



Grace for a Purpose Driven Life: The Tools for Growth and Change – Week 13

Introduction:

1. We're into our 3rd purpose in our study: Grace for a Purpose Driven Life
 2. Review the Purpose #1 and Purpose #2: [**Input:** Anybody want to tell me what they are?]
 - Purpose #1: You Were Planned for God's Pleasure (bring glory to God)**
 - Purpose #2: You Were Formed for God's Family**
 4. Last week, we started: **Purpose #3: You Were Created to Become Like Christ**
 - THAT is God's goal and objective for your life – to be like His Son
 - Romans 8:28-29 make that clear!
 5. Last week we studied how to grow and change – give a brief summary of Ephesians 4:22-24 – the 'put off' / 'put on' and renew your thinking principle
 6. Today, we want to get a little more specific about the 'instruments' or the tools that God uses to help us change/grow in the image of His Son
 - > the two tools I'm referring to are: truth and trouble (trials)
 - > Honestly, sometimes we don't like either – but both are necessary to conform us to the image of Christ – they are normal and are to be expected!
- * Let's take a look first of all at how we are . . .

I. Transformed by Truth

- That shouldn't surprise anybody to know that God's Word is one of the primary tools to help us to grow and change!
- Jesus confirmed that:
 - Matthew 4:4 **But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"**
- We can't imagine living without eating . . . though some know that better than others
- But one thing is certain, at some point, if you don't eat . . . you die!
- As physical food sustains and strengthens our bodies, so does the truth of God's Word
 - > in fact, it's impossible for you to live without it – at some point, you have to eat
- Jesus made it very clear how important the Word was to our lives: [high priestly prayer]
 - John 17:17 **Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.**

Point: A person cannot grow spiritually without the Word of God in their life:

- Acts 20:32 **And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.**

- Knowing and applying the Word of God brings . . .

A. Spiritual Growth

Input: What is the doctrine of spiritual growth called?

> progressive sanctification (explain the progressive part, and 'sanctification' = to set apart!

- **Spiritual growth is the process of becoming more conformed to the image of Christ.**

- Paul calls it being adequately equipped for every good work:

- 2 Timothy 3:16 **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

- The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make us more like the Son of God.

> Think about this for a moment – the Holy Spirit inspired 39 or 40 authors over a period of about 1,500 years!

> Do you think God would go to that much trouble and do an end-around His Word? i.e. for us to think that we can grow/change, or please God, w/o His Word being a part of our lives?

Input : What is *unique* about God's Word that it can impact our lives (change our lives)?

- Hebrews 4:12 **For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**
- 1 Peter 1:23 **for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.**
- John 6:63 **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.**

The Bible is far more than a doctrinal guidebook. God's Word generates life, creates faith, produces change, frightens the Devil, causes miracles, heals hurts, builds character, transforms circumstances, imparts joy, overcomes adversity, defeats temptation, infuses hope, releases power, cleanses our minds, brings things into being, and guarantees our future forever! We cannot live without the Word of God! Never take it for granted. – p. 186

Input: What should be our attitude toward the Word? – how about one like Job . . .

- Job 23:12 **I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.**

Q: *What evidence is there that you 'treasure' His Word? Do others see that?*

- It's not enough just to **KNOW** the Word, we are to be **DOERS** of the Word (James 1:22-25)

James 1:22 **But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.**

- John described our obedience to the Word as . . .

B. Abiding in God's Word

* Abiding in God's Word includes three activities

1. I must ACCEPT its AUTHORITY.

i.e. God's Word is my source of truth and I will submit to whatever it says – no matter the consequences – God's Word is the final authority

- not arguing or fussing – because God's Word is my authority for faith and practice
- and that's not just something we say, but something we try to PRACTICE!

2. I must ASSIMILATE its TRUTH.

Input: How does a person do that? [various answers + the following]

a. Read the Word

- Deuteronomy 17:19 **It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes.**

b. Study the Word

- 2 Timothy 2:15 **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.**
- Not just on Sunday for ABF or Worship – but personal study!
- Mention the number of resources / tools available to help us study the Word!

c. Receive God's Word – accepting it, agree that God is right and you are wrong

- While it is an issues of faith, the Word of God is our SOURCE of TRUTH
- We are 'pre-suppositionalists' = we pre-suppose two things:

- 1) There is a God (an issue of faith – you surely can't prove He doesn't exist)
- 2) He has spoken to us through His revealed Word

d. Remembering it – i.e. using it daily in everyday life situations – referring to the Word in common situations, not just on Sundays!

e. Reflect on it – meditation

- Consider these passage as you decide to hide God's word in your heart or not:
 - Psalm 119:97 **O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.**
 - John 15:7 **If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**

- Joshua 1:8 **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.**

3. I must APPLY its principles.

- James 1:22 **But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.**

Input: Reasons or “excuses” we give to avoid implementing God’s Word.

God’s Word exposes our motives, points out our faults, rebukes our sin, and expects us to change. It’s human nature to resist change, so applying God’s Word is hard work. This is why it is so important to discuss your personal applications with other people. – p. 191

Helpful Hint: The best way to become a “doer of the Word” is to always write out an action step as a result of your reading or studying or reflecting on God’s Word.

- Develop the habit of writing down exactly what you intend to do (in your relationship to God, others, or in your personal character development)

- this next one, we really don’t like, but it’s a reality! God wants us to be . . .

II. Transformed by Trouble

Input: Why don’t we like trials? [various answers]

- But the Word of God tells us enough about trials that we ought to think differently!

- 2 Corinthians 4:17 **For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison**
- 1 Peter 1:3-10 [READ]
- John 16:33 **"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."**

No one is immune to pain or insulated from suffering, and no one gets to skate through life problem-free. Life is a series of problems. Every time you solve one, another is waiting to take its place. Not all of them are big, but all are significant in God’s growth process for you. – p. 193

- Peter even told the people to whom he wrote (facing persecution):

- 1 Peter 4:12 **Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;**

Input: In what circumstances are you most likely to cry out to God?

- Psalm 34:18 **The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.**

Input: What lessons can we learn about God during trials that we wouldn't typically learn without these trials?

Examples: Daniel, Joseph, Jeremiah, Paul, three Hebrew young men

- 2 Corinthians 1:9 **Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.**

IMPORTANT: You'll never know that God is all you need until God is all you've got.

Because God is sovereignly in control, accidents are just incidents in God's good plan for you. Because every day of your life was written on God's calendar before you were born, everything that happens to you has spiritual significance. – P. 195

Input: What do we need to DO /THINK during trials?

1. Remember that God's plan is GOOD.

- Jeremiah 29:11 **'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.**
- Genesis 50:20 **"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.**

The secret of endurance is to remember that your pain is temporary but your reward will be eternal.

- 2 Corinthians 4:17 **For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,**

2. REJOICE and GIVE THANKS.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 **in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

Notice that God tells us to give thanks "in all circumstances" not "for all circumstances."

God doesn't expect you to be thankful for evil, for sin, for suffering, or for their painful consequences in the world. Instead, God wants you to thank Him that He will use your problems to fulfill His purposes. – P. 198-199

- Luke 6:23 **Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.**

3. Don't QUIT!

- Character building is a slow process
- When you grasp the eternal consequences of your character development, you'll pray fewer "comfort me" prayers and more "conform me" prayers

Chart – Contrasting views of a trial

Temporal View	Eternal View
"Comfort me" Take it away	"Conform me" Use it for your glory

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A. _____

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* **Spiritual growth is the _____ of becoming more conformed to the image of Christ.**

Input : What is *unique* about God’s Word that it can impact our lives (change our lives)?

The Bible is far more than a doctrinal guidebook. God’s Word generates life, creates faith, produces change, frightens the Devil, causes miracles, heals hurts, builds character, transforms circumstances, imparts joy, overcomes adversity, defeats temptation, infuses hope, releases power, cleanses our minds, brings things into being, and guarantees our future forever! We cannot live without the Word of God! Never take it for granted. – p. 186

Input: What should be our attitude toward the Word?

B. _____ in God’s Word

1. I must _____ its _____.

2. I must _____ its _____.

3. I must _____ its principles.

Input: Reasons or “excuses” we give to avoid implementing God’s Word.

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No one is immune to pain or insulated from suffering, and no one gets to skate through life problem-free. Life is a series of problems. Every time you solve one, another is waiting to take its place. Not all of them are big, but all are significant in God's growth process for you. – p. 193

Input: In what circumstances are you most likely to cry out to God?

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Temporal View	Eternal View
"Comfort me" Take it away	"Conform me" Use it for your glory

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