

Growing in God Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 18, 2024

Q. Why do we observe Holy Communion? What are the benefits of this ongoing and millennia-old ordinance?

A1. Communion provides an opportunity for **OBEDIENCE**.

1 Corinthians 11:23b–25 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

23 . . . Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; **do this** in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; **do this**, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

A2. Communion provides an opportunity for **REMEMBRANCE**.

1 Corinthians 11:23b–25 (Emphasis Mine)

23 . . . Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in **remembrance** of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in **remembrance** of me.”

A3. Communion provides an opportunity for **THANKSGIVING**.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26, 28 (Emphasis Mine)

23 . . . Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had **given thanks**, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

A4. Communion provides an opportunity for the **PROCLAMATION** of the **GOSPEL**.

1 Corinthians 11:26b (Emphasis Mine)

26 . . . whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you **proclaim the Lord’s death** until he comes . . .

A5. Communion provides an opportunity for us to consider the **REALITY** of His **RETURN**.

1 Corinthians 11:26b–c (Emphasis Mine)

26 . . . whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death **until he comes**.

A6. Communion provides an opportunity for **SELF-EXAMINATION**.

1 Corinthians 11:28 (Emphasis Mine)

28 Everyone ought to **examine themselves before** they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26, 28

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. . . . 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.

Growing in God Pt. 2

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, February 18, 2024

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – We are in the midst of a series on the topic of spiritual growth. Christianity is a transformational faith, whereby the believer is conformed unto the image of Christ in ever-increasing degrees for His glory (Rom. 8:29). As Christian writer Max Lucado pens, “God loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus.”

Q. How is spiritual growth brought forth or realized?

NOTE 2 – Last week we began to answer this question by considering this timeless yet timely teaching of Christ:

John 15:1–8 (NIV)

1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes [lit. “cleans”] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

NOTE 3 – The believer must abide in Christ as a branch abides in the vine if they are to be fruitful (i.e., exp. growth). Moreover, the believer must surrender to the “pruning” work of the Father who “cleans” so that life might come. Please feel free to review this lesson and its corresponding notes online at www.NewLifeBarre.org. God bless!

NOTE 4 – This morning I would like to explore yet another seminal text on the theme of spiritual growth in Christ:

TO THE WORD

Galatians 5:16b–17, 19–25

16 . . . I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

KEY – Let us take the time to explore this text and its connections to the theme or topic of spiritual growth. Note:

PT. 1 – WALK BY THE SPIRIT (WHAT?)

Q. What does Paul command in this selection?

A. Paul commands us to “walk by the Spirit” (v. 16).

Q. What precisely does it mean to walk by the Spirit?

A. Varying theologians and writers reply w. the following:

QUOTE 1 – This phrase (i.e., which is also translated as “live by the Spirit”) refers to the “ordering of one’s life and behavior according to the Spirit. Since the Spirit of God is the one who inspired the Word of God [2 Tim. 3], this includes or intimates patterning your life after what the Spirit inspired and recorded for all time in Scripture.”

QUOTE 2 – To walk by the Spirit means to be responsive to the Spirit, living under His guidance and relying upon Him in order to do what we know to be right (according to the Scripture He inspired).”

QUOTE 3 – To walk by the Spirit is to “live by the rule of the [Holy] Spirit; to be under His control and direction, as we are [supernaturally] energized by His [divine] power.”

Q. What does it mean to walk by the Spirit (S & S)?

A. it means to live under the dominion of the Spirit and according to His power, under the direction of Scripture.

KEY – Thus, there is a two-fold aspect herein. Please note:

- 1) Submission to the Authority, Rule and Reign of the H. Spirit
- 2) Reliance Upon the Supernatural Working/Power of the Spirit

PT. 2 – WALK BY THE SPIRIT (WHY? “A”)

Q. Yet this raises the question: WHY?

Galatians 5:16b (Emphasis Mine)

16 . . . I say, walk by the Spirit, **and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh** [lit. sinful and depraved nature].

NOTE 1 – The only way to rise above or transcend our base, carnal and sinful instincts is to walk by the Spirit. Those who are yielded to the mastery of the Spirit and are reliant upon His power do not have to succumb to the desires of the flesh. Rather, such are free to walk with Christ Jesus in the “newness” of life (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17)!

NOTE 2 – Of course, Paul is not saying that those who live by the Spirit will never have to contend with the flesh. No, you and I must resist our sinful impulses and appetites until we die or until Christ Jesus comes once again. Rather, Paul is saying that we are not powerless slaves to sin any longer. We can live for Christ and know victory, despite the real battle we may feel within. Consider how this chapter of Galatians speaks to this spiritual battle:

Galatians 5:17b (Emphasis Mine)

17 . . . the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in **conflict** with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

KEY – Yet this is a battle we can consistently win!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

17 . . . if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; . . . all things have become new.

PT. 2 – WALK BY THE SPIRIT (WHY? “B”)

Q. What if we fail to walk by the Spirit and allow the flesh go unchecked?

A. Our lives will manifest—in ever-increasing degrees—wicked or sinister acts.

Galatians 5:19–21 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

19 **The acts of the flesh are obvious:** sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Q. What are the acts of the flesh?

A. Consider the items Paul delineates:

A1. Sexual Immorality. The Greek word for sexual immorality is “porneia” (the root of our word “pornography”). This term refers to all forms of illicit sexual connection (e.g., adultery, fornication, incest, homosexuality, etc.). The only sanctioned context for the expression of sexual desires is marriage, between one man and one woman.

1 Corinthians 6:18a

18 Flee from sexual immorality. . . .

A2. Impurity. The Greek term herein is a broad term referring to moral uncleanness in word, thought and deed. This term is often connected with sexual immorality in Scripture. Please consider this sampling of passages acc:

Ephesians 5:3a, c (Emphasis Mine)

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of **sexual immorality**, or of any kind of **impurity**, . . . because these are improper for God’s holy people.

Colossians 3:5 (Emphasis Mine)

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: **sexual immorality**, **impurity**, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Hebrews 13:4 (Emphasis Mine)

4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept **pure**, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually **immoral**.

A3. Debauchery. Bib. Debauchery is defined as “the habitual and unrestrained indulgence of lust and sensuality.”

QUOTE – “There are several places in Scripture where the word debauchery is used to indicate what we would today call ‘partying.’ It encompasses several aspects of unholy living, including but not limited to sexual immorality, drunkenness, crude talk, and generally out-of-control behavior.

Ephesians 5:18 (Emphasis Mine)

18 Do not get drunk on wine, **which leads to debauchery**. Instead, be filled with the Spirit . . .

1 Peter 4:1–3 (Emphasis Mine)

1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. 2 As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in **debauchery**, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.

Romans 13:13 (Emphasis Mine)

13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in **carousing** and **drunkenness**, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.

Q. What was the sin of the prodigal son (i.e., beside betraying his father)?

Luke 15:13b (Emphasis Mine)

13 “. . . the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in **wild** [i.e., reckless, riotous, loose – debauched] living.

A4. Idolatry. The worship of anything “other than or above God”; the love for anything other than or above Him.

Luke 14:26

26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.

QUOTE 1 – “Though we do not face a pantheon of false gods like the Israelites did, we face pressures from a pantheon of false values--materialism, love of leisure, sensuality, worship of self, [and] security.” –Today in the Word, June 1989

QUOTE 2 – “What other gods could we have besides the Lord? Plenty. For Israel there were the Canaanite Baals, those jolly nature gods whose worship was a rampage of gluttony, drunkenness, and ritual prostitution. For us there are still the great gods Sex, Shekels, and Stomach (an unholy trinity constituting one god: self), and the other enslaving trio, Pleasure, Possessions, and Position, whose worship is described as ‘The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life’ (1 John 2:16). Football, the Firm, and Family are also gods for some. Indeed the list of other gods is endless, for anything that anyone allows to run his life becomes his god and the claimants for this prerogative are legion. In the matter of life's basic loyalty, temptation is a many-headed monster.” –James Packer

A5. Witchcraft. The term herein is “pharmakeia” (from which we get our word “pharmacy”). The ancients used to worship evil powers, oftentimes through the use of drugs to create trancelike states. According to St. John, such witchcraft will be prominent prior to the Return of Christ (cf. Rev. 9, 18).

QUOTE – “Ancient societies were no stranger to mind-altering chemicals. Archaeologists note the presence of opium, hemp, and many other substances in Bible-era cultures. These compounds were not as potent as modern options but still capable of powerful effects. . . . Mood-altering substances were also used in connection to ancient religious practices. Temples such as those in Greece sometimes used mind-altering drugs in fortune-telling and oracles. These may have included natural vapors and deliberately concocted mixtures. When Paul wrote Galatians and John recorded Revelation, these practices would have been part of pagan idolatry.”

Q. Could what we are seeing in our culture re: substance abuse be a form of idolatrous witchcraft?

A6. Hatred. This Greek term speaks to “enmity” and the presence of “hostility” and/or “hatred” one to another.

1 John 2:9

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

1 John 4:20

20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar.

ILL – “Two shopkeepers were bitter rivals. Their stores were directly across the street from each other, and they would spend each day keeping track of each other's business. If one got a customer, he would smile in triumph at his rival. One night an angel appeared to one of the shopkeepers in a dream and said, ‘I will give you anything you ask, but whatever you receive, your competitor will receive twice as much. Would you be rich? You can be very rich, but he will be twice as wealthy. Do you wish to live a long and healthy life? You can, but his life will be longer and healthier. What is your desire?’ The man frowned, thought for a moment, and then said, ‘Here is my request: Strike me blind in one eye!’”

A7. Discord. This term refers to the presence and operation of strife. Those given to discord are given to quarrel.

Romans 16:17

17 I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

ILL – “Church Splits 4 Ways Over The Location of The Piano Bench. August 1999 Landover, Maryland - 100 years of Christian fellowship, unity, and community outreach ended last Tuesday in an act of congregational discord. Holy Creek Baptist Church was split into multiple factions. The source of dissension is a piano bench which still sits behind the 1923 Steinway piano to the left of the pulpit. Members and friends at Holy Creek Baptist say that the old bench was always a source of hostility. People should have seen this coming. At present, Holy Creek Congregation will be having four services each Sunday. There has been an agreement mediated by an outside pastor so that each faction will have its own separate service with its own separate pastor. Since the head pastor is not speaking to the associate pastors, each will have their own service, which will be attended by factioned members. The services are far enough apart that no group will come into contact with the other. An outside party will be moving the piano bench to different locations and appropriate positions, between services to please all sides, and avoid any further conflict that could result in violence.”

A8. Jealousy. We often confuse jealousy and envy, but the terms are not synonymous (biblically or otherwise). Envy, which we will soon cover, has to do with desiring what others possess (i.e., covetousness). However, jealousy has to do with a sense of threat, alarm or fear over losing what one has. The term literally means “hot enough to boil over” and speaks to the “burning” desire some have to safeguard what they have acquired.

Q. What was King Herod willing to do to safeguard his throne in the days of Jesus’ Birth?

A9. Fits of Rage. This term, lit. meaning to “rush along; get heated up; or breath violently” speaks to reckless actions that emerge out of intense impulses. When used of people it indicates the outburst of misdirected rage!

Ephesians 4:26, 31

26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. . . . 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

QUOTE – “Of the 7 deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back--in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.”
–Frederick Buechner

A10. Selfish Ambition. The “mercenary self-seeking of acting for one’s own gain regardless of the pain it causes; the placing of self-interest ahead of what the Lord declares right, or what is good for others.”

Philippians 2:3–8

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

A11. Dissensions. Lit. used of “divisions which wrongly separate people into pointless [i.e., groundless] factions.”

A12. Factions. Used in the NT of individual parties or sections which operated within Judaism. The term stresses the personal aspect of choice, and hence how being a Sadducee was sharply distinguished from being a Pharisee.

1 Corinthians 1:10–13

10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. 11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?

A13. Envy. The desire or longing for what another has; covetousness. A “strong feeling (desire) that sours due to the influence of sin [i.e., derived from a primitive root term meaning to decay, breakdown and/or corrupt].”

Proverbs 14:30 (Emphasis Mine)

30 A heart at peace gives life to the body, but **envy rots the bones.**

Q. What impact did envy have in the life of Saul as he desired the accolades afforded David?

QUOTE – Dwight L. Moody once told the fable of an eagle who was envious of another that could fly better than he could. One day the bird saw a sportsman with a bow and arrow and said to him, "I wish you would bring down that eagle up there." The man said he would if he had some feathers for his arrow. So the jealous eagle pulled one out of his wing. The arrow was shot, but it didn't quite reach the rival bird because he was flying too high. The first eagle pulled out another feather, then another--until he had lost so many that he himself couldn't fly. The archer took advantage of the situation, turned around, and killed the helpless bird. Moody made this application: if you are envious of others, the one you will hurt the most by your actions will be yourself.

A14. Drunkenness. Speaks to those given to inebriation; “deep-drinking.” Though Scripture never forbids drinking in general, it is quite forceful and clean in its warning(s) concerning intoxication, etc. Please take note:

Proverbs 20:1

1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler;
 whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Ephesians 5:18a

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery . . .

Proverbs 23:29–32

29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
 Who has strife? Who has complaints?
 Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?
 30 Those who linger over wine,
 who go to sample bowls of mixed wine.
 31 Do not gaze at wine when it is red,
 when it sparkles in the cup,
 when it goes down smoothly!
 32 In the end it bites like a snake
 and poisons like a viper.

Isaiah 5:22

22 Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine
 and champions at mixing drinks . . .

A15. Orgies. Lit. “A riotous party (drunken feast) which hosted unbridled sexual immorality; hence revelings (debauched partying).”

A16. “. . . and the Like” (v. 21b). Indicating that this listing of the apostle Paul is a non-exhaustive list. Take heed!

PT. 3 – WALK BY THE SPIRIT (WHY? “C”)

Q. What if we fail to walk by the Spirit and let the flesh go unchecked

A2. Secondly, we face the penalty of judgment for our criminal behavior.

Galatians 5:19–21 (Emphasis Mine)

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. **I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

QUOTE – “It would have been well for the church of Christ, if the warnings of the Gospel had been as much studied as its promises.” –J. C. Ryle

KEY 1 – To those who hope that this is a mere one-off text from Paul, please consider it is an oft-repeated theme:

1 Corinthians 6:10 (Emphasis Mine)

9 . . . do you not know that wrongdoers **will not inherit the kingdom of God**? Do not be **deceived**: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers **will inherit the kingdom of God**.

KEY 2 – Scripture culminates with very similar words. Please take note of the following from the end of the Word:

Revelation 21:1–8

1 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

5 He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

6 He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Q1. Is yielding to the flesh worth it? NO

Q2. Is it better to walk by the Spirit? YES

PT. 4 – FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Q. What if we walk by the Spirit?

A. We shall experience true spiritual growth!

Galatians 5:22–23 (Emphasis Mine)

22 But the **fruit** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

NOTE 1 – When the Holy Spirit is both yielded to and relied on, His power produces these elements in His own: **a)** love; **b)** joy; **c)** peace; **d)** forbearance; **e)** kindness; **f)** goodness; **g)** faithfulness; **h)** gentleness; and **i)** self-control. Only then will we grow in Christ, be conformed unto His glorious image (Rom. 8:29) and produce the “fruit” desired by our Father (John 15)

NOTE 2 – We will take the time to consider each of these supernaturally-produced virtues in the weeks to come!

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM, WM & CYC).

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.