



# Life Principles Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God

## YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

**KEY PASSAGES:** Psalm 139:1-4; 17-18; 23-24 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Job 23:10 | Psalm 139:19-22  
John 15:4-5 | 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 | 1 Peter 2:2 | 2 Peter 3:18

### SUMMARY:

#### Salvation is just the beginning of a relationship with God.

After a person becomes a believer, he or she should develop a deeper relationship with the Father, learn more spiritual truth, and begin to serve the Lord somehow.

For some, spiritual progress takes off after they're saved and never stops. Others never grow at all because they view salvation as merely a guarantee of heaven. A third group begins strong, but later weakens. These believers may continue to give, attend church, and pray, but their spiritual growth stagnates.

No matter how long a person has been saved, his or her life should be characterized by growth. So if we lose our spiritual fervor, you and I need to pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart . . . see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way" (Ps. 139:23-24).

### SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES:

#### The Request

■ **The request stated:** On a regular basis, we must ask the Lord to examine our lives. He knows us better than we know ourselves and can reveal hidden sins and harmful attitudes (Ps. 139:1-4). God will show us relationships that aren't right, areas where we are no longer growing, and distractions that hinder our walk with Him.

■ **The motivation for the request:** Why did David ask God to evaluate his life? I believe he didn't want to become like the wicked men he knew (Ps. 139:19-22). Our determination to obey the Father can be strengthened when we

understand the consequences of sinful choices through Scripture or by observing the lives of other people.

■ **The nature of the request:** In prayer, we often request something tangible for ourselves or another person. But spiritual evaluation involves asking the Lord to reveal His thoughts and perspective on our lives (Ps. 139:17-18). In other words, we seek to encounter the Father personally rather than to receive a gift from Him.

■ **The confidence that God will grant the request:** The Lord desires to reveal our weaknesses so that we will walk more righteously (Job 23:10). Although the Father loves us unconditionally, He doesn't want us to be held captive by bitterness, resentment, sinful habits, or unhealthy ways of relating to others. When you and I ask the Lord to search our hearts (Ps. 139:23-24), He will begin to show us the truth about ourselves.

#### The Requirements

■ **A willingness to look within ourselves:** Sometimes people take for granted that they know their own hearts. But the truth is we know little about our real motivations. We need the light of the Holy Spirit to reveal both the good and bad aspects of our character.

■ **Honesty:** First Corinthians 2:10-11 says the Spirit of God shows us the truth about ourselves. The Father has perfect knowledge and understanding of our innermost being. So when He brings something up, don't rationalize your sin or make excuses for your behavior.

■ **Adequate time:** The Lord loves us too much to show us all our weaknesses and failures at once.

Instead, He reveals our wrong attitudes and actions little by little. Just as it took decades for you to become an adult, it will take time to grow spiritually.

■ **Courage:** Many people fearfully resist asking the Lord to examine their hearts. But you will never become the person God wants you to be until you allow Him to do just that. Left unchecked, bitterness, resentment, and other harmful attitudes eventually cripple a person emotionally. You may look healthy on the outside, but sin will destroy your peace and joy.

### The Reasons We Resist

■ **Fear of learning the truth about ourselves:** It can be frightening when God reveals our sin. I remember when the Lord first showed me, as a younger pastor, that I was harboring unforgiveness towards my abusive stepfather. I didn't know how I could possibly ask him for his forgiveness; after all, my stepfather was the one who had mistreated my mother. But God told me to seek his forgiveness for my attitude towards him—and say nothing about what he had done wrong. My obedience freed me from the spiritual dryness I was feeling. That event was the start of a fresh season of growth for me.

■ **Fear of what God may require of us:** I felt helpless to change when the Lord showed me I had not forgiven my stepfather. But my heavenly Father enabled me apologize to him, and He will strengthen you as well (John 15:4-5). Don't refuse to listen to God's instructions or you will limit your spiritual growth.

### The Rewards

■ **Removal of spiritual obstacles:** Tell the Father, "Lord, search me. Show me my heart and reveal to me how to obey You." He will be faithful to explain what is hindering your walk with Him.

■ **More intimate fellowship with God:** When your conscience is clear, you will experience a closer friendship with the Lord.

■ **Greater peace, contentment, and joy:** Not only will your relationship with God be healthy, He will prompt you to set things right with other people. And when you realize the Lord knows

all about your sin, and still cares for you, it will result in an even greater appreciation for His unconditional love. You will experience more peace, contentment, and joy.

■ **Increased priority of God's Word and prayer:** Those who allow the Father to examine their hearts will make room in their schedules for studying the Scripture and praying.

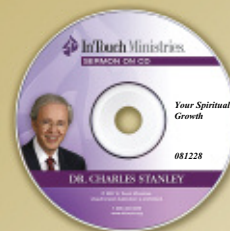
■ **Renewed energy:** Sin is to our spiritual lives what sickness is to our bodies. Worry, resentment, fear, anxiety, and other ungodly attitudes drain our energy. When we become spiritually healthy, serving God is a joy instead of a duty.

■ **Spiritual freedom:** Some people go through life blaming unhappiness on other people, society, or their circumstances. They never think to look at themselves. But we will never know true freedom until you and I allow the Lord to examine us. He can show you how to be joyful and forgiving no matter what your circumstances.

### CONCLUSION:

I encourage you to assess your life honestly. Is it characterized by continual spiritual growth? You may find that your development has stagnated. Or perhaps you are faithfully investing in your relationship with the Father, but just want to make sure your heart is completely clean before Him. I challenge you to pray as King David did: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way" (Psalm 139:23-24).

The Holy Spirit will reveal what is hindering your walk with God and show you how to become free. If you obey, you will experience a more peaceful, joyful, and productive life. Let today be the start of a fresh, new season of spiritual growth. ✨



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