

Growth

Acts 5:15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

Until my shadow heals people I have room to grow.

It seems weird for me to be telling people how to do things but that has not stopped me in past so I will go ahead. Any pastor, including the Pope, Billy Graham, or Kenneth Copeland needs to hear fundamentals every once in a while to make sure they are on track. One day a person corrected me on a bad attitude and said to me something that I know he got from me a couple of years before. I thought it might be a good idea to write some stuff about personal growth, ministry growth, and church growth. I encourage everyone to forward this to anyone who may be interested.

The first thing we must keep in mind is to seek the Kingdom. We don't seek growth for numbers sake. If we seek the Kingdom, God will take care of the rest. Hard work is not a substitute for seeking the Kingdom. A mistake I made was at first, I was spending a lot of time in prayer and praying in tongues and seeking the Kingdom. Then, as I got doing a lot of music, I began praying to build myself up to be successful in music ministry. I was praying to maintain the anointing, not to seek the Kingdom.

Luke 12:

²⁹**And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.**

³⁰**For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.**

³¹**But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

Prayer

The largest church in the world in Seoul, South Korea was built on a foundation of prayer. It has a prayer mountain for people to go to and just pray. The pastor credits his mother-in-law, a prayer warrior, for the church's growth.

Church on the Rock in Rockwall was also built on prayer. Could You Not Tarry by Larry Lea is the story of how he built that church. He uses the Lord's Prayer as an outline for praying. I want to start with Jesus.

Mark 1

³⁵**And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.**

³⁶**And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.**

³⁷**And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.**

As Jesus was praying, the world was seeking him. We can use that as our best guide about our growth. Is the world seeking us? Hard work is no substitute for prayer.

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another [your false steps, your offenses], and pray for one another, that you may be healed *and* restored. The heartfelt *and* persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power]. AMP

Prayer gives us power.

Hard work

Saying hard work is no substitute for prayer, does not mean God does not want us to work hard. Prayer can be the hardest thing we do. God first entrusts us with small successes to see how we handle them. We should treat our ministry as if we were ministering to 10,000 people. Then as we grow, our ministries grow.

3 John 1:2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The Word

Our job is to put the Word into people. The Word is what brings faith. **Romans 10:12 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** The difference between successful churches and mediocre or failed churches is how the Word is presented. If it presented as some good guidelines to live by if we agree with it, expect it to be of no value. If it presented as the very words of God that is absolute and final authority on any subject, expect it to have power in itself to build faith in you and the hearer. If for some reason time is short, put the Word in.

I enjoyed watching a local church's broadcast on the free cable channel. The pastor was a great speaker. But after a little while I noticed I didn't care about watching. I thought that was funny. I started paying attention to what was being said. I noticed he didn't put much Word out. He talked about church stuff and his experiences; I quit watching. The church was out of business in a few months.

One of the first things I figured out was that the more Word I got inside me, the better my life would be.

Music

Psalms 22:3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. God lives in the praises of his people. Psalm 100 says we come before the throne singing. This helps us hear the Word.

Music is not an end in itself. One thing praise does is help us put down our flesh. The wilder the praise is, the more our flesh is put down and our minds cleared. The eastern religions use an

empty mind to contact demons. They give their minds over to Satan without knowing it. The mind type religions use quietness, but the Bible says to make noise.

Prayer

We can use the Lord's Prayer as an outline. I am told in the early church, long prayers were written using the Lord's Prayer as an outline. This is a good way to pray. Books have been written on the different subjects that I will cover as we go through the Lord's Prayer and I suggest you read a book on each subject.

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

God has a lot of different names (and I don't mean Buddha or Allah). Don't get hung up on using the correct Hebrew. This was a mistake I made. Know and use the English words and I guaranty God will understand. In talking to a friend once, that person got bent out of shape because people used "Jehovah" instead of "Yahweh". I told that person that it didn't matter because I called him "Daddy" anyway. I then pointed out that we used "Jesus" and we would need to use "Ἰησοῦς" (ē-ā-sū's). (As I was writing this, I saw that I had been mispronouncing the Hebrew anyway.) You say the "Jesus" and Heaven will stop and see what you have to say. Satan will also stop in his tracks at the name of Jesus. When we pray we can use the name of God that fits the situation we may be in at the time.

In Genesis 1:1 the first name for God we see is **Elohem** (el·ō·hēm') which means rulers, judges, divine ones, angels, gods, godlike one, or God. As we start to pray we could say things like, "Daddy, be my ruler." Or "Daddy, you are my ruler." You could start your prayer this way if you wanted to reaffirm that God was in control of you.

Here is a song I am listening to while writing:

When I Look Into Your Holiness Written by Wayne Perrin & Cathy Perrin

When I look into Your holiness.
When I gaze into Your loveliness.
When all the things that surround
Become shadows in the light of You.
When I found the joy of reaching Your heart.
When my will becomes enthralled in Your Love.
When all the things that surround
Become shadows in the light of You.

I worship You, I worship You.
The reason I live (The reason I live)
Is to worship You. (Repeat)

Jehovah / Yahweh – The Existing One – The root word is be / am / exist. This is going to cover anything. Your Daddy can be anything you need Him to be.

el – mighty, strength, used for God. This is used in a lot of individual's names.

Adown / Andonai – Lord, Master, King

El Shaddai – Almighty - This is a good lesson for us all. Years ago, I heard a preacher I highly respect say that this literally means “the breasty one” and I have quoted him. Strong's Concordance says it is masculine meaning “almighty”. We should never believe or teach something just because we heard someone say it. We should go to the Bible and check it out ourselves. Any preacher worth his salt would tell you to go to your Bible and verify what he was teaching. At one mass I heard a priest say, “You don't need the Bible, just the Catechism.” We build faith by reading the Bible. Reading the catechism does not build faith. Even if the information is correct it is still just someone's opinion.

Any teaching that is not backed up by scripture cannot be trusted as truth. One major denomination's official teaching says that Genesis is allegory not literal. Some denominations teach that John 6 is allegory. What is being said is that God is a liar. The earth was created in 6 days less than 10000 years ago and Jesus gives us his body to eat and his blood to drink.

Yahweh Rapha – God That Heals – I like to use “I am healing.” If you need healing, it would be best to begin the prayer with reminding God that His name is “I am healing.” Your praise of thanksgiving could be to thank God and Jesus for taking stripes on His body for our healing. Peter refers to this in the past tense (**we were healed**).

Yahweh Jireh – The Lord Will Provide – If we need provision this is a good way to begin a prayer. If you cannot remember the Hebrew just use, “your name Father is I Will Provide.”

Yahweh Nissi – The Lord Our Banner – **Romans 8:37** **Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.** The prize fighter wins in the ring. He is a conqueror and gets the prize money. He takes it home and gives it to wife; she is more than a conqueror. Jesus did all the real work; He conquered death and hell and we get the benefit of His sacrifice.

Yahweh M'kaddesh – The Lord Who Sanctifies - **Leviticus 20:7-8** **⁷Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. ⁸And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you.** Sanctify means to set apart or make holy. If during your prayer time you are going to ask forgiveness for some sins you might use this name. You could say something like, “Daddy, please remember that your name is “The Lord Who Sanctifies and thank you for that.”

1 Peter 2:9 **But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** We are a set apart nation. We have the priestly function of standing before God and interceding for non-believers. We are also royalty.

Yahweh Shalom – The Lord Our Peace – Peace means: completeness, soundness, safety, health, prosperity, quiet, tranquility, contentment.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

There are a lot of other names for God. I heard some good teaching on seeking the kingdom I am going to talk about.

Your kingdom come.

I recently heard a good teaching and some of that teaching relates to our seeking the Kingdom.

Exodus 33:13-18 (New King James Version)

13 Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.”

Moses is praying “Show me now your way.” Our goal is to see things the way God sees them. “that I may know You” this is to be one with God.

14 And He said, “My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest.”

15 Then he said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go *with us*, do not bring us up from here. **16** For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth.”

If you don’t go with us, we are not going.

Hebrews 13:5. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. **6.** So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Under the New Covenant we have the promise that Jesus will never leave us. He will be with us if we go on a trip or to the store.

17 So the LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.”

18 And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.”

Moses wants to see God’s glory. When we put the Word into people, we can expect God to confirm His Word with signs following (and persecution will come against us also).

Mark 16:20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Mark 4:16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

So, in these verses we see that:

We want to be one with God.

We only want to go somewhere if He wants us to.

We want to see God's glory. We can also say we want to see God working.

2 Timothy 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

This does not deal with salvation. This has to do with what we do while here in the body. It is up to us; we must purge ourselves. This does not mean for us to do more churchy things. We renew our mind with the Word and build our self up with prayer. When both are put together, sin is purged from our lives. We also put ourselves in a position to be ministered to. Sometimes we must just stop doing the unfruitful things we are doing.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Here is where the Pharisees messed up; they kept man-made rules and figured they were OK with God. They turned a relationship into a religion. It doesn't matter what our denomination is, somewhere it has missed what God wanted. If I looked for a perfect denomination and found it, it would not let me in because I would mess it up. Denominations deal with public practices. A person could do everything their denomination says to do and still go to hell.

One thing I have noticed is that as teachers, after teaching a while, try to think up new stuff where they do not have to say the same thing over and over. They began bringing in philosophy, after all, they want to show how smart they are. They want to tell us why the Bible isn't right and what books are fairy tales (they say allegory, not fairy tales, but it's the same thing). They say: "Jesus (or God) didn't really say, 'Don't divorce.' or "If Paul was alive today, he wouldn't say, 'Husbands love your wives or wives be submissive to your husband.'" or "Genesis fits in perfect with evolution." The only rule that is needed is that church starts at 9:00.

Successful Ministries

We have the Transfiguration reading from Matthew 17.

The thing nearly every successful ministry has in common is an attitude that says, "If it's in the Bible that's the way it is." Successful Christians interpret all Scripture the same. The Catholic Church believes that communion bread is the body of Jesus and has come to this belief because of what the Bible says. Any church or individual that interprets the whole Bible that way will be successful.

2 Peter 1:

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

I looked at numerous translations and they all used “more sure”. What Peter (or the Holy Spirit) is saying is that even though they heard God’s voice and saw Jesus transformed, it is not as reliable as the written prophecy in the Old Testament. All of the Old Testament written Word points to Jesus and that is where our faith is. We put our faith in the written Word, not what we experience.

John 20:29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Thomas believed Jesus was alive because he saw him. We believe because we heard God’s Word, believed Jesus was raised from the dead, and we made him our lord. Jesus wants us to believe the Word no matter what we see or experience.

Psalms 138:2 (Amplified Bible)

I will worship toward Your holy temple and praise Your name for Your loving-kindness and for Your truth and faithfulness; for You have exalted above all else Your name and Your word and You have magnified Your word above all Your name!

God says that his word is higher than his name. One thing I saw early on is that the more Word I have in me the better my life would be. The Word is what builds faith in us. No Word, no faith. Reading about the Bible is not anywhere near as important as reading the Bible (that includes what I am writing now). The way we know God is through his word. Once you see things the way God sees them, life makes a lot more sense.

One of the great things God did for me was having Christian TV in the markets I lived in. In the ‘70s and ‘80s Christian radio had good teachers on all the time and since I was in the car a lot, I got a lot of good teaching, both with radio and teaching tapes. It was very exciting to my wife and me that Christian TV was in Fort Worth when we moved here in 1973.

James 1:27 (Amplified Bible) External religious worship [religion as it is expressed in outward acts] that is pure and unblemished in the sight of God the Father is this: to visit and help and care for the orphans and widows in their affliction and need, and to keep oneself unspotted and uncontaminated from the world.

Here is how we do a spiritual checkup. What is on the inside of us will come out in the way we live our lives and what we say. This is what this verse is talking about. This is not, “go do this”. God is saying if you are correct on the inside it will manifest itself in helping widows and orphans and keeping oneself unspotted and uncontaminated. We can check ourselves by looking at how we spend our time.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

We are to seek God's will. This is done by **Seeking the Kingdom.**

To know God's will we must know what the Bible says. It is a love letter to you and me. It is full of promises, each reflecting God's will.

We must hear from God to know what He wants us to do. This is done by putting ourselves in a position to hear what God is saying. We go to church, read the Bible daily, and listen to teaching and music on TV, radio, CDs and internet.

Give us this day our daily bread.

We have a right to ask and receive our daily bread. **Psalm 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.**

This is where we pray for any needs we have. When praying for our own needs, we pray once then expect God to give us what we ask. **Mark 11:24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.** If we pray this a lot of times it means we are not believing that he heard us the first time. When we believe we have received then we will receive. The believing comes before the receiving.

Luke 11: 5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

The man was not asking bread for himself. He was asking for a friend. When it comes to other people, we can bug God all we want. Mostly this is for people who have no rights before God and we are asking God to help them.

Going back to Mark 11:23, we had in church one Sunday Jesus appearing to Thomas. Jesus said, "Blessed are they that do not see and believe." The world says seeing is believing, but the Bible says believing is seeing.

This is a good spiritual check-up: How much do we need to see to believe? Jesus wants people who will take him at his word. We see that in John 6. Jesus started saying some hard things and people started leaving him. He did not run after them and try to explain or talk them into coming back.

Why didn't Jesus show himself to the people who crucified him? The reason is, there would be no faith. He could startle some into believing, but that's not faith. Some people would say he really wasn't dead. Some people believe Oral Roberts and all the healing preachers are frauds.

And forgive us our sins,

As we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

Mark 11: 25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Unforgiveness stops faith. If we have power to move mountains, it is important we do not use that power to harm someone with unforgiveness. Jesus and Steven both knew the power of unforgiveness.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

This is interesting; especially in light of the dancing in the streets that some have done with the news of bin Laden's death. This is another good check-up.

Proverbs 24:17. Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:

24:18. Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

This ties in with unforgiveness.

Matthew 18:23-35 we see the story of the unforgiving servant. The problem was not with the enormous debt but with the debt of a few dollars. We must be aware of the small offences and make sure we forgive them.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

Sorry I don't have anything much on this. I have asked God explain it to me so I can understand better what is going on here.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen

We end with praise.

Two interesting observations the Holy Spirit pointed out to me last week at church.

In the Gospel from **John 14 1-12, The man who has faith in me will do the works I do and greater far than these.** We are to do greater works than Jesus-so until I do greater works than Jesus, I got room to grow. Also Peter's shadow healed people; until my shadow heals people, I got room to grow.

Also, when the Bible is being read at church, we should not only listen with our ears but we should put the words in front of our eyes. Not only do we hear with our spirit but we also should use that time to renew our mind. I know there have been people who say just listen, but I believe that to be generally wrong. We all need to continually renew our minds.

Act 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

One of the keys to growth is daily receiving and searching the Word. These people were commended as noble. They were always ready to receive the Word. They didn't go by what people said but daily went to the Word to check out what was being taught. Any good Bible teacher will tell you to check out everything that is being taught. It is a complement to any teacher to check out what they teach.

How to be a Bible expert in 5 years

Romans 10:12 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

It has been said that if you spend 10 minutes a day reading in your field you will be an expert in 10 years. This can hold true for the Bible, but spend 20 minutes and you can do it in 5 years.

Being a Bible expert and a quarter will get you a cup of coffee (not counting Starbucks). However, Bible knowledge with faith and love can make one's life easier and we can effectively minister to other people. I cannot say too many times that life is a lot easier with Bible wisdom. A person also has answers and understanding of the things happening around them.

We all have so much Word available to us we have no excuse for not living a victorious life. If a person is a new Christian, Proverbs is a good place to study and New Testament is where the person should be reading. They should listen to a lot of different radio and TV preachers.

A person with a working knowledge of the Bible should take the daily readings and look up every word in the Greek and Hebrew concordance. They should find ministries they like and faithfully listen to them. Here is where I might get into trouble, don't just go to your denomination. We need to hear people saying different things than we are accustomed to hearing. Even if a denomination has correct doctrine, the teaching may not all be correct; and the person teaching it may also get it wrong. The person doing most of the preaching at my church has made both Bible mistakes and Catholic mistakes. We must learn to judge what we are being taught, like the Thessalonians.

If we ever feel discouraged about our growth progress, we would do well to remember this song:

*He's still working on me
To make me what I want to be
It took six days to make the Moon and stars
The Sun and Earth and Jupiter and Mars
How loving and patient he must be
'cause He's still working on me.*

One aspect of growth is stick-to-it-ness.

2 Corinthians 8:10 And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; 11 but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as *there was* a readiness to desire it, so *there also may be* a completion out of what you have. NKJV

Here God is telling them to follow through with what they said they would do.

After a few years of staying in the Word and not letting my Word level drop, I found I had answers to questions. When you interpret all scripture as you do – “take, eat, this is my body” everything in life makes sense. And when it doesn't it is easy for God to answer your questions because the answer is on the inside of you.

Religious Activity

A hindrance to growth is substituting religious activity for true ministry or faith development. In Mark 11 we see the recording of Jesus cursing the fig tree. The tree looked good; it was full of leaves. The problem was it looked good on the outside, but had no fruit. Hard work and religious activity cannot be a substitute for prayer and Bible study.

The Jews were sent to Babylon for worshipping other gods. When they were returned to Israel, they never followed false gods again. Now what could Satan do? What he did was he made the people religious. Satan took a relationship with God and made it into a religion.

When God sent Jesus, he ran into problems with the religious leaders. The people and sinners loved Jesus, the leaders hated him. This is because the leaders were blinded by Satan. The religious leaders were correct in their doctrine but missed the move of God that was happening around them. We see this today. When people were baptized in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, the main-line churches gave them the left-foot-of-fellowship.

My wife and I went to a real small full gospel church in San Antonio. The people, being Protestants, believed Catholics were not Christians. When they found out my wife was raised Catholic they started talking about hearing that the Holy Spirit was falling on Catholics. The pastor said, "I don't understand it, but praise God." He did not understand what was happening and it was shaking up his belief system but he was not going to limit God and he was glad it was happening.

Religious activity could be going to church, praying at meals if you believe certain words must be said, making the sign of the cross without any thought (we seen baseball players do it a lot when coming to bat), taking holy water without thinking what you are doing, and anything done without faith.

I was leading singing at a Bible study. The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said to sing *Bind Us Together*. Not paying any attention when the thought came to me, I said to myself, "No, we always do that song at the end." I picked another song. When the teacher came in he said to sing *Bind us Together*. I completely missed what God said because of my religious belief was that *Bind Us Together* should be done at the end. Nowhere in the Bible does it say to sing *Bind Us Together* at the end of anything.

The Jewish leaders did all the correct duties that God required, but the duties became an end in themselves, not as a means to an end. There was a time that Jewish rabbis spend years arguing about different laws. The Bible says not to work on the Sabbath. They argued about whether having a false tooth was carrying a burden in the Sabbath.

I was listening to an old set of Kenneth Hagan tapes and talked about a man who was a model Christian. He went to church every Sunday, prayed at meals and was one of the nicest men in town. One day an evangelist came to town and the man went forward for salvation. He later said that he had never invited Jesus into his heart.

I am going to develop this more because we all need to hear this.

Being outwardly religious and obeying rules for the rule's sake is one of the sneakiest ways Satan can trip us up. It always looks good on the outside.

1 Corinthians 10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Here we see that there are demons associated false religions. This can include Christianity and Judaism if they become man reaching to God. Both of these deal with God reaching to man. Other belief systems are man reaching to god.

Here is a good example: I am convinced by scripture that an angel sits on the curb in front of the house protecting us. I can see him with the eye of faith. I do not need to see him with my physical eyes to know he is there. This is my doctrinal position and it is correct. If the angel is out there, I see no need to lock doors at night or when we leave. For me, locking doors could be construed as lack of faith and going against my doctrine. This is not the same for everyone, only people whose faith has been developed in this area.

My wife on the other hand likes to lock the doors at night. This is not unreasonable. So, I can insist on the doors being unlocked or lock them as my wife wants. Religion says don't lock the doors and it is correct in its doctrinal position. Love, on the other hand, says lock the doors. Love always trumps doctrine.

Sitting next to me in church yesterday was a person that made numerous signs of the cross. I had never seen someone do so many so fast. This person did not sing and left before the last song was over. I am not trying to judge that person; they probably were not taught correctly. What we want to do is always know what we are doing.

I was told that in making the sign of the cross a person was blessing themselves.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

If we have every **spiritual blessing**, people crossing themselves must mean they want to be blessed physically; or in the mind, intellect, or emotional realm (soul); or financially. Mary said that all generations were going to call her blessed. It was not ego talking but truth talking. The same can be said about us. The same blessing Mary has and the same blessing Abraham has, has come on us. If we say we do not have every spiritual blessing, we call God a liar.

Romans 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

This is about Abraham. When we embrace the promises of God, we can use them to help others as well as ourselves. Most of the time the promises sound self-centered or egotistical. Religious folks always feel they have to do something to earn salvation.

Our Thought Life

Our thought life is an ingredient in our growth. Satan does have access to our minds. He can say things to us. We must work at keeping our minds under control.

Satan attacks new Christians by saying, "I'm not good enough" or "If I really became a Christian I would not be having these thoughts." Satan speaks in the first person so that you believe you are thinking it instead of him speaking to you.

2 Corinthians 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Philippians 4:8 For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them]. Amplified

We have all heard people say, "I only watch the news on TV." Well if I read my Bible correctly, that's one of the worst things you could watch, it's all bad. I would be a hypocrite if I said much about this because I am the worst offender of this verse. However, I would be remiss if I did not point out this verse.

Giving and receiving the Word

Isaiah 55:10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

When we apply God's word to a situation, we see here that God will make it work. We can meditate on these verses and build our faith. We can also study the Bible and we can learn passages that apply to the things we want to change. After Salvation, Baptism with water, and Baptism with the Holy Spirit, this is the best thing we can teach a new Christian.

We are going to look at "The Sower Sows the Word."

Matthew 13:1-23 / Mark 4

Let's first look at the soil that the Word is sown in; that's us.

Footpath – That is soil so packed down that nothing will grow. If something will grow it will get stepped on and killed. Satan comes and takes out the word that was sown. When you see something in the Bible that's unbelievably great, Satan will come and say, "That can't be right" or "That's for the really holy people, not you."

2 Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. If we can find the promise in the Bible, it belongs to us! When we really believe this verse, we will do everything we can to get the Word inside us.

To get something to grow on packed soil we must use heavy equipment to break up the path and go down deep. Then we must break up the packed soil to make it like regular soil. That

packed soil could be sin or pre-conceived opinions (things we think the Bible says or things taught to us that do not line up with the Bible).

Kenneth Hagan had a vision of a big dark hole. When he asked God what it was and God said, “Your denominational wrong thinking.”

Rocky Ground - The soil in our front yard is very shallow and it takes more water and fertilizer than the back yard which has deeper soil. It takes a lot of time for trees to root because they have to go down through rocks.

This individual hears a promise and gets joyful. Then when things don’t work out like he thinks they should he stumbles. **When tribulation or persecution arises because of the word...**

This person sees the promise that “God heals. This person then prays for a sick person and he dies. He does this again and the person dies. People then start to laugh at him and instead of continuing praying for people, he backs off. If you are putting God’s Word into people, you will be made fun of. Satan does not like you putting the Word into people. Satan does not care if you do nice things for people, but he gets real chapped when you start using the Word to change people’s lives and start kicking him out of his strongholds.

You can see how effective you are in ministering to other people by how much you are being persecuted. If you put the Word into people you will have tribulation and persecution.

When I was leading the singing at a large denominational church and telling people that God wanted exuberant praise, I could see people in the congregation laughing at me. That is never pleasant. Every bit of the Holy Spirit that I had in me flowed out to the congregation and I was left completely drained of all spiritual power. I have personally seen people back off from the Bible truth when confronted with ridicule or opposition.

Sown Among Briers – Matthew 13:22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

We all need to learn to say, “I don’t care.”

2 Corinthians 28:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. 28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Paul equates **the care of the churches** with the beatings, perils and sufferings. It is not Paul’s job to carry the care of the churches, it’s Jesus’ job.

It seems the responsible thing to do is to worry over your children. But even with children “I don’t care” is better.

From some stuff I wrote about children

Psalm 91 Note 5 and 6

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

Some years back when my oldest girl was in elementary school a note came home from school saying a man in a blue Ford had tried to pick up a young girl on her way home the day before. My wife asked me what we were going to do. I said "The weather is bad and you will drive her to school tomorrow anyway. But the day after that if the weather is nice, she will walk. If Psalm 91 is not true we have bigger problems than having our child abducted." She knew I was saying "Our life is based on God's word and if we cannot trust in God to see that his word is fulfilled we will all go to hell anyway so nothing else mattered." Look at verse 2. The word "say" shows up again.

The facts are I cannot protect my family or home or anything so I am better off letting God do it.

Jesus has just told them that the cares of the world choke the Word; now Jesus issues some Word.

Mark 4: 35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

Note that Jesus did not say "let's go to the middle and sink" or "let's try to go to the other side". Jesus was asked, "**Don't you care?**" Peter could have said, "Peace be still" and the sea and wind would have obeyed him also.

The deceitfulness of riches also chokes the Word. Mark adds **the desire for other things**. The Bible says that giving is the way to increase wealth; the world says hard work, saving, and maybe cheating are the ways to increase wealth. You will see Christians not being givers and holding on to their money.

But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

Here is where we want to be and the purpose for all of this writing. We want to be good ground.

We put the Word into people and God gives us more Word. We want the effectiveness of the Word that God sows in us to be at the 100 times level. If we try for 30 times we will probably hit

20 times, so we might as well shoot for 100 times. We may fall short but we will be higher than if we shoot for 30 times.

God does not just want us be holy on Sunday, but all the time. We are to make sure we spend more time in the Bible than we spend in books about the Bible. We need to listen to as many different preachers as we can. Our attitude is to be: Either be receiving the Word or putting the Word into people.

Let's look at the problem of turning bad soil into good soil. If the soil is packed down it will take special equipment to break it up and get under the surface. They make plow like things that go deep and break up the top. Or if it by hand, you must use a pick with a sharp point to break into the ground to get to the soil lower down. Sometimes it takes this to get sin or bad habits out of our lives. Jesus says to pluck out your eye. Sometimes it can be almost that painful.

Rocky soil just needs the rocks removed. However, sometime rocks come up from below the surface and we don't get them on the first pass. Rocks keep popping up and we must continually be removing rocks. This is like sin in our lives. Communion gets the rocks out by us judging ourselves and confessing sins. We can also get rocks out by getting rid of things that hold us back. This could be relationships, TV, music or anything God does not want in our lives. With me, God wanted soccer out of my life. I have heard Bible teachers say newspapers and novels needed to get out of their lives. It can be anything that gets in the way of our Bible study, prayer, or church attendance.

Isaiah 55:2 Why do you spend money for *what is not bread*, And your wages for *what does not satisfy*?..... I don't know about you, but I do a lot of things that are not in my best interest. I have said a lot of times that the Franklin Mint makes all kinds of money telling people that if they get a Civil War chess set then they will be happy. Having a high Word level, good prayer times, spending time in God's presence with the church, and keeping sin out of our lives is what will lead to fulfillment.

When it comes to not letting the cares of this world or deceitfulness of riches choke the Word the only thing I can think of is to build up your faith. **Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** We can listen to preachers that preach the Word under the anointing of the Holy Spirit or study and read the Bible ourselves. We must believe what we read. When we read something we must accept that that is the way it is. I don't care what people say or how it looks; the Word is true no matter what.

This just came to me: Start with Genesis 1. Study everything there is on creation science. Do this until you come to the conclusion that the world was spoken into existence less than 10,000 years ago. Then study some more until you do not care what anyone thinks or what they say, "evolution is heresy and no thinking Christian would believe that lie."

Then go on to other topics. Build your faith in all areas of the Christian life. Some are:
God's love and mercy
God's provision for us, tithing and giving
God's healing
Our salvation

The real presence of Jesus in the communion body and blood

The Holy Spirit's work in the church

If you put on the whole armor of God, Satan won't know if it's you in there or God. When we start putting the Word in people and God starts blessing us, persecution will arise for the Word's sake. I am going to go through this, but here it is together. Working your way through these verses will help in the long term Christian life.

The Whole Armor of God

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We are dealing with the victorious Christian life.

First, God wants us to be strong in him and the power of his might. We do this so that we can stand against the wiles of the devil.

A bullfighter uses a cape to distract the bull. The bull thinks that the cape is his problem. If the bull understood what was happening in the ring, he would beat the matador every time. Our fight is with demons not people – not people – not people – demons. (Note that there is an organization of demons. Just as angels have territories, so do demons. Satan has sent demons to harass individual churches, denominations, and geographical areas.) Satan wants Christians to attack each other and not attack the real problem – him.

We need the whole armor of God to be able to stand. We have good armor and powerful weapons. That is why I dislike songs (and will not sing parts of them) that talk about how weak and tired we are.

We gird our waist with truth. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the father but by me." Not Buddha, not Joseph Smith, not Mohamed, just Jesus. We should have correct doctrine but God doesn't get bent out of shape if our doctrine isn't perfect. He wants us

to love and serve. Love trumps doctrine every time. This truth goes around our middle; truth needs to be at our core.

Righteousness needs to cover our breast. **We have been made the righteousness of God.** Our hearts need to know that we are righteous, no matter what Satan or anyone else tells us. The murderer who is about to be executed, but near the end repents and makes Jesus his Lord is just as righteous as me or St Francis or the Pope. Righteous is our position; it has nothing to do with our conduct. Correct conduct and works of righteousness are important and helps us live; but it has nothing to do with our righteousness. **Our righteousness is of Him.** We cover our heart with the knowledge of our position in Jesus.

Our shoes are for spreading the gospel.

With the shield of faith we stop ~~some~~ all of Satan's attacks. This shield of faith comes by meditating, reading, and studying the Bible. We speak the way God speaks. Jesus used the Word to stop Satan's temptations.

The helmet of salvation can be two things. It can mean to keep your mind under control. It can also mean – When you don't feel loved by God or you cannot hear him, use your mind to remember what God has done for you. You can remember encounters with God including your salvation experience. You can remember that we do not go by how we feel but we go by the Word of God. Our mind is in the soulish realm. Here David tells his mind to bless the Lord.

Psalm 103 A Psalm of David.

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul;

And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!

² Bless the LORD, O my soul,

And forget not all His benefits:

³ Who forgives all your iniquities,

Who heals all your diseases,

⁴ Who redeems your life from destruction,

Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,

⁵ Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,

So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The sword of the Spirit is God's Word. It is an attack weapon. We are to use the Word to control Satan and tear down his kingdom.

Success

Here is one of the main keys to a successful Christian life; a life that helps others, a life that grows and becomes complete, a life that is fun and exciting.

Joshua 1 God's Commission to Joshua

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: ² "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I

have given you, as I said to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. ⁵ No man shall *be able to stand before you all the days of your life*; as I was with Moses, *so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.* ⁶ Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is with you wherever you go.*”

In Joshua 1:2 God said that Moses was dead, get up and take the land. We cannot live in the past.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

God wants us to grow, getting better and better. God does not us living in the past.

Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I have trouble with this. I remember the things I have done and said in the past and always feel bad about them. Paul is saying that he is not where he wants to be, but he's going forward. He is forgetting the things he did in the past. If God is going to forget them, I might as well too.

In verse 3 is a great promise of God, We can claim territory. Jabez says enlarge my territory and God promises in Isaiah 54:2 to enlarge your tent. The whole 54 chapter is a great promise. We should expect the best God can give us.

In verse 5 we see God saying, **“I will not leave you nor forsake you.”** Psalm 91 is our divine protection promise along with this verse. Both Psalm 91 and verse 5 depend on our speech.

In verse 6 God tells Joshua that he will do as promised.

2 Corinthians 1:19-20

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

If you can find a promise in the Bible, it is for us. People say God answered my prayer but he said “no”. If the person was asking something that was not promised in the Bible, God might say “no”. An example might be, “God help me win the lottery.” This would be contrary to God's word. (The lottery has winners and losers; in God's system everyone wins.) We have the promise

in Psalms that says, I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their seed begging bread. So, we can expect God to meet our needs.

Verse 7 says to be successful we should: be strong and courageous, do what the Bible says to do, and do not turn to the right or left.

Verse 8 is where our part comes in. **This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**

Joshua only had the first 5 books of the Bible, but that was enough to get the job done. It doesn't say to read books about the Bible even though they can be helpful. It says the Book of the Law – the Bible. Remember Mary at Wedding at Cana. She said to the servants, "Do what he says." Even though Jesus was not ready for his public ministry, he still fulfilled this verse. Mary knew Jesus spoke differently than other people. He didn't speak the problem; he spoke the answer from God's Word. Mary put her faith in Jesus' words and he had no choice but to respond, even if he was a little chapped. God always responds to faith.

Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

What is on the inside of us will come out in our speech. If we meditate (or mutter -to moan, growl, utter, muse, mutter, meditate, devise, plot, speak) on the Word day and night, we will start speaking the Word.

We do what the Bible says to do and we will prosper and have good success. God has made things so simple that the most mentally challenged person can make it work. We are to believe in the name of Jesus and to love God and each other. We should always keep in mind two things. One, it takes theologians to mess up the Bible. And two, the prostitutes and tax collectors didn't have any problem with Jesus; it was the religious folks that didn't like him and wanted to kill him.

Conclusion

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

By doing Psalm 1, we will be fruitful, prosperous, and will not wither.