



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR JANUARY 6, 2012

TARGETS FOR GROWTH

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18, NIV)

ASK ANY GOLFER WHAT THEY NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE THEIR GAME, and nearly every one will have an answer ready on their tongue: “I need to fix my putting,” “I’ve got to practice my bunker play,” “I’d sure love to hit it longer, so I could keep up with my friends.”

But ask a follower of Jesus what their spiritual growth is supposed to look like and you get a lot of uncertain replies.

Every seasoned believer has heard talk of spiritual growth. Most are sure it is measured by personal discipline or church involvement (or both). That is, the busier you are with the activities of “the faith,” the more you must be growing. *Right?* In that tiny question, the hesitation is exposed. Something is amiss.

Consider a salesman who needs the work but isn’t so sure about the product he is selling. Can it really do what its makers say it can do? This salesman may increase his calls each days, add some door-to-door routes to his schedule, buy booth space at another expo each month. He may even double his sales. All good ideas. And yet none gives us indication as to whether his faith in the product is growing—only faith in his ability to work it, to sell it.

Perhaps that’s the real trouble with spiritual growth; it is too often pointed in the wrong direction. When Peter closed his second letter, he did so by reminding his readers not of their actions but of their aim. “Grow in the grace of Jesus...grow in the knowledge of Jesus.”

Spiritual disciplines are not spiritual growth—at least not growth in the character of Jesus. We pray to ask God to infuse in us the traits of Jesus (including his grace). We read the Bible to learn more of Jesus, to add to our knowledge of him. But the measures of our growth are found not in our prayer or our study, but in our grace toward others and the depth at which we know our Lord.

What it means to grow

How does today’s devotion help shape your thinking about your spiritual growth? Where have you been mistaken? Where have you been right?

A principal emphasis

Read Luke 17:5, Romans 1:17 and Romans 14:23b. What must increase in order for us to say that we are growing in the way God would have us grow? How might this kind of growth be cultivated?

Evidence of real growth

Read Matthew 7:15-20 and James 3:9-12. What kind of fruit do you think Jesus looks for in our lives? How does James’ use of a similar metaphor allow us to see that change in our behavior and growth in Christ are interrelated?
