

WHY BAPTISTS BELIEVE WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE, PART 12

PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

In *[Question 14]* there are five principles of spiritual growth that are listed. You will notice rather lengthy passages of scripture accompany each one of these. I encourage you to look these verses up on your own time. For now, let me give you the answers...

Principle 1 - We must **read** the **Bible** (James 1:18-27). This is what James refers to as the "word of truth," as "the implanted word," as "the perfect law." In this passage he says that we must be "quick to hear" what the word of God says.

Principle 2 - We must **pray** (Matthew 26:31-75). That sounds simple. In Matthew 26 we have the account of Jesus' betrayal by Judas. Jesus takes His most trusted circle of disciples - Peter, James and John and goes to the Garden of Gethsemane (the night that He is going to be betrayed) to pray. He tells His disciples to keep watching and praying. Why? **To avoid falling into temptation.** By the way, this is the answer to *[Question 17]* later. As it turned out, instead of praying, they fell asleep. When Jesus was arrested later that night, we're told in verse 56 that "all the disciples left Him and fled." They abandoned their Lord. They failed to pray. They got in the flesh and became fearful. So, there's a lesson here about the danger of prayerlessness.

Principle 3 - We must **fellowship** with other **believers** (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). This passage talks about spiritual gifts and how they are used in the body of Christ. We need each other. We all have an important role in the work Jesus has called us to do. The Great Commission. That's our task in the body of Christ. So, fellowship is important and not just for the social aspects, but for the benefit of us corporately, as a church, carrying out His

kingdom work. We need to take that message out where it needs to go.

Principle 4 – We must **witness** for **Christ** (Acts 26:12-29). Acts Chapter 26 gives the account of Paul witnessing to King Agrippa. He is telling him what he had experienced. He is giving his testimony. That's all witnessing is. It's telling OUR story to others about what God did for US, how He changed our lives. If you want to use tracts or the Roman Roads that is fine. But if you tell them what happened to you, they can't argue with that. So, this is what Paul is doing with King Agrippa. And if you remember that story, Agrippa came close to accepting Christ.

Principle 5 – We must **obey** God (Romans 6:14-23). The Romans 6 passage talks about how we were once slaves to sin, but now we have become slaves to righteousness. You and I are slaves to someone or something. That's what Paul says. We've been set free from sin, but we have become slaves of God. We're not our own. We belong to Him. We talked about Jesus being Lord. That is what Lord means. He is our Master. He is our Lord.

“Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). Later Peter says this: “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation” (1 Peter 2:2).

[Question 15] Peter is talking to Christians in these verses. Putting them together, what is the spiritual food for a Christian?
The Word of God.

[Question 16] Let's go to a series of True – False questions based on a series of scriptures about God's word.

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law

he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers” (Psalm 1:1-3).

True or false? We should meditate on the Word of God day and night. That’s **True.**

“If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples...” (John 8:31).

True or false? Jesus said that those who read and believe God’s Word are truly His disciples. Although He didn’t put it in those exact words, we learned from our previous study that the only way to “abide” in Jesus, to stay connected to Him is through His Word. So, this one is **True.**

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

True or false? “The mind is willing but the flesh is weak.” Jesus actually said, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” So, this one is **False.**

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

True or false? We are to pray at least three times a day. No, we are to pray without ceasing, to be in a constant attitude of prayer. So then, that’s **False.**

[Question 17] I answered this one earlier when we read Matthew 26:41. Again, why did Jesus command His disciples to keep watching and praying? **To avoid falling into temptation.** Remember, Satan, our adversary “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). So, watch out! You need to be praying so you don’t fall into temptation. The devil is coming back around.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

[Question 18] What did the new believers continue to do? They continued to (1) **fellowship**, (2) break bread (a possible reference to **observing the Lord’s Supper**), (3) **pay attention to the apostles’ teaching** and (4) **pray**. Later in Acts we read that the church DID give. They helped out poor believers who were in need. We also know that Paul and others later went on mission trips. And while singing in the choir and giving tithes and offerings aren’t specifically mentioned in this passage, they are certainly worthwhile activities. We know that giving IS instructed in other passages, just not this one.

A witness is a person who tells what they have **seen** and **heard**. They share their own personal **experience**. I just talked about how Paul witnessed to King Agrippa. Witnessing is the overflow of the Christian life. If our lives have truly been changed and filled by Jesus Christ, we cannot help but **share** or **tell** what He has done in our life with those we meet.

[Question 20] Question: Why can’t you serve two masters? Answer: **Matthew 6:24**: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” Divided loyalties mean that you cannot be committed to both.

Question: How much are we to love the Lord? Answer: **Matthew 22:37-38**: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.” We should love God with all of our heart, soul and mind.

Question: How can you show that you love Him? Answer: **John 14:15, 21**: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments...

Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” Show your love by keeping His commandments.

Question: Where do we get the power to obey God? Answer: **Philippians 2:13**: “For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” He gives the power to us through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. He is the one who gives us the power to live the Christian life.

Question: Why is obeying Christ imperative? Answer: **Luke 6:46-49**: “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.” By obeying Christ, we will have a solid life foundation.

Let’s review... Are you saved? If so, are you a spiritual or fleshly Christian? Is your life pleasing to God? Are you living like Jesus? What is God’s Holy Spirit convicting you of that you need to do. Whatever that is I encourage you to get that settled with Him today. The storms of life, they ARE coming. For some of us, they’re already here. Will you be ready for them? I encourage each of us to get the house of our lives in order.