____ in prayer.

Look at John 15:7

What are the two things that Jesus said are required for God to give us what we ask for in prayer?

1. _____
2. _____

How does this influence what we ask for in prayer?

Our requests should be aligned with the _____ of God and the _____ of God. Then we can have confidence that God will hear and answer our prayers (1 John 5:14-15).

How should we pray?

Look at the following scriptures and write down the key words that tell us how we should approach prayer.

Mark 11: 22-24	with _____
Mark 11: 25	with _____
Philippians 4:6	with _____
Colossians 4:2	with _____
Acts: 1:14	with _____
Matthew 6:5	with _____

Prayer is just a conversation between you and God. There is no formula or particular words that need to be used. Just tell God what is on your heart. Thank Him for what He has done for you and in your life. Thank Him for the ways He has answered your prayers. Ask Him for guidance, for help in times of trouble.

When we approach God in prayer we should include the following:

- Thanksgiving (Psalm 100:4)
- Repentance (1 John 1:8-9)
- Forgiveness towards others (Luke 6:37)
- Petitions and requests (Philippians 4:6)

Jesus taught us to pray with the 'Lord's Prayer'. Read it in Matthew 6:9-13. Find the key themes listed above within the prayer.

It's all about relationship

The whole reason God wants us to make time for reading His word and prayer is because He wants us to get to know Him. He wants to have a relationship with us. He is a Holy God but He is a personal God too. Start making time for Him in your life.

Questions:

Do you have a regular habit of reading the word of God?

Share with the person doing this book with you how you approach reading God's Word. Share any struggles you have.

Share an answer to prayer that you have received.

What do you normally pray about when you spend time in prayer?

Spend time this week learning the memory verses at the beginning of this chapter.



- Get a copy of 'How to Read the Bible' and begin to work through it. You can begin now and work through it while you are doing this booklet.
- Set aside a regular time each day to spend time with God and reading His word.
- Learn to pray with others. You can do this at Lifegroup, prayer meetings or whenever you gather together with other believers. Your prayers don't have to be perfect they just need to be heartfelt.