

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Becoming What God Intends Us to Be

Psalm 119:15-16, Romans 12:1-21

During my quiet time recently, I thought about us growing and living as mature Christians; and I was drawn to two scripture passages, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament, both as rendered in the New Living Translation. The first, Psalm 119:15-16, reads ¹⁵*I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways.* ¹⁶*I will delight in your principles and not forget your word. [NLT]*

The second passage, in Romans 12:1-2, reads ¹*And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.* ²*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. [NLT]*

It then occurred to me that, too often in our day-to-day lives, we think more about what man thinks, than reflecting on what God tells us through the Bible. We tend to delight more in men's principles than God's; and we easily slide into copying the behavior and customs of this world, rather than being transformed into what God really wants us to be. At least, I know that I have strayed in this manner from time to time. And as it tells us in Romans 12:2, if we really want to know what God's will is for our lives, we need that transformation. Because thinking and acting like those around us clouds our judgment and hides God's will from us.

As I reflect back on my own life experiences, I can recognize that during the times when I was the most in tune with God's will, I was the least in tune with the world; and vice versa. A real sign of Christian maturity is learning to be "in the world, not of the world". It is difficult, but we can do it if we put our mind to it.

Paul gives us some very specific instructions regarding how we can really live the kind of life that God has planned for us; we have no excuse for not doing so. So let's take a close look at the entirety of Romans Chapter 12 to see what we can learn about living a maturing and fruitful life for Christ.

Read Romans 12:1-21 and consider the following questions:

1. In Romans 12:3, how does Paul tell us that we are to value, or measure, ourselves?
2. What is Paul telling us about ourselves in Romans 12:4-8?
3. In Romans 12:9-10, what is Paul telling us that runs counter to today's thinking?
4. There are three things cited in Romans 12:12 that every maturing Christian does. What are they? (and are you doing them?)
 - a. Action #1:
 - b. Action #2:
 - c. Action #3:

5. Beginning with Romans 12:13, list each thing that we are instructed to do as growing Christians. Be careful to spot each one.
- a. Romans 12:13
 - b. Romans 12:14
 - c. Romans 12:15
 - d. Romans 12:16
 - e. Romans 12:17
 - f. Romans 12:18
 - g. Romans 12:19
 - h. Romans 12:20
 - i. Romans 12:21
-

As you may have heard me mention before, in the book of James, James tells us that scripture is like a mirror: If we look into it, it will reflect back who and what we are. As you contemplate what the scriptures have indicated to us in this lesson and consider all of the instruction found therein, how do you stack up? When I consider them with respect to my own life, I see how far short that I fall each and every day compared with living up to the standard that God has set for me.

Are there areas in your life that need fine-tuning? Are you actively seeking to allow the Holy Spirit to transform your mind and life, or are you clinging to man's wisdom and man's ways?

Yes, we are forgiven through God's great grace and the shed blood of His Son Jesus the Christ. However, we are also clearly commanded to repent of the sinful ways that creep into our lives. We are to strive to live the kind of life, and walk the kind of walk, that God commands us to.

Commit this week to spending more time reading, studying, reflecting and praying for the revelation of God's Word regarding how to live your life. "Bumper-sticker theology" tells the world that as Christians, we are not perfect, just forgiven. This is true enough, but it does not excuse us from our responsibility to grow and mature as Christians, and to allow God's Holy Word to transform our lives.

I pray that as you continue your quest to grow and mature in your faith, that God will speak to you, refresh you, forgive you, and renew within you a new zeal for growing, walking, and working in His Kingdom.

May God richly bless you this week as you study His Holy Word.

In Christ,

Wes