

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 foods, get the proper amount, avoid harm and danger, and get enough exercise.

To grow spiritually, you must do similar 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 the principles, you will see how you can put them into practice in your own life. Wonderful results will follow! Harmful actions in your life will be replaced by good ones, and you will grow daily into the mature person God wants you to become.

The Plan

- A. Feed Your Soul Every Day
- B. Rest in the Lord
- C. Keep Spiritually Healthy
- D. Exercise Your Spiritual Muscles

The Goals

- 1. Identify ways to grow spiritually.
- 2. Use biblical tools to overcome discouragement and worry.
- 3. Show the importance of maintaining your spiritual health.
- 4. Point out ways to serve God better.

A. FEED YOUR SOUL EVERY DAY

Goal 1. Identify ways to grow spiritually.

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

Matthew 4:4 “Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”””

1 Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.”

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 other 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 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.

Psalm 119:97 “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.”

Psalm 119:103 “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

Application

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



B. REST IN THE LORD

Goal 2. Use biblical tools to overcome discouragement and worry.

Do you feel too weak to do what the Lord wants you to do? You cannot 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. 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 is no use trying? Take courage. 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 to overcome every temptation.

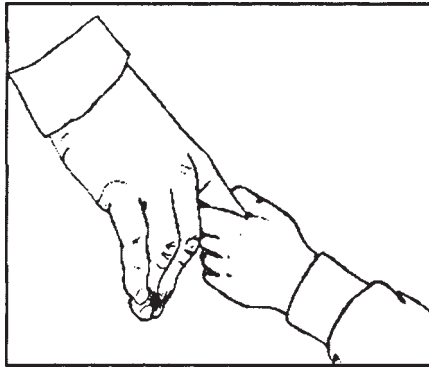
Isaiah 40:31 “But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Do life’s problems bother you? Are you afraid? Do you feel discouraged because you are overworked? 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 at your problems. Read Jesus’ words:

Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 6:31–33 “So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”



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.


Application

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

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4 Read carefully Matthew 11:28 and Matthew 6:31–33.

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



C. KEEP SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY

Goal 3. Show the importance of maintaining your spiritual health.


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 is 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 filth of indecent amusements and immoral living. Do not go where the Lord would not go. Keep clean in your thoughts, words, and actions.

Application

6 God wants you to avoid indecent amusements and immoral practices because He does not want you to

- a)** become spiritually weak and sick.
 - b)** relax and enjoy life.
 - c)** spend time with unbelievers.
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Matthew 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for 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 does not 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. Do not 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 is what the Bible says:

Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Make this verse your daily prayer:

Psalms 19:14 “May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

Application

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, magazines, pictures, TV programs, movies, and internet sites that are evil and immoral.

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

1 John 1:7, 9 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

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

Avoid Disease: Do Not Take Poison

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

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.

Application

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

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|-------|-----------|------------|
| Anger | Hatred | Resentment |
| Worry | Suspicion | Impatience |
| Envy | Fear | |



D. EXERCISE YOUR SPIRITUAL MUSCLES

Goal 4. Point out ways to serve God better.

The body is strengthened by exercise, while 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.

Application

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



1 Corinthians 15:58 “Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

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.

For Your Notes
