

Spiritual Growth

When I began my journey toward a spiritual awakening I was first instructed to place my trust in God. Then I was to confess my anger, pray for help to remove my character defects, make restitution for harm I had done, and do God's will each day. This was called cleaning house.

This is the opposite of corruption, a purifying of the heart, mind, and soul. I was told many times to "trust God, clean house, and work with others." It was a regular statement like, 'God bless you' or 'amen.'

De-corruption was cleaning up my sinful ways to be able to see God's grace. I was clinging to sin and abhorring grace. As long as I held tightly in my mind, attitude, and actions fear, resentment, selfish-ambition, or other form of sin I would not be able to grasp grace. I cannot experience joy and anger at the same time. I cannot feel content and worried at the same time. I had to choose anxiety or peace. My mind and heart clings to one and rebels against the other.

Romans 12:9 *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. **Cling** to what is good.*

In order to cling to what is God's good, my heart, mind, and soul will need to develop a regular focus upon that good. I will need to understand precisely what God's good is and then set my mind upon such experiences. If I do not have such experiences I will need to get such experiences to gain insight into the spiritual good within them.

When I apply mercy, what does it feel like, how does the other person respond, is there something beyond the superficial that is alive and active? We must go through such experiences to gain spiritual understanding. Ask anyone who has made sincere restitution for harm done, deep confession, or has practiced genuine compassion and empathy. There is much to learn through sincere and honest Godly practices. Such practices can develop us over time. It requires self-discipline and commitment.

Learning to be less of me and more of God

Ingrained habitual thinking and acting existed within my being. If I began my journey eliminating all sin I would have disappeared. All I really understood was sin. I did not know grace. I grew up believing compassion, mercy, and forgiveness was for the weak. I believed we lived in a world full of exploitation and extortion and generosity was for suckers. To me, everyone was on the take. But you see I was a product of my environment. I chose friends I felt comfortable with which ended up to be kids in seriously broken families. And kids in seriously broken families a lot of times end up as seriously broken adults. We are often products of our own environment.

In order for me to change I needed to change my environment, learn new ways of doing things, and choose different friends. I needed to get around other people that would provide new messages, ideas, and stories. I was blessed to be part of a group at 21 years of age which directed me into a new way of life with God.

Continuous sacrifices

To say I was saved with single prayer would be far from the truth. As I understand it, a person who is saved doesn't suffer from self-destructive choices. A person who is saved is one who seeks and trusts God more and more progressively becoming more like Christ. Besides the theological debate, I have many experiences over 3 decades that testifies to this point. When I am loving God with all my heart (notice the word all and think about it for a moment because it means something important), all my mind, all my soul, and all my strength as God's instructions for us is clearly stated, and practice it over time, my life drastically improves. When I stop seeking God and apply myself to school, work, or other interests my self-thinking and self-serving grows which creates within my mind much fear, anxiety, worry, anger, and sadness. Most of the time when I am upset I am thinking about what I am not getting out of life, how I am missing out on something, or how things are not going the way I think they should. Being patient, seeking peace, trusting God in all things, are no longer part of my mind, heart, or attitude.

Spiritual growth has everything to do with how I choose to think or whether I choose to consider what God wants for me. Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20, all of John 15, all of Ezekiel 18, and see how they relate.

False Teachers

False teaching about the Bible exists. Read 2 Peter 2.

Matthew 24:11 “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.”

False teachers exist and many of them may not even know they are teaching falsely. Many may be teaching what they were taught. Yet if we look at the scripture and hammer out the conflicting information with spiritual realities at hand we can learn things teachers may be afraid to teach.

Distractions come when we choose to look more at problems than solutions. God uses stories that have solutions.

1 Corinthians 2:4 “And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,”

The Bible says to demonstrate. The best teachers may be those who can share from their own experience spiritual transformation and walk with others as they do likewise.

We each ought to each read the Bible ourselves because we can. If God is our highest priority and we serve God it really ought to increasingly be part of our activities. It's a no-brainer. To do God's will we ought to increasingly understand God's instructions. We will need to learn how to use our thinking better, grow in discernment, critical analysis, introspection, and much more.