



Created to Be Like Christ

BibleTract.org

Chapter 28

Notes: This Bible Study is intended to be a companion to “The Purpose Driven Life” by Rick Warren. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

Chapter 28: It Takes Time

Can you take a short-cut to spiritual growth?

There are no shortcuts to spiritual maturity. As physical growth takes time so does spiritual growth. Grocery suppliers pick tomatoes green so that they will ship without bruising then ripen them quickly by exposing them to carbon dioxide. These kinds of tomatoes look good but do not taste as good as those that are vine-ripened.

Which is more important to God, how fast we grow or how strong we grow?

God is more interested in seeing us be prepared for eternity than how fast we get there, however long it takes...

Philippians 1:6 - He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ

When I first became a Christian, I felt that God had me on a fast-track growth program because I was like a sponge, hungry to absorb all the biblical truth that I could. But as I look back on it, I realize that my rapid growth was in accumulating knowledge about the Bible, applying these truths would come later as I had experiences that tested me. And I'm still being tested and learning as much or more now than I did before.

What is discipleship?

Discipleship is the process of conforming to Christ...

Ephesians 4:13 - till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

How long will our discipleship journey last?

This journey will last a lifetime because we will not be the full “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” until we are resurrected into the same eternal body that He has right now.

Why doesn't God instantly transform us to be like Christ, why does it take a lifetime?

Rick Warren gave five reasons: (1) we are slow learners, (2) we have a lot to unlearn, (3) we are afraid to face the truth about ourselves, (4) growth is painful and scary, and (5) habits take time to develop. I can think of a couple others: (1) life is a test since some of the burden for growth rests on our shoulders... we are being tested to determine who is worthy of receiving greater responsibility in God's kingdom, (2) it serves His purpose... even our failures can be used by God to reach people for Him that may not otherwise be reached.

How do we know we are slow learners when it comes to becoming more spiritually mature?

We know we are slow learners because there are many spiritual growth lesions that we keep having to learn over and over. The history of Israel shows how quickly we forget what God teaches us.

Why is it we have a lot to unlearn so that we may grow spiritually?

We have habits and problems that took years to develop so these issues can not be corrected overnight. This is why we need to take deliberate action to “put on” the things of God:

Ephesians 4:22-24 - put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Colossians 3:8-10 - But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

Colossians 3:14 - But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

Why are we afraid to face the truth about ourselves?

We prefer to stay in the prison of denial rather than face the truth that we need to change. It is easier to convince ourselves that we can mask our flaws than to do the hard work to correct them.

Why is a humble, teachable attitude necessary for spiritual growth?

Admitting we have a problem is the first step toward taking the actions necessary to change.

Why is spiritual growth often so painful or scary?

Growth requires change and change means that something is lost. Like a worn pair old shoes, change requires giving up something that was at least comfortable and familiar. Stepping out into the unknown always involves some degree of fear and trepidation. This fear can stifle growth.

Why do good spiritual habits take time to develop?

The only way to develop good habits is to practice them. If you practice something over time, you get good at it and you don't have to even think so much about it, it will come naturally...

1 Timothy 4:15 - Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

Why shouldn't we get in a hurry to grow spiritually?

We all go through seasons of growth where it is like springtime or summer but this is followed by a period of stabilizing and testing which is like fall or winter...

Ecclesiastes 3:1 - To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven

What is a good way to avoid forgetting the lessons we've learned from spiritual growth?

Rick Warren suggests keeping a journal of insights and life lessons that God has taught you about Himself, ourselves, life, relationships, and everything else. Reviewing this journal can keep us from having to relearn lessons...

Hebrews 2:1 - Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

Why should we be patient with God and ourselves about our spiritual growth?

Patience is no-doubt one of the lessons we need to learn...

James 1:4 - But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Trusting God to follow through on His promises in His own timing is also part of our spiritual growth. This is what Habakkuk learned about this:

Habakkuk 2:3 - For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.

Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Does anyone have a particular area of spiritual growth that you know you need to be more patient as well as persistent about?

I know I need to be more loving of my fellow man... I need to be better at loving them enough to share the gospel with them.

Does anyone have any spiritual growth objectives that you'd like to share? In what particular way would you like to be more Christ-like in a year? What can you do now to move toward that goal?

- I need to be better at exercising self-control, to resist the temptation of eating too much and eating the wrong things. I plan to use my topical resources to find Scripture that will help me focus my attention on eternal things rather than worldly pleasures when I am tempted.
- I need to also be better at loving the unsaved. I plan to pray more about the spiritual needs of specific people and brainstorm with the Lord scenarios where I may be able to steer the conversation onto spiritual matters that will lead to a presentation of the gospel.

When are you most vulnerable to temptation? Which of the steps to defeating temptation can help you the most?

During business travel I'm always too tempted to eat too much, the easy availability of good, rich foods as well as associates that are eating heartily encourage me to do the same. I think that refocusing my attention on something else and quoting Scripture to myself as Jesus did when He was tempted in the desert may be the most effective steps to avoid this temptation.