

Basic Bible Truths - Message #12
**"WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT GROWTH & PURPOSE IN THE
 CHRISTIAN'S LIFE"**

Introduction:

1. This is the last session of our 12-week course on Basic Bible Truths: *"What The Bible Teaches About Growth & Purpose In The Christian's Life"*.

*Each session has been based upon and taught from the Scriptures and this final one will be no different than the previous eleven.

1. I want to begin by telling you about something I heard from a woman TV evangelist.
 1. As she was giving her pitch about her tape ministry, this is what she said...
"You need to order these tapes right away...so you can hurry up and grow and mature!"
 2. What's wrong with that picture?
 3. Well...there's no doubt that God wants His children to grow up!
 4. But...before we're finished today, I think you'll see that it's not a *"hurry up"* process!
2. Now...I'm going to tell you right up front what the Bible says about *"Growth & Purpose"* in the Christian's life.
 1. The Christian life is all about one thing!
 2. Here it is:
"THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS ALL ABOUT BECOMING MORE AND MORE LIKE JESUS CHRIST...AND GROWING INTO HIS LIKENESS...AND EXPRESSING THAT LIKENESS TO THE WORLD AROUND YOU."
 3. Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote to his converts in Galatia...
"My children, with whom I am in again in labor until Christ be formed in you..." (Galatians 4:19).
 4. As a Christian...God is working out His eternal purpose for you.
 5. And He is doing something...
 1. He is **SLOWLY** developing you...
 2. Into His likeness.
 6. Now...I'm emphasizing the word "slowly" which we'll talk more about in a minute.
 3. But...you must understand this primary truth before we can understand the rest of what I'm going to say.
 1. **What truth?** God is **WORKING OUT** His eternal purpose for your life!
 2. And...He's doing that **right now** as you listen to this message or read this lesson.
 3. Listen to what the Bible says...

Rom 8:28-29

28 *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

29 *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..."*

4. Now...before we see what the Bible says about GROWTH in the Christian's life...let's talk about PURPOSE.
2. I think I've told you before about my Grandson, Joshua.
 1. When he was smaller, he was very sensitive to people's feelings. (*Still is, by the way*)
 1. That's just the way God made him.
 2. He just likes everybody and talks to everybody, every place he goes.
 3. Now...one day he called me up and said, "*Grandpa...are you gonna come to my first soccer game?*"
 4. And of course, Grandpa said "YES!"
 5. So...Jan and I went to the soccer game.
 6. And there he was...all dressed-up in his cute little soccer uniform and his cute little soccer shoes.
 7. And Joshua ran on to the field and the game started.
 2. But...it didn't take long for us to see that there was a little problem with the way Joshua played the game.
 1. Because...while all the other members of the team were trying to get the ball away from the opposing team...
 1. And trying to get it down the field...
 2. And trying to kick that ball in to the goal...
 3. JOSHUA COULDN'T CARE LESS!
 2. I suppose he believed he might hurt the feelings of the guys on the other team if he kicked the ball into their net.
 3. What was Joshua doing?
 4. Well...he was just skipping around out on the field in his cute little soccer uniform with this cute little soccer shoes.
 5. And he was just waving to his parents and waving to his grandparents!
 1. And his friends...
 2. And the little cheerleaders.
 6. Just skipping around...having a great time all by himself!
 7. Now...he thought he was in the game...
 1. But even though he was signed up to play...
 2. And even though he had on all the right equipment...
 3. And even though he was a member of the team and on the field...
 4. HE WASN'T INVOLVED IN THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF THE GAME...
 5. WHICH WAS TO SCORE A GOAL!
 8. **What was he doing?** He was just skipping around in his cute little soccer uniform and cute little soccer shoes.
 9. He had no idea **WHY** he was on that soccer team...and no idea of his **purpose** on that field that day!

3. A lot of Christians are like Joshua.
 1. They have no idea why they are in this world...and no clue as to their PURPOSE in life.
 1. Or...if they do have an idea as to their PURPOSE...
 1. It's based upon a *lack* of Biblical knowledge...
 2. Or *misapplied* knowledge!
 2. Now...it's kind of cute to see little Joshua out there skipping around.
 3. But...IF the leading scorer on a team that was playing for the World Cup...
 1. Went out on the field in front of 100,000 soccer fans...
 2. And just started "skipping around"...
 3. Waving to his girl friend and his family....& the cheerleaders...
 4. THAT WOULDNT BE OKAY!
 4. **And...it's not okay for a child of God either!!!!**
 5. Why not? Because God has a definite PURPOSE for your life and mine!
 6. And we ought to know what it is!
 7. And it's not just "*skipping through life*" like we haven't got a clue as to why we're here!
 2. Well...okay...WHAT IS IT?
 1. First...let me tell you what it's NOT!
 2. It's NOT just going to church every Sunday...and Prayer Meeting...and Sunday School...as important as those things are.
 3. It's NOT just having some sort of ministry in the church...as important as that is.
 4. It's NOT just being a good wife or mother...as important as that is.
 5. It's NOT just being a good husband, father and provider for the family...as important as those things are.
 6. It's NOT just obeying my parents...as important as that is.
 7. Well...what is God's **Primary Purpose** for your life and mine as believers?

GOD'S PRIMARY PURPOSE FOR EVERY MAN AND WOMAN OF GOD IS TO REFLECT HIS IMAGE TO THE WORLD!

Now...what does that mean?

4. Let's look at Genesis 1:26-27...

26 *"Then God said, "**Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**"*

27 ***And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**"*

1. Three times in two verses, we read that man was created in the IMAGE of God.
 1. Now...what does that mean?
 2. The usual answer is that man was created in God's image means...
 1. That man has a personality...
 2. And intellect and emotions.

3. But...it means more than that.
4. Because if you take the Bible as a whole...
 1. Further investigation reveals that being created in the IMAGE OF GOD...
 2. Means much more than merely the reflection of human faculties.

WHAT IS BEING SAID HERE IS THAT MAN HAS BEEN CREATED WITH THE UNIQUE CAPACITY TO REFLECT AND TO MIRROR **THE CHARACTER** OF GOD!

5. Therefore...the *PRIMARY PURPOSE* of the Christian life...
 1. The *Primary Purpose* of the life of every believer...
 2. Is...to reflect the character of God in this world.
2. But...we've got a big problem right-off-the-bat!
 1. Because Adam believed the LIE that Satan told and chose to go his own way.
 2. He turned his back on God...
 1. And began to attempt to live his life apart from...
 2. And independently of his creator!
 3. He became proud and spiritually dead toward God, who is the Source of all life.
5. Now...in that spiritually-dead condition...man produced a race patterned after a DIFFERENT IMAGE!

1. Look at Genesis 5:1-3, where God reviews the creation of man.

"This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

2 He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

3 When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth."

1. What happened?
2. God created man in His image..
 1. But man sins and turns his back on God...
 2. And starts doing his own thing apart from God...

AND...SINCE THAT TIME, THE DESCENDANTS OF ADAM HAVE NOT BEEN MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD, BUT IN THE IMAGE OF ADAM!

3. Now...who are the descendants of Adam?
4. They're all around you...including you!
5. You and me and everybody else that ever lived.
2. So...God's *PRIMARY PURPOSE* for man... the purpose for which he was created...was distorted.
 1. It was marred...it was all messed-up!
 2. Then...death came in and everybody started dying.
 3. Paul puts it this way in Romans 5:12...

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned..."

4. And now...instead of being born with the very nature of God which man was created with...
 1. Because of the sin of Adam...
 2. All of us have inherited Adam's sin-nature.

5. And...we are born in Adam's image, rather than in the image of God.
6. Even those cute little septuplets...are 7 little sinners.
7. So...the bottom line is this...
 1. All men who were originally created with the PRIMARY PURPOSE...
 2. To reflect and mirror the image of God...
 3. Are now born spiritually dead...
 4. In trespasses and sin!! (*Ephesians 2:1*)

6. So...what is man's greatest need? He needs two primary things:

1. **He needs spiritual life.**
2. **He needs God's image restored!**

1. And...the Good News is that God has provided a way to give man spiritual life and to restore His image in him.

1. But...only on His terms.
2. In other words...He's provided only **ONE WAY** for those two things to happen.
3. *Turn to I Corinthians 15.*
4. Now remember what man needs:
 1. He needs LIFE.
 2. And he needs God's IMAGE restored...
 3. Because he can't fulfill God's primary purpose for his life without those things!

2. Let's read I Corinthians 15:45.

"So also it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living soul.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

1. The first Adam blew it...but the Last Adam (*Jesus*)...came to give man spiritual LIFE!
2. Look at Vs. 46...

"However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual."

1. First...there's a natural birth...and we come into this life spiritually dead.
2. And then...through faith in Christ, (*the Last Adam*) who gives life...
3. Spiritual life is infused into the man or woman who was born with the Adamic nature.
3. That's known in the Bible as the "*new birth*".
 1. Jesus called it being "born-again"!
 2. And when that happens, Jesus Christ comes to live in us through the Holy Spirit.

7. So...that takes care of the need for spiritual **LIFE**...but what about restoring the **IMAGE OF GOD?**

1. Look at Vss. 47-49.

1 Cor 15:47-49

47 *"The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.*

48 *As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.*

49 *And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."*

1. Now...here's some great news.
2. God's original purpose of making man in His own IMAGE is still being carried out!
3. But...He's not using the original man anymore!
2. He's now using **THE LAST ADAM**... JESUS CHRIST!
 1. And when He comes to live in a person...
 1. And as we walk humbly before Him...
 2. And as we cooperate with the indwelling Holy Spirit...
 3. Jesus Christ is free to express His Life through our lives...
 4. And our personalities.
 2. And when that's happening, the world is exposed to the IMAGE OF GOD...
 1. His character...
 2. His holiness and righteousness....
 3. In us!!!
 3. Turn to Romans 8:28-29...

28 *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

29 *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..."*

So...that's the PRIMARY PURPOSE of your life, whether you are a new believer or you've been a believer for years.

And I am convinced that it's because most believers don't understand what I've said so far...that the church is so weak and has so little influence on our culture!

I didn't understand this for years!

8. But...how does God **CONFORM** us to the image of His Son? **THAT'S WHERE GROWTH COMES IN!**
 1. You might remember that last time we discussed the believer's POSITION and CONDITION.
 1. Now...it's very important that we understand our *POSITION* if we're going to grow and mature in the Christian life.
 2. The frustrating part of this message is the lack of time to develop the truth of our "**position**" in Christ.
 3. But...let me give you some basics.
 2. Look with me at Ephesians 1:5-7.

5 *"He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,*

6 *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved*

7 *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace..."*

1. Notice that phrase in Vs. 6...**"IN THE BELOVED"**.
2. That's our **POSITION**.
3. Now...what we have to be learning...
 1. In order to GROW...
 2. Is to ABIDE in our POSITION...
 3. Which is IN CHRIST...
 4. Who is the SOURCE of our life!
4. Growth can be measured this way:
 1. By how much we are depending upon him...
 2. Versus how much we are depending upon ourselves.
5. As we become more fully established in our POSITION...
 1. We will be more and more willing to reject self...
 2. And depend upon the Christ in whom we are abiding and trusting.
3. As Christians...we are quick to talk about trusting the Lord...but slow to do it.
 1. But...there are reasons for that.
 2. One of which is the fact that most believers have never heard or studied anything on the subject of their POSITION in Christ.
 3. And as a result...what we actually ARE in truth...never becomes part of what we are in PRACTICE!
 4. But...if *Joe Christian* was actually living out of his POSITION...
 1. Not only would his stomach muscles relax...
 2. But the great majority of Christian "psychologists"...
 3. And Christian counseling ministries would go out of business!
 5. And we would be learning to expect less and less of ourselves...
 1. And less of the pastor...and the Christian celebrities of the day...
 2. And more and more from the Lord Jesus!
 6. The Psalmist had it right when he wrote...

Ps 62:5

"My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him."

4. So...the basis for all spiritual GROWTH in your life and mine is our POSITION in Christ.
 1. Jesus said it very clearly in John 15:4-5...
- 4** ***"Abide in Me, (your position) and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me."***
- 5** ***"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."***
2. If I am to live out of my POSITION in Christ...I must live the *abiding life*!

9. *Now listen carefully.* Sometimes, when we go through difficult and painful times, we might even think God is mad at us or against us.

BUT...

1. **Everything God takes you and me through is for our spiritual growth!**

Rom 8:28-29

28 *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

29 *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..."*

2. That's why Paul can say to the Christians at Thessalonica...
 1. ***"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"*** (I Thessalonians 5:18).
 2. And to the Corinthians...***"For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God"*** (II Corinthians 4:15).

10. Now...remember our evangelist friend I mentioned at the beginning of this message?

1. She wanted people to send their money for her tapes right away...so, they could hurry up and grow and mature?
 1. Let me give you this bit of important news: **GOD HAS ORDAINED THAT MATURITY IS A SLOW PROCESS!**
 2. We want to grow up overnight, don't we?
 3. Miles Stanford...one of my favorite authors, who recently went home to be with the Lord writes:

"Let's settle it once and for all - - there are no shortcuts to reality! Unless the time factor is acknowledged from the heart, there is always danger of turning to the false enticement of a shortcut via the means of "experiences," and "blessings", where one becomes pathetically enmeshed in the vortex of ever-changing "feelings," adrift from the moorings of scriptural facts."

"Experiences and blessings, through real gracious visitations from the Lord, are not sufficient to rest upon, nor should they lead us to glory in ourselves, as if we had a store of grace for time to come, or were yet at the end of the conflict. No. Fruit ripens slowly; days of sunshine and days of storm each add their share. Blessing will succeed blessing, and storm follow storm before the fruit is full grown or comes to maturity."

4. Part of the reason for our impatience in growing is that we are prone to walk by sight, rather than by faith.
5. And even though God tells us in His Word that He's working on our behalf...**we still want to see something happen!**
2. But don't forget that it took God 30-years to get Joseph ready to be the Prime Minister of Egypt.
 1. And eighty years to get Moses ready for 40-years of service.
 2. So...never think of what God has *"made"* you...always think in terms of what God is *"MAKING YOU"*!
 3. And remember...that's true with others, too!
 4. So...be gracious toward them...God is working in them, too.

5. Many of the men and women who have been used greatly of God...
 1. Dwight Moody
 2. Jonathan Goforth
 3. George Mueller
 4. Ruth Paxson
 5. Amy Carmichael
 6. J.N. Darby
 7. C.I. Scofield...
 6. And many others...
 1. Spent many, many years in ministry...
 2. Before they were brought to maturity...
 3. And began to understand that Jesus was their very Life.
11. In the areas of life that really count...there are no shortcuts!
1. ***For example:*** there are some people who are looking for shortcuts to understanding the Bible.
 1. They go out and get study Bibles with all kinds of notes and outlines.
 2. And yet...they never seem to get a grasp on the truth.
 3. Why? Because they're in a hurry!
 4. They pour over outlines and charts... but they never take the time to let the Spirit teach them anything!
 2. Furthermore...because there are no shortcuts to learning the Bible...there are no shortcuts to building godly Christian character.
 1. We study the Word of God, so that we might get to know the God of the Word.
 2. And...now watch this...because this is part of that "***conforming process***" we talked about earlier...
 1. When we get to know Him better...
 2. We become more like Him!!
 3. A reputation can be made-- *or lost*--- overnight...**but it takes years to build character!**
 4. Never forget that God is more interested in the **Worker** than He is in the **Work!**
 3. NO...we can't use shortcuts when it comes to understanding the Word of God...or building Christian character...or building the local church.
 1. The emphasis in the church today appears to be on "*methodology*" and "*goal-setting*".
 2. There's nothing essentially wrong with either of those things...
 1. As long as they're not man-made shortcuts...
 2. Designed to achieve man-exalting goals.
 4. But...where there is life there is growth.
 1. And the individual believer should be growing in a local church setting.

2. And the church ought to be growing in both quality and quantity.
3. But...churches don't grow by addition - - they grow by NUTRITION!
4. True growth is from the inside-out!
5. At least...that's the kind of growth that lasts!

Conclusion:

12. The Bible teaches us that our PRIMARY PURPOSE in life is to reflect the character of Jesus Christ to the Christ-rejecting world around us.

1. How are you doing?
 1. How am I doing?
 2. **Here's one way to find out:**
 1. Ask your mate.
 2. Ask your closest Christian friend.
 3. If you're a pastor, ask your congregation.
 3. And here's the fruit they should be looking for...

Gal 5:22-23

22 ***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,***

23 ***gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."***

4. Those 9 things reflect the character traits of Jesus Christ.
5. When those things are being seen in you...YOU ARE REFLECTING GOD'S IMAGE.
2. But...let me encourage you by reminding you that God isn't in a hurry to develop those things in you.
 1. That doesn't mean they're not important.
 2. It just means that it takes TIME!
 3. It takes time to develop you into the kind of person who is learning to rest in the Source of your life...
 1. Jesus Christ...
 2. The True Vine.

4. You've heard a lot of truths straight from the Bible during these 12 sessions.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

- ...ITSELF
- ...MAN'S BIGGEST PROBLEM
- ...MAN'S ONLY HOPE
- ...GOD'S SEVEN TESTS
- ...LAW & AMAZING GRACE
- ...TRUE & FALSE CHRISTIANS
- ...JUDGMENTS & REWARDS
- ...CHRIST'S FIRST & SECOND COMINGS
- ...HEAVEN & HELL
- ...GOD'S PLAN FOR THE FUTURE
- ...CHRISTIAN'S POSITION & CONDITION
- ...GROWTH & PURPOSE IN THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE

5. I don't know what you've learned.
6. But...at least I know that you've heard and you know.
7. And someone has written...***"ONLY THE CHRISTIAN WHO KNOWS, GROWS!"***

Basic Bible Truths - Lesson #12

"WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT GROWTH & PURPOSE IN THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE"

1. At the beginning of this lesson, Pat stated that the Christian life is about one thing. Please write that in below. (P. 1) _____

2. Please check the correct answer:

The Christian's "**primary purpose**" in life is to...

- _____ Go to Church every Sunday.
 _____ Attend prayer meetings and Sunday School each week.
 _____ Be a good mother.
 _____ Be a good father, husband, provider.
 _____ (None of the above)

3. The Christian's primary purpose in life is to (p. 4) _____

4. What is it specifically, that the Christian is to reflect? (p. 4) _____

5. What have we all inherited from Adam? (p. 5) _____

6. As descendants of Adam, man is made in the image of whom? (p. 5)

7. What is man's greatest need? (p. 5) 1. _____

2. _____

8. The Last Adam (*Jesus*) came to give man what? (p. 6) _____

9. God is still creating man in His own image! _____ True _____ False

10. What is one way to measure whether or not we're growing in Christ? (p. 8)

11. The basis of all spiritual growth in a believer's life is: (p. 8) _____

12. What 3 words best describe the believer's position in John 15:4? (p. 8)

13. Everything God takes us through is for what purpose? (p. 8) _____

14. How many years did God take getting Moses ready for service? (p. 9) _____
15. If a Christian gets a Bible with a lot of study helps in it, God will grow-him-up a lot faster. (p. 10) _____ TRUE _____ FALSE
16. God is more interested in the "WORK" than He is in the "WORKER" (p. 10)
 _____ TRUE _____ FALSE

Return completed lesson to:

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