

THE 5 COMMANDMENTS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

#1. READ GOD’S WORD DAILY: Deuteronomy 17:18-20

17:18-20 The king was to be a man of God’s Word. He was to (1) have a copy of the law made for his personal use, (2) keep it with him all the time, (3) read from it every day, and (4) obey it completely. Through this process he would learn respect for God, keep himself from feeling more important than others, and avoid neglecting God in times of prosperity. We can’t know what God wants except through His Word, and His Word won’t affect our lives unless we read and think about it regularly. With the abundant availability of the Bible today, it is not difficult to gain access to the source of the king’s wisdom. What is more of a challenge is following its directives.

#2. STUDY GOD’S WORD REGULARLY: II Timothy 2:14, 15

2:14 Paul urged Timothy to remind the believers not to argue over unimportant details (“quarreling about words”) or have foolish discussions (“godless chatter”) because such arguments are confusing, useless, and even harmful. False teachers loved to cause strife and divisions by their meaningless quibbling over unimportant details (see 1 Tim. 6:3-5). To handle the word of truth correctly, we must study what the Word of God says so we can understand what it means.

2:15 Because God will examine what kind of workers we have been for Him, we should build our lives on His Word and build His Word into our lives—it alone tells us how to live for Him and serve Him. Believers who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment. Consistent and diligent study of God’s Word is vital; otherwise we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living.

#3. APPLY GOD’S WORD TO OUR LIVES: II Timothy 3:16, 17

3:16-17 The whole Bible is God’s inspired Word. Because it is inspired and trustworthy, we should *read* it, *study* it, and *apply* it to our lives. The Bible is our standard for testing everything else that claims to be true. It is our safeguard against false teaching and our source of guidance for how we should live. It is our only source of knowledge about how we can be saved. God wants to show you what is true and equip you to live for Him. How much time do you spend in God’s Word? Read it regularly to discover God’s truth and to become confident in your life and faith. Develop a plan for reading the whole Bible, not just the familiar passages.

#4. LIVE GOD’S WORD IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIVING: Proverbs 3:5, 6

3:5-6 *Leaning* has the sense of putting your whole weight on something, resting on and trusting in that person or thing. When we have an important decision to make, we sometimes feel that we can’t trust anyone—not even God. But God knows what is best for us. He is a better judge of what we want than even we are! We must trust Him completely in every choice we make. We should not omit careful thinking or belittle our God-given ability to reason; but we should not trust our own ideas to the exclusion of all others. We must not be wise in our own eyes. We should always be willing to listen to and be corrected by God’s Word and wise counselors. Bring your decisions to God in prayer; use the Bible as your guide; and then follow God’s leading. He will make your paths straight by both guiding and protecting you.

In the Bible these two characteristics, trust and obedience, are always linked. Trust in God (believing what He says to us is prompted by love, and actually does mark out the very best pathway for us) is critical to the kind of obedience God desires. A person who does not trust, but rather fears, might produce an *outward conformity* to the orders of a tyrant. But only trust and love enable us to make a willing, inner commitment to follow the instructions of our Heavenly Father. When we trust God, we are freed to obey from the heart.

What then contrasts with the rebellious attitude of the disobedient generation? A *responsive* attitude. When we hear God’s voice today, what is important to God and to us is simply that we trust ourselves to Him and obey. *Faith in God, expressed in obedient response to His voice, is the critical principle which sums up the lifestyle expected of God’s children.*

#5. SHARE GOD'S WORD WITH OTHERS: I Corinthians 9:22-27

9:22-23 Paul gives several important principles for ministry: (1) find common ground with those you contact; (2) avoid a know-it-all attitude; (3) make others feel accepted; (4) be sensitive to their needs and concerns; and (5) look for opportunities to tell them about Christ. These principles are just as valid for us as they were for Paul.

9:24-27 Winning a race requires purpose and discipline. Paul uses this illustration to explain that the Christian life takes hard work, self-denial, and grueling preparation. As Christians, we are running toward our heavenly reward. The essential disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and worship equip us to run with vigor and stamina. Don't merely observe from the grandstand; don't just turn out to jog a couple of laps each morning. Train diligently—your spiritual progress depends upon it.

9:25 At times we must even give up something good in order to do what God wants. Each person's special duties determine the discipline and denial that he or she must accept. Without a goal, discipline is nothing but self-punishment. With the goal of pleasing God, our denial seems like nothing compared to the eternal, imperishable reward that will be ours.

9:27 When Paul says he might be disqualified, he does not mean that he could lose his salvation, but rather that he could lose his privilege of telling others about Christ. It is easy to tell others how to live and then not to take our own advice. We must be careful to practice what we preach.