

Christian Growth

Talk #9

Scripture Ref: See outline.

Speaker & Length Youth, 20 Minutes

Progression This talk continues with the theme of Christian life by emphasizing the need for spiritual growth. Just as our physical body must be fed in order to grow, so must our spirit be fed in order to grow spiritually.

Purpose Prayer, study, and Christian action enables us to grow in a life of grace and provides for us a well established relationship with God that will give us the strength to deal with situations as they arise.

Introduction

This talk introduces the candidates to the disciplines that enable us to move toward a life of grace. Yesterday was focused on dying with Christ. Today, the focus is on rising with Christ. "...So that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life." (Romans 6:4). There are some things that we must die to (e.g. self-centeredness) in order that we may rise in Christ and live a life of grace for others. We must be willing to die in hope (and expectation) that we will rise with Christ.

I. Hope In Our Lives

A. We need hope

1. For solving family problems
2. For dealing with peer pressures
3. For avoiding drug abuse
4. For developing new friendships
5. In finding happiness
6. In finding the right college, career, job
7. For living a Christian life

B. Hope is expressed as a new relationship with Christ where we are transformed by dying to our old self (old ways) and rising with Christ into a life of grace.

C. Our life of grace thru Jesus involves our entire life. In our devotion to God and others, Jesus is our ideal (model)

1. In His living (Matt. 9:18-26)
2. In His loving (Luke 10:25-37)
3. In His giving (Mark 8:8-9)

II. The Foundation For Our Life Of Grace And Devotion To God

There are three basic things that enable us to live our life of grace and to have hope that our relationship with God will be a relationship that will give us the strength to deal with situations as they arise. These three things can be likened to a three-legged stool where

each of the three legs represent prayer, study, and Christian action.

A. The first leg is prayer

1. Prayer can be alone or in the community
2. It can take many forms (conversation, meditation, reflection, singing, or writing)
3. Prayer is talking with God—putting your thoughts into words. Jesus shows us how to pray.
 - a) in humility (Luke 18:9-14)
 - b) with faith (Matt 21:18-21)
 - c) unceasingly (Luke 18:1-8)
 - d) seek forgiveness (Mark 11:25)
 - e) for others (Luke 6:27-28)
4. Prayer is communion with God—putting yourself in God’s presence in silence.
5. Prayer is listening to God—putting yourself at God’s disposal.
6. Prayer is always answered. (Matt 7:7-11)
 - a) God will be consistent and careful to give us only that which will help us grow and mature in our faith.
 - b) God will answer in His time and in the form that will grow us and fill our deeper need.
 - c) The answers can come in different forms.
 - 1) Instant answers that are clear and easy to see.
 - 2) Over a period of time (slowly revealed).
 - 3) Through natural means (people, nature, study, or incidents).
 - 4) Sometimes we don’t understand the answer. Miracles such as the miracle of resurrection (Luke 24:36-49) are like that.
 - 5) Sometime the answer is “No!”. (Mark 14:35-36)
 - 6) Share a time in your life when prayer was especially meaningful and you felt a special closeness to God. How did you feel when your prayer was answered?

B. The second leg is study

1. To study is to love God with your mind.
2. Study gives us a better understanding of God.
 - a) Better understanding produces a closer communion with God.
 - b) Through study we are transformed by a renewing of minds. (Romans 12:2)
 - c) To study is to seek the truth and the truth sets us free. (John 8:32)
3. Through study, we begin to understand how God can help us in our everyday life.
 - a) I can discover my God given skills for my job.
 - b) I can discover better ways of relating with people and with God.
 - c) I can learn how to be a better steward of God’s gifts.
 - d) I experience maturity by seeking and finding God’s solutions for my needs.
4. Your study will include many differing forms. Schoolwork, the Scriptures, world events through TV/radio/newspapers/magazines, Christian movies and publications, and observation.
 - a) Schoolwork - studying in school helps us to discern the truth.
 - b) Scriptures - studying God’s word helps us to understand His message, and reading the Bible as a devotional helps us to apply God’s principles to our life.
 - c) Suggestions:

- 1) Read one or more shorter books in the OT or NT each day for a month.
- 2) Make a retreat to study the Scriptures or attend a Bible study.
- 3) World events - Read and observe in light of how I can be active in the world and live an effective Christian life.
- 4) Christian movies and publications - Christian movies edify our life. Christian books by authors such as C. S. Lewis enhance our understanding of Christianity and allow us to see others' perspectives.
- 5) Share how you have grown through study and the development of your mind. Have you experienced a better understanding of God's word and a new sense of hope?

III. Conclusion

Explain that the third leg of the tripod (**Christianity In Action**) will be covered in a later talk. Emphasize that the three legs of the tripod must all be present and of equal strength (length). A tripod with a missing leg will not stand. A tripod with unequal legs will be out of balance. This is true for your life of grace. When it is balanced (prayer, study and action) we can face life with great hope, we can rise with Christ, trusting in God's grace.

IV. Some Questions To Reflect On And Discuss

- A. Was there a time in your life when you felt that you had a prayer answered? Not just the miraculous, but the ordinary.
- B. Was there a time when prayer seemed unanswered?
- C. Do you feel you don't know enough about God's word and how it applies to your life? Study is the answer.