

THE KEY TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH

I Peter 2:1-3 – *Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ²as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

- **Nelson Study Bible Note:** **Desire** does not mean merely to want something, but rather to long for something with all of one's being. **that you may grow:** The purpose of studying God's truth is not only to learn more, but to become mature in the faith.
- **New Geneva Study Bible Note:** the emphasis at this point is not that teaching should be elementary, like the "milk" of 1 Cor. 3:1-3, but that it should be pure.

INTRO:

- **Quote:** It's hard to know you're stalled if you don't know there's a journey.
- **Quote:** Christianity is not a spectator sport.

Five most influential steps to spiritual growth:

- Believe that God is personally involved in your life.
- Ask God for guidance daily.
- Reflect on scripture regularly.
- Have six or more meaningful conversations with unbelievers in a year.
- Be a tither.
- **Note:** regularly reflecting on scripture for meaning in your life is #1 by far!

II Timothy 3:16, 17 [NLT] – *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.*

Practice God's Word.

- Ask yourself, "What does God's Word have to say about this?"
- The Bible is not just a reference book; it should become the DNA of our lives.
- The Bible is God in paperback form. Everything we need is there. [Marcus Way]
- As a church, the Bible should be the source and reason for everything we do.
- **Pastor Russ Austin** [Jacksonville, FLA] – "...if your business is failing or your marriage is failing or you're failing as a parent, the principles for getting things back on track are in the Word of God. The reason you're failing is you don't know and apply the Word of God.
- **Pastor Steve Milazzo** – "People don't realize that faith isn't about making a commitment to attend services. It's about allowing the Holy Spirit to change who you are on the inside – the transformation that occurs only by God, not by us."

We need a “new normal.”

- **Imagine** hearing scripture quoted in foyer, the parking lot, at the welcome center over coffee, from parents checking on their kids and ministry team members straightening up after services.
- **Imagine** every congregant, when challenged by life, asking themselves, “What does the Bible have to say about this?”
- **Imagine** we, as church leaders, modeling this new normal in our own lives.
- **Todd Wagner:** “Church leaders need to bleed scriptures when they’re cut.”

Hebrews 4:12 [AMP] – *For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power [making it active, operative, energizing, and effective]; it is sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating to the dividing line of the breath of life (soul) and [the immortal] spirit, and of joints and marrow [of the deepest parts of our nature], exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.*

- The Word is alive, not old or archaic.
- The Word is full of power – energy.
- The Word is sharp and cuts both ways.
- The Word goes deep.
- The Word deals with our hearts. [More about thoughts than acts]