



How to Grow

According to Gallup, the number one personal concern of the American people is to have good physical health. Many people also long for a happy home and family life. I'm sure this is true for many people in many other countries. However, to find these, we need to develop good emotional and spiritual health.

When a person responds to God's call and receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he becomes spiritually alive and is a brand new person inside. As Paul said in the Bible, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new is come."¹ One still has his old self to contend with, but God has given him a brand new spiritual life.

To grow and be healthy physically we know that we need to eat, sleep, relax, and exercise properly. To grow and be healthy spiritually, we need to develop a close relationship with God and take care of our new Christian or spiritual life. The following suggestions can help you do this.

Read ... Pray... Trust ... Obey



R ... Read

Jesus Christ said, "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."² Jesus

was referring to the Bible, which is God's Word to mankind. In it we find spiritual food. Its truth teaches us about God. And its principles for daily living, if we live by them, guarantee a greater sense of

physical, mental, and spiritual health than modern man has yet devised.

The best way to get to know the Bible is to read it on a regular, daily basis. Read a modern translation and use some teaching aids (such as the Wycliffe Bible Commentary). For new Christians, it is helpful to begin with the Gospels of Mark and John in the New Testament and the Psalms and Proverbs in the Old Testament.



P ... Pray

Communication is the key to all healthy relationships and needs to be two-way, not only with people, but also with God. God communicates to us

through nature, our inner spirit, other people, our circumstances and various other means, but primarily through his Word, the Bible. But how do we communicate to God?

We do this through prayer, which is simply talking to God as you would to any close friend. It includes expressing love, thanksgiving, and all our feelings as well as presenting our needs and requests.

For me, praying doesn't come naturally or easily. So, many of my prayers I write in letters to God. I also find it helpful to visualize Christ being with me wherever I am.

As I need to spend quality time with family every day, I try to do the same with God. To do this I like to set aside a quiet time each morning to read from the Bible and other devotional material and to pray. If I neglect this important area of my life for too long, I end up feeling soul starved.

Does prayer work? Jo

hn wrote in the Bible, "This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."³



T ... Trust

Another benefit of being a Christian is the inner security we find as we learn to trust God for every detail of our life.

For one thing, we have the security of knowing that we have life after death. "And this is the testimony," says the Bible, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life. . . I write these

things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."⁴

We also have the security of knowing that nothing happens to us in this life without God's knowledge and care. Jesus reminded us that even the hairs of our head are all numbered.⁵ Furthermore, if we put our trust in God, he has promised to supply our every need.⁶ And Peter encourages us to "Cast all our cares on him because he cares for us."⁷

Every day I like to trust my life to God. I am convinced he can make a much better job of it than I can.



O ... Obey

There are at least two ways that our love for God grows. One is through loving people; the other through obeying God. "If

we love each other," John wrote, "God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." And again, "But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him."⁸ There is nothing like obedience to God and living in harmony with his will and the principles found in his Word to bring harmony to our personal as well as our spiritual life.

Briefly, here are some fundamental **B-A-S-I-C-S** of obedience to God.

B... Be filled with God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit). Jesus called God's Spirit the Comforter, which literally means "one called alongside to help." That's what God's Spirit wants to do for us. We are commanded to "keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit."⁹ As we daily open our inner selves to God, he will fill us with his Spirit and in so doing, empowers us to serve him.

A... Abide in Christ. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit."¹⁰ In other words, if our lives are to be fruitful, we need to abide in Christ. We do this by spending time with him in his word, in prayer, and in living for him in our daily life.

S... Serve the Lord. The happy Christian is the serving Christian. Contentment comes from living beyond ourselves and helping others. James wrote, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."¹¹

I... Importance of putting God first. God has given us everything we have, including the power to get wealth.¹² In olden times God required his people to tithe; that is, to give one-tenth of their income to

get God's work done. When they did this faithfully God promised to bless them greatly.¹³ It is a wise investment and responsibility for Christians to do similarly. We need to tithe or give proportionately not only of our income, but also of our time and talents to get God's work done today.

C... Clean living and confession are also essential for physical, emotional and spiritual health. Our goal needs to be not to sin, but when we do we need to confess our wrong and put things right, "If we confess our sins," writes John, "he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."¹⁴ Accept God's forgiveness by faith and be sure to forgive yourself.

S... Sunday has been called by many the Lord's day. It's not the day in the week that is important, but rather, that we set time aside each week to worship God with other people. God's word says, "Let us not give up meeting together."¹⁵ Attending a church where God's Word is believed and taught and where people love one another is very important for worshipping God, for strengthening our Christian faith, for learning more about God, and for fellowship with fellow Christians. Jesus went to "church" himself every week. We need to do the same.

Footnotes

1. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)
2. Matthew 4:4 (NIV).
3. 1 John 5:14-15 (NIV).
4. 1 John 5:11-13 (NIV)
5. Matthew 10:30.
6. Philippians 4:19.
7. 1 Peter 5:7.
8. 1 John 4:12 and 2:5 (NIV).
9. Ephesians 5:18.
10. John 15:5.
11. James 1:27 (NIV).
12. Deuteronomy 8:18.
13. Malachi 3:10.
14. 1 John 1:9 (NIV).
15. Hebrews 10:25 (NIV).

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ACTS International
PO Box 73545
San Clemente, California 92673-0119
U.S.A.

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