

AM I GROWING?



Study Guide

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AM I GROWING?

Part 1: Growing Spiritually

WARM-UP QUESTION

True or false: "I will automatically grow spiritually if I read the Bible, pray, and go to church. Why or why not?"

DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

"Spiritual growth is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives." (Grudem)

Key Scriptures:

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
(2 Peter 3:18)*

"For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." (Romans 8:29)

FOUR REASONS WHY SPIRITUAL GROWTH IS IMPORTANT

- It strengthens our faith: Spiritual growth helps us stand firm in trials and remain faithful to God. (James 1:12)
- It draws us closer to God: As we grow spiritually, our relationship with God deepens, leading to peace and joy. (James 4:8)
- It equips us for God's purpose: Growth enables us to fulfill our God-given calling and serve others effectively. (2 Timothy 3:17)
- It reflects Christ to others. A spiritually mature life becomes a testimony, drawing others to Christ. (Matthew 5:16)

ROADBLOCKS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- Lack of Time with God: Neglecting prayer, Bible study, or worship prevents growth.
- Unconfessed Sin: Harboring sin disrupts our fellowship with God. (Isaiah 59:2; 1 John 1:6-9)

- Spiritual Apathy: A lukewarm attitude leads to stagnation. (Revelation 3:16)
- Negative Influences: Worldly distractions or relationships can pull us away from God. (1 John 2:16)
- Pride and Self-Sufficiency: Depending on ourselves instead of God hinders reliance on His power. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

FIVE STEPS TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

- Prioritize God's Word: Daily reading and meditation on Scripture provide wisdom and direction (Psalm 119:105).
- Pray without ceasing: Maintain an ongoing conversation with God about everything (1 Thessalonians 5:17) .
- Fellowship regularly with other believers: Fellowship with other Christians encourages and challenges spiritual growth (Heb. 10:24-25).
- Serve others: Using our gifts to serve deepens our faith and mirrors Christ's humility (Matt. 20:28).
- Be led by the Holy Spirit: Surrender daily to the Spirit's guidance and correction (Gal. 5:16).

APPLICATION

- Ask yourself which of the roadblocks to spiritual growth do you most resonate with? Why?
- Ask God to reveal areas of needed growth, to provide strength to overcome roadblocks, and to ignite a deeper passion for Him.
- What step will you take this week to grow spiritually, and how can we in Prime Time pray for you in that?

AM I GROWING?

Part 2: Growing in God's Word



Even though the Bible is the best-selling and most widely distributed book in the world, very few people actually read it, including Christians. Why do you suppose this is happening?

WHY READ THE BIBLE?

Reading the Bible is essential because it is God's Word, offering guidance, wisdom, and truth for every aspect of life. It reveals God's character, His plan for salvation through Jesus Christ, and His purpose for your life. The Bible provides encouragement in trials, clarity in confusion, and a foundation for hope and peace. By reading it, you deepen your relationship with God, learn to live in alignment with His will, and gain strength to navigate life's challenges with faith and confidence.

HOW TO STUDY A BIBLE BOOK (W⁵H)

Ask yourself the following six questions when reading a book of the Bible:

- Who: Who is the author? Who are the intended recipients?
- When: When was this book written?
- Why: Why did the author write this book?
- What: What is the main purpose of the book?
- Where: Where were the author and the intended audience?
- How: How is the book structured? Look for an outline of the book which will show its main points, subpoints, etc. You may also want to try outlining the book yourself.

HOW TO STUDY A BIBLE CHAPTER (7Cs)

Read a chapter in the Bible then jot down these seven aspects:

- Caption: Give a short descriptive title. The shorter the title the easier it will be to remember it.

- Contents: Describe, summarize, paraphrase, outline, or simply make a list of major points in a chapter.
- Chief people: List the most important people in the chapter and state why they are included.
- Choice verse: Choose a verse that summarizes the whole chapter or one which speaks to you personally.
- Challenges: List any difficulties you may have with the passage, statements that are not clear to you.
- Central lesson: Write down the major principles, insights, and lessons you learn from this chapter.
- Conclusion: This is the application portion of your study. Write down some actions you would like to take from this chapter.

HOW TO STUDY A BIBLE TOPIC (S-E-A-T)

- Select a topic: Most Bibles have a list of topics that can be found in the back of your Bible (concordance).
- Examine the topic: Look up each reference shown in the concordance and note what each passage says about the topic
- Analyze your notes: Read through them several times observing what they say.
- Test against extra-biblical sources (commentaries, etc.).



BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

- Study Bibles with commentary notes, maps, outlines, etc. (e.g. NIV “Life Application Bible”)
- Bible commentaries (e.g. The MacArthur Bible Commentary)
- Bible dictionaries (e.g. Zondervan Pictorial Dictionary)
- Bible handbooks (e. g. Halley’s Bible Handbook)
- Bible study software/applications (e.g. Accordance Bible Software)

Note: Free Bible study tools can be found at www.TaylorNotes.Info/resources-details



AM I GROWING?

Part 3: Why Pray if God Knows?

SELF ASSESSMENT	Often	Sometimes	Never
I find praying to be more of a duty than a delight			
I often don't know what to pray for			
I don't see many answers to my prayers			
I feel uncomfortable asking God to bless me			
I pray mostly about other people's physical needs			

WHY PRAY WHEN GOD ALREADY KNOWS?



If God already knows what I'm about to say to him in prayer, and even the response I'd like? Why then should I go through the effort of praying to him?

Jesus answers this question in Matthew 6:8-13 by explaining that prayer is not about telling God what he already knows, it's about relating to him.

Notice what Jesus says in the Lord's prayer.

*"Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy
Matt. 6:8-9 NLT*

- We are to acknowledge God's holiness and authority
- We are to have reverence for God as a loving Father emphasizing His holiness and majesty.
- We are to start our prayers with worship, recognizing God's sovereign and his exalted position.

"May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Matt. 6:10 NLT

- We are to seek God's will. This expresses a desire for God's rule and reign to manifest fully on earth.
- We are to align their lives with God's purposes, seeking His will above their own.

"Give us today the food we need..." Matt. 6:11 NLT

- We are to acknowledge our dependence on God for our daily needs (Matt. 6:11). This reflects trust in God as the provider of physical and spiritual sustenance. It also encourages living one day at a time, relying on God's provision rather than being consumed by worry about the future (Matthew 6:34).

"and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us..." (Matt. 6:12 NLT

- We are to seek God's forgiveness for sins and extend forgiveness to others. Forgiveness is a cornerstone of Christian living, reflecting God's grace and love in relationships.

"...and don't let us yield to temptation but rescue us from the evil one." (Matt. 6:13 NLT

- We are to acknowledge our human vulnerability to sin and ask for divine guidance and protection.

IS GOD IGNORING MY PRAYERS?

What should you do if you pray about something very important, but it feels like God is ignoring your request because you see no response?

- Trust God's wisdom and timing (Isaiah 55:8-9). God may be answering in ways you don't yet see or working out something greater in His timing.

My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. 9 For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. (Isa 55:8-9 NLT)

- Don't give up praying. The Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8) teaches perseverance in prayer. Jesus encourages persistence, not giving up, even when answers seem delayed.

One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up.² "There was a judge in a certain city," he said, "who neither feared God nor cared about people."³ A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, 'Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.'⁴ The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people,'⁵ but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!'"⁶ Then the Lord said, "Learn a lesson from this unjust judge."⁷ Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?⁸ I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?" (Luk 18:1-8 NLT)

- Have you been asking for the wrong things? (Psalm 66:18; James 4:3).

"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Psalm 66:18

"And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong - you want only what will give you pleasure. James 4:3 NLT

- Ensure your prayers align with God's will, and there is no unconfessed sin or selfish motives hindering your prayer (James 4:3).
- Shift your focus from what you want to what God wants (Luke 22:42).
- Pray for God's name to be glorified in the situation. As Jesus modeled in Luke 22:42: "Not my will, but Yours be done."
- Have confidence in God's goodness (Romans 8:28).

WHY PRAY WHEN EVERYTHING IS OK?

How can we pray for ourselves, or Christian friends, when everything is going well? Here are five ways (Hint: See Colossians 1:9-11).

So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.¹⁰ Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.¹¹ We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy (Col 1:9-11 NLT)

- Col. 1:9: Pray that God would help them know his will and give them spiritual wisdom and understanding.

- Col. 1:10a: Pray that God would enable them to live a life that honors him.
- Col. 1:10b: Pray that God would give them fruitfulness in their actions and relationships.
- Col. 1:10c: Pray that God would help them know him better by increasing in their knowledge of who he is.
- Col. 1:11: Pray that God to give them endurance, patience and joy as they face challenges in their daily lives.

SUMMARY

- Prayer is not about informing God; it is about your relationship with God.
- If it seems that God is ignoring your prayers it may be that you are asking for the wrong things.
- Pray for your Christian friends even when they are not sick.

AM I GROWING?

Part 4: How Can I Know God's Will?

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Knowing God's will is one of the biggest concerns for most Christians.

Knowing God's will is essential for anyone seeking to live a life of purpose and alignment with God. It provides clarity and direction, enabling believers to make decisions that honor God and reflect His love and wisdom. Understanding His will deepens one's relationship with Him, fostering trust and reliance on His guidance even in uncertain circumstances. By seeking God's will, believers embrace a life of faith and obedience, experiencing the peace and fulfillment that comes from walking in step with His divine purpose.

FIVE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT GOD'S WILL

- Misconception #1: God makes all decisions, I make none (psychotic approach). This is not what scripture teaches. Notice the freedom to make decisions described in the following verses:
 - I Corinthians 10:27 "...and you want to go..."
 - II Corinthians 9:7 "...each man has decided in his own heart."
 - I Corinthians 7:36 "...he should do as he wants..."
 - Ecclesiastes 9:10a "...whatever your hand finds to do..."
 - I Corinthians 10:31 "...or whatever you do..."
 - Genesis 2:16 "...you are free to eat of any tree...but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..." (limit).
- Misconception #2: God's will is revealed only through my feelings (psychic approach).
 - Feelings are misleading and unreliable.
 - Feelings are often substituted for God's Word.
 - Feelings are vulnerable to our old nature.
 - Feelings are difficult to interpret.

- Example: “God is giving such strong feelings for another man even though I am already married.”
- Misconception #3: God’s will is revealed only through supernatural signs (supernatural signs approach). Examples:
 - “If there is a parking space free, God wants me to shop here.”
 - “If she answers the phone on the second ring, God wants me to marry her.”
 - “If God wants me to tithe, He’ll give me a 10% pay raise.”
 - Fleece setting restricts God’s will (Judges 6:36-40).
 - Fleece setting limits God’s will only to “this choice,” or “that choice.”
 - Gideon sensed that he was pressuring God by using this method (Judges 6:39 “...do not be angry with me...”).
 - Example: Rather than saying “God which of these two colleges is best?”, it may be God’s will to go to either college.
- Misconception #4: God’s will is found only by following a systematic procedure (standard procedure approach).
 - Great men of the Lord often practiced different ways to find God’s will.
 - George Muller had a five-step sequence.
 - F.B. Meyer used a simple sequence stated in one sentence to determine God’s will.
 - There is no universal procedure for finding God’s will.
 - Trying to follow a standard procedure to find God’s will can lead to: legalism, superstition, and discouragement.
 - Don’t ask what God’s will for me is, ask what God’s will is.
- Misconception #5: God is hiding His will, and I must find it (shell game approach).

THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOD’S WILL

- Principle No. 1: God’s will never conflicts with God’s Word.
- Principle No. 2: God’s will is based on an obedient relationship, not on a system (John 14:23; Revelation 3:20). “Seek the guide, not guidance.”
- Principle No. 3: God allows you to make decisions within His limits. His wisdom helps us fill the gap between His principles, promises and commands.

GOD WANTS YOU TO KNOW HIS WILL...

- Because He wants you to experience His perfect constant unchangeable love in your everyday lives (James 1:17).

Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow. (Jam 1:17 NLT)

- Because He wants to establish an intimate, personal relationship with you (Jeremiah 9:24).

But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the LORD who demonstrates unfailing love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth, and that I delight in these things. I, the LORD, have spoken! (Jer 9:24 NLT)

- Because He wants your priorities to line up with his priorities (Matthew 6:33).

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. (Mat 6:33 NLT)

- Because He knows you are human, and you don't always understand what is happening in your life (Proverbs 3:5-6; 20:24).

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. (Pro 3:5 NLT)

- Because He wants you to worry less about your needs and trust him more in your everyday life (1 Pet. 5:7).

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. (1Pe 5:7 NLT)

OBSTACLES TO KNOWING GOD'S WILL

- Not wanting to know God's will because the result would be unpleasant (Jonah 1:1-3).

The LORD gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: ² "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are." ³ But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the LORD. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD by sailing to Tarshish. (Jonah 1:1-3 NLT)

- Limiting God's will through "fleece setting" (Judges 6:36-40).

Then Gideon said to God, "If you are truly going to use me to rescue Israel as you promised, 37 prove it to me in this way. I will put a wool fleece on the threshing floor tonight. If the fleece is wet with dew in the morning but the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to help me rescue Israel as you promised." 38 And that is just what happened. When Gideon got up early the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out a whole bowlful of water. 39 Then Gideon said to God, "Please don't be angry with me, but let me make one more request. Let me use the fleece for one more test. This time let the fleece remain dry while the ground around it is wet with dew." 40 So that night God did as Gideon asked. The fleece was dry in the morning, but the ground was covered with dew. (Judges 6:36-7:1 NLT)

Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the LORD your God.'" (Mat 4:7 NLT)

- Not waiting patiently for the Lord but acting hastily on your own (Proverbs 19:2).

Enthusiasm without knowledge is no good; haste makes mistakes. (Prov. 19:2 NLT)

- Thinking that God reveals His will only when faced with big or critical decisions (cf. Prov. 3:5-6).

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." (Prov. 3:5-6)

- Thinking that you must understand all the details of God's will (Isaiah 55:8,9).

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. (Isa 55:8 NLT)

HOW TO SEEK GOD'S WILL

- Keep a close relationship with God through regular prayer and reading His Word.
 - God's Word = God's will!
 - Don't just read God's Word, study it.
 - Meditate on it.

- Ask God for wisdom when making decisions. Wisdom fills the gaps between the principles promises in commands of God.
 - Wisdom is abundantly available to anyone who asks for it (James 1:5; 3:17).
 - Ask others to pray for you as you seek God's will (Colossians 1:9).
- Make yourself neutral before God when seeking his will.
 - God doesn't reveal his will until that person is open to receiving it.
 - Describe what you want on a piece of paper, then throw it away.
 - Without becoming neutral we may read into God's Word what we want it to say (eisegesis).
- Be patient when seeking God's will (Matthew 7:7-8).

Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. (Mat 7:7-8 NLT)

THREE MARKERS FOR KNOWING GOD'S WILL

- **Marker No. 1:** You will have a clear conscience.

Don't ignore the warnings and promptings of the conscience. To do so is to run the risk of missing God's will (1 Peter 3:16).

But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. (1Peter 3:16 NLT)

- **Marker No. 2:** It will be consistent with God's Word.

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." (Psalm 119:105)

- **Marker No. 3:** You will have peace about it.

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! (Isa 26:3 NLT)

End Notes

¹ Douglas, Alban, "God's Answers to Man's Questions," 1976, p. 150.

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