

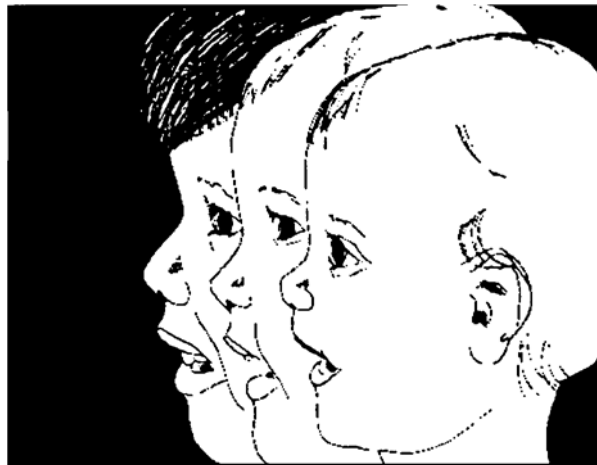
Lesson
4

Do You Want to Grow?

You have been born into God's family. Now you need to grow. How can you do this? In some ways spiritual growth is like physical growth. To grow physically, you must eat the right kind of food, get the proper amount, avoid harm and danger, and get enough exercise.

To grow spiritually, you must do the same kinds of things. Spiritual growth does not just happen. God has planned for you to take an active part in the changes He wants to make in your life. You must learn to feed your soul on God's Word, rest in His promises, avoid things that will destroy your spiritual health, and choose to do what He says will make you strong. If you follow these steps each day, you will discover the "abundant life" God has promised to His children.

This lesson explains more about these four important principles of spiritual growth. As you study it, you will see how you can put them into practice in your own life right now. Wonderful results will follow! Harmful patterns of acting will be replaced by good ones. You will grow day by day into the kind of mature person God wants you to become.



In this lesson you will study . . .

Feed Your Soul Every Day
Rest in the Lord
Keep Spiritually Healthy
Exercise Your Spiritual Muscles

This lesson will help you to . . .

- Grow spiritually.
- Overcome discouragement and worry.
- Maintain your spiritual health.
- Serve God better.

FEED YOUR SOUL EVERY DAY

Objective 1. *Choose to feed your soul each day through prayer and the Word of God.*

Talking with God feeds your soul. God speaks to you through His Word, and you speak to Him in prayer.

Matthew 4:4. But Jesus answered, “The scripture says, ‘Man cannot live on bread alone, but needs every word that God speaks.’”

1 Peter 2:2. Be like newborn babies, always thirsty for the pure spiritual milk, so that by drinking it you may grow up and be saved.

The Word of God, the Bible, is the spiritual milk that you must drink often.

Does the Bible seem hard for you to understand? Before you start reading it each day, ask the Lord to make it clear to you. Ask older Christians or your pastor any questions you may have about it.

Take advantage of every opportunity to receive Bible teaching in Sunday school, other church services, and special courses like this one. You can also feed your soul with gospel literature.

Do you want to grow rapidly in the Lord? Eat well. You should read at least one chapter a day from the New Testament. This part of the Bible tells us about our Lord Jesus Christ and teaches us how we ought to live. It is good to learn some of the verses that you especially like. In this way you develop an appetite for the Word of God.

Psalms 119:97, 103. How I love your law! I think about it all day long. How sweet is the taste of your instructions—sweeter even than honey!



For You To Do

1 Following are listed several activities. Choose those that will help you grow spiritually.

- a** Reading Christian literature
- b** Arguing with others about religion
- c** Doing penance and religious rituals
- d** Studying the Bible and praying to God

2 Will you sign this promise? Lord, with Your help I will try to read some of Your Word every day of my life. When I cannot read it, I will quote portions of it from memory or ask someone to read it to me. I will feed my soul on Your Word.

Signed

Date

REST IN THE LORD

Objective 2. *State how you can overcome feelings of weakness, fear, and discouragement.*

Do you feel too weak to do what the Lord wants you to do? You can't go to heaven by your own efforts to be good or because of any good works that you have done. You are on your way there because you are a child of God and your heavenly Father is leading you. He will take care of you. Let your faith rest in His promises.

Have your first steps with the Lord been unsteady? Have you stumbled and fallen and felt that it's no use trying? Take courage, because your Father, who gave you this new life, is holding your hand and will lift you up again. Rest in His presence. Commit yourself each day to God in prayer, confessing your own weakness and asking Him to give you the strength you need to overcome every temptation.

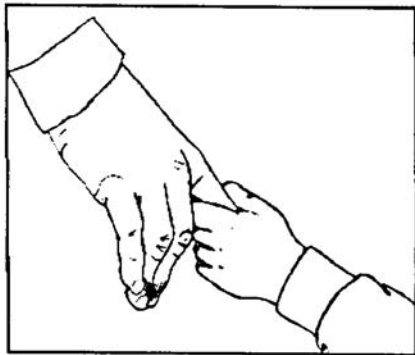
Isaiah 40:31. But those who trust in the Lord for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak.

Do some of the problems of life bother you? Are you afraid? Do you feel discouraged because you are overworked? You need to rest in the Lord so that worry, discouragement, and fear will not slow or stop your spiritual growth.

Do you know how to get this rest? Have faith. Believe what God has promised and look to Him instead of looking at your problems. This is faith. Here is what Jesus said.

Matthew 11:28. "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 6:31-33. "So do not start worrying: 'Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?'" (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things."



Taking time for Bible reading and prayer every day will help you reach this place of rest in God. As you pray, put every problem in the Lord's hands and leave it there, believing He will do what is best.



For You To Do

3 Memorize Isaiah 40:31. This verse says that those who find their strength renewed are those who

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4 Read three times Matthew 11:28 and Matthew 6:31-33.

5 Is there something you are worrying about right now? Ask God to help you give it to Him so you can be free to serve Him and His kingdom instead.

KEEP SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY

Objective 3. *Take steps to keep yourself spiritually healthy.*

Avoid Disease: Stay Clean

Just like a mother tries to keep her children clean and protects them from things that would make them sick, the Lord wants to keep you away from things that would make your soul sick. When He saved you, He washed away your sins and gave you a clean heart. It's very important to keep it that way if you want to be spiritually healthy.

Let the Lord walk with you and be your guide. Stay out of the mud and filth of indecent amusements and immoral living. Don't go where the Lord wouldn't go. Keep clean in your thoughts, words, and actions.



For You To Do

- 6 God wants you to avoid indecent amusements and immoral practices because He doesn't want you to
- a) become spiritually weak and sick.
 - b) relax and enjoy life.
 - c) spend time with unbelievers.

Matthew 5:8. "Happy are the pure in heart; they will see God."

What you think about is important! If you let your mind dwell on unclean thoughts, they will infect your soul, weaken your will, and cause you to fall into sin.

You can ask God to stop you from actually doing things that are against His will. However, your responsibility doesn't end there. If you want to please Him, you must also stop thinking about doing such things. Ask God to help you shut out bad thoughts. Don't read books, look at pictures, or listen to stories that are indecent and immoral.

How can you control your thoughts? You must take positive steps to keep them pure. Here's what the Bible says:

Philippians 4:8. Fill your mind with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable.

Make this verse your daily prayer:

Psalms 19:14. May my words and my thoughts be acceptable to you, O Lord, my refuge and my redeemer!



For You To Do

- 7 Circle the letter before each TRUE statement.
- a Thoughts can be controlled with God’s help.
 - b Bad thoughts are impossible to control.
 - c The Bible tells us to fill our minds with good thoughts.
 - d A person who is a Christian never thinks bad thoughts.
 - e The only step you must take to control your thoughts is to ask God to take bad thoughts away.
- 8 Perhaps you struggle with bad thoughts. Review the steps you need to take. Underline each one that you will begin doing now.

I will ask for God’s help.

I will meditate on God’s Word, the Bible.

I will fill my mind with good things.

I will avoid books, pictures, and stories that are evil and immoral.

It is easier to give yourself completely to the Lord than it is to serve Him halfheartedly. Don’t play with sin. Get rid of anything in your life that would make you spiritually sick.

1 John 1:7, 9. But if we live in the light—just as he is in the light—then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin. . . . If we confess our sins to God . . . he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing.

The blood of Jesus washes us clean from our sinful acts and our sinful thoughts.

Avoid Disease: Don’t Take Poison

Certain attitudes or feelings are deadly poison for both soul and body. Anger, worry, envy, hatred, suspicion, fear, resentment, and impatience can cause bad digestion, ulcers, heart trouble, and other diseases. They choke our spiritual life too and cause all kinds of trouble. Pride, selfishness, unbelief, and stubbornness are also spiritual poison. They take away a Christian’s joy and leave the soul weak, sickly, and unhappy. Every morning ask God to keep you from taking any of this poison during the day.

If you ever feel weak and sick spiritually, remember that Jesus is the Great Physician. Go to Him sincerely in prayer, and He will give you spiritual, mental, and physical health.



For You To Do

- 9 Listed below are some poisons you must keep out of your mind. Underline any that are a problem for you, and ask God to help you stop taking them.

Anger

Hatred

Resentment

Worry

Suspicion

Impatience

Envy

Fear

EXERCISE YOUR SPIRITUAL MUSCLES

Objective 4. *Describe what you can do to strengthen your spiritual life.*


The body is strengthened by exercise, and the soul is strengthened by working for God. From the first day of your new life, there are several things you can do to show your gratitude to the Lord for His salvation. As you grow spiritually and learn more of His Word, the Lord will give you more opportunities and responsibilities in His work.

Some of these spiritual exercises are telling others about Jesus, praying for them, and inviting them to church. Taking part in church and fighting against sin will help you grow spiritually.

10 Describe something you can do this week to make your spiritual life stronger.

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1 Corinthians 15:58. Keep busy always in your work for the Lord, since you know that nothing you do in the Lord's service is ever useless.

**Check Your Answers**

- 6** a) become spiritually weak and sick.
- 1** Activities **a** and **d** will help you grow spiritually.
- 7** Statements **a** and **c** are true.
- 3** trust in God.