

# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN QUAD: Developing a Balanced Life

## Becoming Spiritually Mature

### *Introduction:*

We began our study of a Balanced Christian Life by noting that

*Maturity is a process not an event!*

We have broken the Christian life down into four parts based on Luke 2:52 where it tells us that Jesus, our example, the only perfect person who ever lived developed in four distinct areas of life:

1. In wisdom--*MENTALLY*
2. In stature--*PHYSICALLY*
3. In favor with God--*SPIRITUALLY*
4. In favor with men--*SOCIALLY*

Today we look at the area of Spiritual Maturity and, of course, the Scriptures have much to say on this subject.

I have chosen 2 Peter 3:18 as my key verse for this section. In this chapter Peter is warning believers to hold fast to sound doctrine, and *not only to remain true or maintain the status quo, but to continue to grow spiritually.*

He sums this up in verse 17,

*"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, ..."*

And then in verse 18 he commands them,

*"but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him {be} the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."*

Our spiritual well being drives our entire life: the mental, the physical, and the social.

This is true because we are made **new creatures**, re-made when we are saved and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us.

2 Corinthians 5:17 makes this perfectly clear:

*"Therefore if any man is in Christ, {he is} a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."*

We have become a spiritual being capable of reconstructing our mental, physical, and our social lives. How is this to be accomplished?

Is this a magical process that comes with out obedience, discipline, effort and commitment? Not quite! Remember *Maturity is a process not an event!* This process includes The Scriptures, The Spirit and Total Submission.

## I. THE SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:16 and 17:

*"All Scripture is inspired by God (God breathed) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate (or mature), equipped for every good work.*

D. L. Moody described his early experience with the Bible like this,

*"I prayed for faith, and thought that some day faith would come down and strike me like a bolt of lightning. But faith did not seem to come. One day I read in the tenth chapter of Romans, 'Now faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.' I had closed my Bible and asked for faith. I now opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing ever since."*

## **A. Necessary for Life**

1 Peter 2:2 and 3 instructs us,

***"like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."***

A baby screams to be fed because it thinks its starving to death every time it's hungry. A baby knows it **needs** food.

We should sense a need for the Word that is just as compelling since, in truth, if we are not ingesting the Scripture we are slowly shriveling up spiritually.

We don't grow out of this need either. Consider Job. God told Satan,

***"Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."*** (Job 1:8)

Sounds like a mature follower of God to me. How did Job feel about the Word of God? In Job 23:12 we find out:

*"I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."*

The last phrase of the verses we began with, 1 Peter 2: 2 and 3 seem to question the sincerity of our faith if we if we don't have that driving desire. Look again:

***"like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."***

If we do not desire the milk, then the bread, and finally the meat of the Word perhaps that is the reason we do not live a Spirit filled, life.

## **B. Necessary for Wisdom**

Psalm 19:7 shows how the Scriptures bring wisdom into our lives:

***"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple (open minded)."***

The antidote for spiritual foolishness is knowledge of Bible Doctrine. Wisdom is the ability to apply the knowledge of that doctrine to our Christian experience.

John 8:31 and 32 expands on this benefit:

*"Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, **"If you abide in My word, {then} you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."***

It is hard work to study the Bible, but it results in learning that makes us free to be all that God wants for us to be.

### C. Necessary for Joy

You already know that Biblical joy and happiness comes not from persons, possessions, or circumstances but from a proper personal relationship with Jesus and a proper response to His Word.

If we love Him we will keep His commandments and Psalm 19:8 says:

*"The precepts of the LORD are right, **rejoicing the heart (or making the heart joyful),...**"*

True joy comes from a proper response to God's precepts.

True joy comes from knowing what God wants us to do, and doing it. Jeremiah found this to be true:

*"Thy words were found and I ate them (meditating on and assimilated them), And **Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts.*** (Jeremiah 15:16)

### D. Necessary for Righteousness

The Study of the Scriptures naturally leads to a proper life-style.

Colossians 3:16 and 17 tells us to,

*"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms {and} hymns {and} spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. **And whatever you do in word or deed, {do} all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."***

Our main line of defense against sin and encouragement to live righteously comes from a working knowledge of Scripture.

Psalms 119 verses 9 and 11 support this truth:

*"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping {it} according to Thy word.... **Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee."***

***Bonus Promise: Isaiah 55:11,***

*"So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding {in the matter} for which I sent it."*

## II. THE SPIRIT

Being Spirit filled is allowing the Spirit that dwells in us to dwell in us richly. To have access to every area of our lives and powerfully affect us. The Holy Spirit is indispensable and necessary.

### A. Necessary for Salvation

Romans 10:17 tells us, *"So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."*

The Holy Spirit was responsible for the transmission of that Word to us. Look at 2 Peter 1:21,

*"for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, **but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**"*

1 Corinthians 12:13 explains the part the Holy Spirit played in the salvation process:

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."*

The Spirit joins all believers to the Body of Christ. This is something all believers experience at the moment of conversion when the Spirit comes to live within us.

Titus 3:5 and 6, *"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, **by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit**, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ..."*

### B. Necessary for Power

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to hope as we work and preserve and wait for the Lord's return. Paul reminded the Romans of this in Romans 15:13,

*"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you **may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**"*

The Holy Spirit pours out the love of God into our hearts, which brings maturity. Romans 5:3-5 explains it this way:

*"And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, **because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**"*

The Holy Spirit enables us to remember, understand and obey the Word.

John 14:23 Jesus begins this thought,

*"Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."*

Continuing in verse 25 Jesus says,

*"These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you." Then in verse 26, "**But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.**"*

The Holy Spirit also helps us to keep that teaching pure and accurate as 2 Timothy 1:13 explains,

*"**Retain the standard of sound words** which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. **Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure** which has been entrusted to {you}."*

### **C. Necessary for Communication**

The Holy Spirit gives us the power communicate the gospel, to witness as expressed in Matthew 28:19 and 20:

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Jesus is with us through His Spirit who actually lives in us.*

Our witness includes our changed lives. Sam Shoemaker wrote,

*"... The greatest argument and proof for the Christian faith is the men and women in whose lives it has wrought a change, an who have learned the profound art of making real to others the faith that has changed the very nature of life itself for them."*

The Holy Spirit also aids in our communication with God through prayer. First, he is God in us:

1 John 3:24 *"And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that **He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.**"*

It is better now than when Jesus was on earth. He was with his disciples but He, through the Holy Spirit, is actually resident in us.

Secondly He helps when we don't feel like praying.

In Romans seven Paul describes the battle between the new and old nature for control of his life style that disrupts his relationship with God. He cries out, "Who shall deliver me?" His answer is that the Holy Spirit makes it possible to do what he should.

Third, He helps when we can't pray

Romans 8:26 and 27 explain it this way,

*" . . . the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, **but the Spirit Himself intercedes for {us}** with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to {the will of} God."*

### III. TOTAL SURRENDER

Back to an earlier verse that gave us an overview of what kind of surrender God expects. Romans 12:1 and 2,

*"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship.** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**"*

#### A. Necessary for Growth

In order to fulfill God's will, that good and perfect and acceptable plan for your life you must emulate the humble mind of Christ as presented by Paul in Philippians 2:5-7:

*"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,*

*who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, **taking the form of a bond-servant**, {and} being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

Becoming a voluntary servant as Jesus did commits us to a surrendered, submissive life style as explained in 2 Timothy 2:24:

*"And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, ..."*

Being humble and aware of our vulnerability we continue to carefully submit and study.

2 Timothy 2:15, *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth."*

2 Peter 3:17 and 18, *"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand (that we are venerable), be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*

#### B. Necessary for Success

Submission and humility is demanded if we are to succeed since God does the exalting, not we ourselves.

Josh. 1:8 expresses it this way, *"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."*

And Peter instructs in 1 Peter 5:6, *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time"*

***Conclusion:***

Again, we have become a spiritual being capable of reconstruction in our mental, physical, and our social lives. How is this to be accomplished?

Remember ***Maturity is a process not an event!*** It is a growth process that includes The Scriptures and The Spirit, and Total Submission to God.