

"How to Grow Up and Not Give Up"

Acts 2:42

Skip Heitzig

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connect groups

PATH

The term *growth rate* is usually reserved for the financial world to describe market change over a period of time. It tells you how fast a country's economy is growing. But let's think of it as a spiritual and personal term—and use it to describe our own spiritual growth. How's *that* going? In this teaching, Pastor Skip looks at one aspect of spiritual growth, and considers some tips from one verse to accentuate and accelerate it:

I. To Grow, You Must Learn

II. To Learn, You Must Hear

III. To Hear, You Must Commit

POINTS

To Grow, You Must Learn

- All people need to grow up, spiritually speaking.
- As the apostle Paul said:
 - "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11).
 - "[We] may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).
- To grow spiritually, we must be spiritually fed.
- The Word of God does the work of God, by the Spirit of God, in the hearts of the people of God.
- To grow we need doctrine; the word "doctrine" means "teaching or instruction." Notice that doctrine is first on the list, not singing, prayer, or mission. Learning is primary.
- The loss of doctrine in the church leads to *me-ology* and *be-ology*. Or as Michael Vlach stated, "There is a crisis of biblical knowledge in the church." This cuts against the clear teaching of Scripture (see Proverbs 19:2; Hosea 4:6; and 2 Peter 3:18).
- Concerning Acts 2, John Stott stated: "One might say that the Holy Spirit opened a school in Jerusalem that day. The school teachers were the Apostles whom Jesus had appointed and trained and there were 3,000 pupils in kindergarten."
- Stott's point: the early church was a learning church, as Jesus had instructed: "Learn from Me" (Matthew 11:29).
- If Christians are to follow God, we need to know Him; the only way to know Him is to read His Word.

To Learn, You Must Hear

- Jesus regularly used the phrase "ears to hear." It was as if Jesus was saying, "Listen up; pay attention." Likewise, Luke is calling us to listen up in Acts 2; listening is key to learning.
- What we're called to listen to is the apostle's doctrine.
- Specifically, the apostle's doctrine was the apostolic teaching and commentary on how the Old Testament applied to them (see Acts 2:14-17, 23-25).
- The apostle's doctrine was expository in nature, letting Scripture speak for itself.
- Expository teaching is rooted in the power of the text, not the personality of the preacher.
- God uses preachers; He sent preachers and continues to do so (see 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; Romans 10:14), but the essence of power is found in God's Word, not a preacher's approach.
- The apostle Paul reminded us: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

To Hear, You Must Commit

- Notice this phrase in the text: "continued steadfastly". The Greek word in the original rendering means "to stick to something," "to be diligently attentive."
- Other translations render this phrase "they devoted themselves," "they gave constant attention to", meaning they constantly studied the Bible.
- Remember, it's Jesus who stated, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).
- To continue in truth, we must continue to

hear, learn, and grow in our understanding of God's Word.

- Why is that important? Here are six reasons:
 - You'll know God better. Scripture reveals God's mind, what He's like, His plans and purposes.
 - You'll know yourself better. The Bible gives both a correct theology (doctrine) and a correct anthropology (understanding of humanity).
 - You'll live life better. The Bible reveals the meaning of life. It gives us our purpose and principles for guidance. Jesus said that God's word is truth (see John 17:17).
 - You'll pray better. When you know what God wants, you'll know how to pray in accordance with God's will.
 - You'll help others better. Understanding the Bible is not only for ourselves; it instructs us to love and counsel others (see Romans 15:1-5).
 - You'll discern better. In a world with many voices, worldviews, and opinions, the Bible will keep you from error, helping you stay in the right lane, doctrinally speaking.
- Here are four tips to help develop better Bible study habits:
 1. Get a Bible. Find a translation that helps illuminate the text.
 2. Make time. It's not *when*, but *that you* read it.
 3. Get help. Find a reading schedule, commentaries, or other tools, such as *The Bible from 30,000 Feet* to help you unpack and understand the text.
 4. Tell someone what you learned. The best way to learn is to teach.

PRACTICE

Connect Up: As God is truth, so, too, is His Word. Why do you think there is such a close correlation between the Bible and God Himself? The Bible teaches four major aspects to God's truth. Look up these verses and discuss: God the Father (Deuteronomy 32:4), God the Son (John 14:6), God the Spirit (John 16:12-14), and Scripture (Psalm 119:160). How does truth interact among the four aspects? Are there other aspects to God's truth (such as His creation, best understood through science)?

Connect In: As the apostle John notes in 3 John, Christians are to walk in truth. To walk in truth is to be occupied with it, living with it, and obeying it. As an individual and a church, how are we to walk in God's truth? Use this teaching as the basis for your answers. What more can we do to deepen and enrich our experience of study in God's Word? Share your plans to help enliven your textual experience this new year.

Connect Out: Pastor Skip has likened a teaching church to a textual community, a place dedicated to the teaching of a text. Knowing that one of the great needs in the world is for people to belong, how can you make a textual community (a teaching church) an inviting place for all people to learn and experience God? How can a textual community act as an outreach tool for our city?