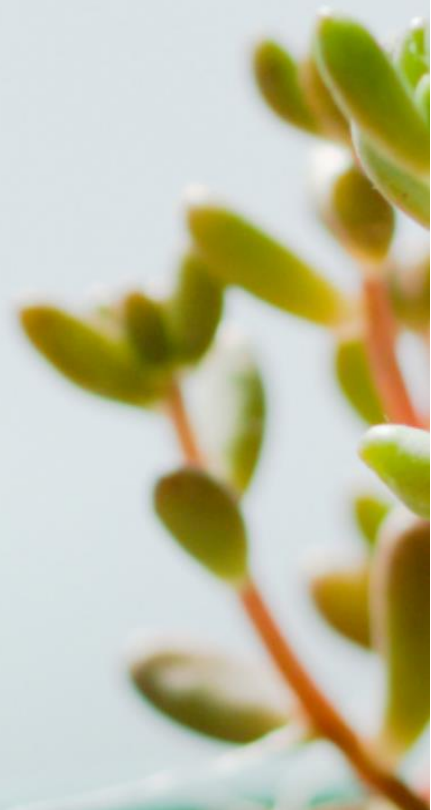


8 PILLARS OF GROWTH

For Effectiveness & Success



'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.' Luke 2:52

One of the most encouraging things about the life of Jesus is the fact that during His earthly ministry He consistently grew in critical areas that directly impacted His effectiveness in fulfilling His assignment. As Jesus provides a perfect example for us to follow, this means we also have the opportunity to continuously grow

This series we are looking at 8 pillars of growth that we should target as they will significantly equip us to succeed in all aspects of life.

We pray the Holy Spirit will bring understanding as we dig into the topic and show us how to apply these to our daily lives.



Day 1

Knowledge of God

“asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.” Ephesians 1:17 NLT

Growing in our knowledge of God should be every believer's goal. This is different from the pursuit of the things of God (e.g healing, promotion, etc) which we can do without pursuing the knowledge of God Himself. If all we want are the results, we won't necessarily want to pay the price to seek and find Him for ourselves. When we start desiring to know God, we will inevitably be drawn to prayer and study of the word with the primary objective of finding Him. For example, we may engage in a Bible study to understand what God thinks about a particular topic. And when we pray, rather than ask for things all the time, our primary objective would be to have a revelation of who He is.

“Then Moses said to the Lord, “...Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You...” Exodus 33:12-13

Moses made this request for the grace to know God after the various miracles God had done through him in Egypt and the desert. Moses must have understood that there was still a lot about God that He didn't know. Which tells us that a person's ability to perform miracles isn't the only index we should look at in determining the person's walk with God.

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” Romans 11:33

“...for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6

As we focus on knowing God and not just getting things from Him, the things we're looking for will still come because they are all readily available in God's presence. There is joy (Ps 16:11), strength (Isa 40:31), protection (Ps 91), direction (Ps 32:8) and so much more. The pursuit of the knowledge of God is a lifetime's activity because God is far too vast for a human being to fully comprehend in one lifetime.

Prayer: Lord help me as I intentionally seek to grow in the knowledge of You.



Day 2

Excellence

'Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men.' Proverbs 22:29

Sometimes we may think some people are just born excellent or that excellence is a one-off event that we pull off occasionally. Rather it is the result of deliberate and consistent actions where we commit to always give our very best in whatever we are engaging in. Excellence is something that is recognized as a distinguishing factor by both the physical and spiritual realms which is why the Bible says such a person cannot be ignored and will surely be recognized by leaders in their area. If excellence is a possibility for us all how then do we achieve it?

'Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might...' Ecclesiastes 9:10

The first step is deciding in advance to be a person of excellence. This means choosing to put in the very best in every area. This will lead us to reflect upon what that really means for us. What does excellence in following God, giving, serving, being an excellent boss, employee etc look like? When we answer these questions then we start identifying the gaps in us that need to be closed. As we consistently work on closing those gaps, we become people of excellence.

'Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him...' Daniel 6:3

'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.' Matthew 5:16

Daniel didn't receive an anointing for excellence, he worked so diligently in every area that his enemies struggled to find fault with his work or character. He paid the price to grow in excellence and was recognised by the various kings he served who all said the same thing about him. Daniel must have pre-determined that he would distinguish himself and by doing so, He brought God glory. The same way we bring Him glory by excelling in every good area of our lives. Is there any area of your life that you desire to demonstrate excellence? If so, bring it before the Lord and ask for His help as you commit to working on that area.

Prayer: Lord I want to be excellent in ____, help me as I identify my gaps and work on improving these areas.



Day 3

Wisdom

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Luke 2:52

Jesus growing in wisdom means the amount of wisdom we have access to is expandable and that it's possible to cover both natural and supernatural aspects of wisdom. Jesus intentionally spent time studying so He could acquire more knowledge and asked questions from teachers, leaders so He could understand how that knowledge should be applied. So His focus wasn't information gathering, but its application. Jesus also spent a significant amount of time in prayer so the Holy Spirit could equip Him with the supernatural ability to tap into God's divine wisdom.

“Get wisdom! Get understanding!... Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. ...” Proverbs 4:5-7

“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.” James 1:5 NLT

Wisdom is a resource that we should prize very highly because of its many benefits to us in all things. How then do we grow in wisdom? The first step is to let God know we desire this growth and then be open to receiving guidance on the actions to take. Perhaps we need to study, go on a specific course, get a mentor. The possibilities are endless and even if we are doing these already, there are still heights in levels of wisdom we can grow into.

'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding...' Isaiah 11:2

Jesus always had an accurate response for every situation. He always knew exactly what to do and what to say. As busy as He was and despite the numerous challenges that confronted Him daily, He was never confused because He had total clarity on how to tackle everything. The Holy Spirit can also make this lifestyle a possibility for us as we partner with Him. As Jesus grew in wisdom, so should we. The question is are we willing to follow the disciplines required to grow in wisdom?

Prayer: Generous Lord, I ask that You show me the habits I need to adopt for an increasing measure of wisdom in my life.



Day 4

Victory

“They go from strength to strength [increasing in victorious power]; Each of them appears before God in Zion”. Psalms 84:7 AMP

Jesus paid the price for us to have the power over sin and victory over the enemy, but that doesn't insulate us from experiencing challenges in this life (John 16:33). Much as we may not like them, challenges are an inevitable part of life. As we are not exempt from challenges, God in His wisdom equips us to overcome them so that we can constantly live a victorious life. As we grow in stature so do the level of challenges we will face, so God is always working in us, preparing us in advance for what is ahead.

“Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle—”
Psalms 144:1

God trains each of us in different ways based on our call and the challenges we will face, which are tailor made to our assignments so we must understand who we are and what role they are meant to play in our lives. David was trained in battle by handling the bears and lions in the wilderness, so he wasn't overcome by Goliath (1 Sam 17:34-36). In the journey to becoming king, men about whom nothing positive was noted came to David (1 Sam 22) and rather than be discouraged, he partnered with God developing himself as a leader and transformed the men into a mighty army who won many wars with him for Israel (2 Sam 23). Paul went through several difficult situations during his assignment (2 Cor 11:22-33) but overcame all successfully. What challenges are you facing now and can you see them as stepping stones to growth?

“Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.” Exodus 23:30

The enemy isn't going to stand by and let us take advantage of all God has for us. There will be resistance along the way, so God exposes us to the level we can accommodate per time. As we grow in strength, we advance to another level of both inheritance and challenges. Therefore we shouldn't run away from issues because doing so means we will remain at the level of that challenge until we address it.

Prayer: Lord train my hands for war and my fingers for battle so I live a victorious life.

Day 5

Endurance

“But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” Matthew 24:13

There are many types of races athletes run: from short distance sprints to long distance marathons spanning several kilometers. For a short distance runner to succeed in a marathon without gassing out, that runner must be intentional about building capacity to run the long distance. The person would have to consistently practice extending the distance covered over time, until the marathon distance can realistically be taken on. This is the same way we must build our capacity to endure.

“...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” Hebrews 12:1

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” I Corinthians 6:12

The same way a marathon runner would struggle running with a backpack filled with weights is the same way we will struggle to endure if we don't let certain things go. These things are weights, which are not necessarily sin but they make it difficult for us to be effective. All the weights will not go immediately but over time as we persist in our commitment, it becomes easier to let go of more and more.

As we mature in the things of God, it becomes clearer to us what our weights are. We realise how dependent we are on the Holy Spirit for grace to see what He's working in us so we have the right perspective in identifying and letting go of the weights in our lives. The less weight we carry, the lighter we become and the freer we are to run without encumbrances. For example, there's nothing wrong with sleep, in fact the body needs it to function effectively. But sleep becomes a weight if we allow too much of it to rob us of time with God. So like the runner we can practice getting up earlier each day so we have more time in the morning with God; or making more use of the night time if that's what our schedule permits. What are the weights we need to set aside?

Prayer: Dear Holy Spirit please show me the weights in my life so I can start letting them go by Your grace.



Day 6

Persistence in Prayer

“pray without ceasing,” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

When the Bible instructs says pray without ceasing, it wasn't a suggestion. There is a doggedness and persistence in the place of prayer that we need to cultivate. The life of a believer is one of constant contention and a major key to our victory is prayer. Prayer isn't meant to be an end in itself, but a means by which we communicate with the Father, download strategies, receive enablement and transformation. Which means we should always look to prayer as our first line of action and we need to grow in the amount of time we give to prayer.

“Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart”
Luke 18:1

Isaiah talks about giving God no rest until we see the manifestation of what we're praying for (Isa 62:6-7). Jesus talked to His disciples about not giving up until they see what they have prayed for. Clearly there's something powerful about having a rich and robust prayer life. As we can imagine, this doesn't come overnight but is built through consistency over extended periods of time.

'I will climb up to my watchtower and stand at my guard post. There I will wait to see what the Lord says and how he will answer my complaint.' Habakkuk 2:1 NLT

“Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on the people of Jerusalem...” Zechariah 12:10 NLT

The first step is to ask the Holy Spirit to help us in the place of prayer so we are not just engaged in activity that's not generating the desired impact. Second is to have a dedicated time for prayer, it shouldn't be haphazard or when we feel like it. We should create a time in our daily schedules for prayer and stick to it. Because growth is intentional, we also have to create a plan to stretch ourselves. For this to work, there needs to be a goal in sight, say to pray for an hour daily. If current prayer time is 6-6:30am, try adding 15 mins say every month until prayer time is a full hour. It also helps to have a prayer group to help keep the fire burning even outside of personal prayer time. The only way to grow in prayer is to be intentional about praying consistently.

Prayer: Lord help me as I plan to grow in prayer. I ask for the grace and stamina to stay in the place of prayer and to guide my prayers so I focus on the things that really matter.

Day 7

Growing in Understanding

'...And with all your acquiring, get understanding [actively seek spiritual discernment, mature comprehension, and logical interpretation].' Proverbs 4:7 AMP

The difference between success and failure in many areas is understanding. Having the ability to accurately understand the word of God, seasons of life, people, systems, structures clearly sets one apart from the rest. The verse above describes the acquisition of understanding as something that must be sought which speaks to commitment and intentionality on our part. How do we grow in understanding?

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding' Proverbs 3:5

'The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding...' Isaiah 11:2

'And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.' Luke 24:45

There's a level of understanding that all mankind has access to by virtue of being God's creation. So by studying, acquiring insight, practice etc there's some understanding we can come to. However, there's also a superior understanding that can only be provided by the Holy Spirit. It's this understanding that unlocks our ability to really comprehend what the Bible is saying, maximise seasons, circumstances and situations. It takes us behind the scenes to the root cause of things and provides the capacity to tap into the best avenue for resolution. This type comes only by constant engagement with the Holy Spirit who is the spirit of understanding. The same way a student typically learns more by spending quality time being tutored by a teacher, the more we spend time with the Holy Spirit in fellowship, the more of Him "rubs off" on us and the more we increase in understanding.

'So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.' 2 Corinthians 3:18

As believers we have the opportunity to spend uninterrupted time directly with the Holy Spirit. The amount of time we spend with Him determines our level of transformation therefore the growth we seek is actually in our hands. We decide by our actions how much of Him we want and that translates to amongst other things the level of understanding we operate in. The question therefore is, how committed are we to growing in understanding?

Prayer: Lord I commit to seeking You first because I see that when I do, the understanding that I'm looking for will come.



Day 8

Growing in Obedience

'though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.' Hebrews 5:8

Jesus Himself had to learn obedience and He also faced the consequences whenever He may not have obeyed. This should be reassuring to us on two levels. First that God is indeed fair to all as Jesus wasn't given a free pass on disobedience. Second is that having gone through whatever He suffered, Jesus was able to increase His ability to consistently live a life of obedience so this is a possibility for us also.

'Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.' Luke 22:42

'Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names' Philippians 2:9

Obedience isn't always pleasant and it does come at a cost – the Bible doesn't mince words about this. However the upside always far outweighs the perceived cost. The enemy always wants us to be fixated on what the perceived downside of obedience is – letting go of our personal agenda, how we may look to others etc. But when we see from God's perspective and focus on carrying out His will regardless, we start seeing the immeasurable benefits of obedience. Because Jesus allowed Himself to focus on doing God's will, He was rewarded with a position that only He can ever occupy in eternity.

What does obeying do for us? It demonstrates to God that we love Him (Jn 14:15), opens the door for God to honour us (1 Sam 2:30), give us prosperity and good success (Josh 1:8), God's blessings (Luke 11:28), long life and peace (Prov 3:1-2), a multitude of rewards on earth and in eternity (Matt 6:33; 25), access to supernatural living (Rom 8:14) and so much more.

Disobedience on the other hand brings the opposite of these. So whenever we are tempted to disobey, we need to ask ourselves: is this disobedience worth my victory in battles or shortchanging my destiny? As we become more intentional about obedience, it becomes easier to say like Jesus, "Not my will but Yours".

Prayer: Lord thank You for opening my eyes to the power and benefits of obedience. Help me as I shift my mind to grow in this area.



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