



*Studying the Bible yourself
for Spiritual Growth*
Feb 25, 2026

Tonight's Goals

Introduce the Topic of Spiritual Growth

- Theologically
- Biblically (in two particular passages, two others will be mentioned)

2 Peter 1 – Main Passage

- To examine the **Qualities** mentioned therein
- To talk about their **prerequisite** (faith) and their **results**
- To look at them in **Macro** and **Micro** Senses

To Give An Example of Growth Focused Bible Study

- Using the Qualities mentioned there to form a basis for a study and the application of that study
- Walking through these Qualities as steps in growth / process

Discipleship:

- The process by which we enter into a student-master relationship with Jesus
- whereby we examine his life and his Word
- and through the application of that Word and
- God's transformational work of/in our lives
- begin to take upon ourselves attributes of The Teacher
- and lose some of our own flaws (sin)
- yet maintaining our own identity – shaped by His.

The Benefits of these Qualities

Peter makes a great deal of this process of discipleship and speaks of the benefits (or perhaps results) of these wondrous qualities in 2 Peter 1 –

- They **confirm your salvation**, since salvation is our partially taking upon the divine nature – or godliness. [v10]
- They **help us escape the world of sin** – moving us little by little out of its sphere of influence. [v4, 9]
- They **help us become effective** (purposeful) **and fruitful** (productive) as Christians. [v8]
- They give us **insight** and the **ability to “see” ourselves rightly** and our situation rightly. [v9]
- They **keep us from “falling”** in our faith. [v10]
- They richly provide **an entrance into Jesus’ eternal kingdom**. [v11]

2 Peter 1:5-7 / With Context

2 Peter 1:1–15 (ESV)

1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, **4** by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, **6** and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, **7** and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

8 For if **these qualities** are yours and are increasing, **they** keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For whoever lacks **these qualities** is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. **10** Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you **practice these qualities** you will never fall. **11** For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of **these qualities**, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. **13** I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, **14** since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. **15** And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to **recall these things**.

Introductions

*Salvation / God's Actions
Our Benefits!*

*The Qualities of Growth /
Our Actions – His Power*

*The Significance of These Qualities
in Our Lives / Results*

*Peter Will Continue to Remind His
Readers of These Things*

Choose an Area of Spiritual Growth

Brainstorm your area of focus for tonight?

Your Area of Focus:

1 *faith* (trust in God)

Faith is always the beginning point with God. It is so in our salvation, and it is in our “sanctification.” Faith is our ability to trust God – faith does not lose significance after justification; our journey of **faith** has just begun. **Our obedience shows our faith** (check out James).

Think through the following ideas:

- Do we trust God when he says he will and can help us grow in any area we trust him for?
- How about for the area you are working on?
- Talk to God about your trust in his wisdom over yours. Talk about your fears of this.

2 + virtue (*a desire for excellence*)

Add virtue! Rather than “living good,” this word means a desire for excellence. It is a bit like “*a desire to do better*” or even “*hero worship*,” desiring to be *like* the object of our respect – which is Jesus. Not ourselves. Killing our arrogance is part of this, admitting our sin the other. Some can never get beyond this point.

Think through the following ideas:

- Do you desire to be like your “hero” Jesus?
- Do you see that you lack many things – and need to enter into a discipleship relationship with Jesus?
- In the area that you chose, do you desire to grow and improve? There could be some confession here: I have room for growth – “I don’t tell the truth fully.”
- Give some thought to the area of life you chose.

3 + *knowledge* (more than just info)

Add knowledge. OK, this is where the first “real action” needs to take place. It is not enough to have a “desire to be better” in some way – we need God’s Word – the Truth – to help us in our desire – to give us truth, to provide us with the power to combat our sin and ignorance. The writer of Psalm 119 understood this deeply.

Think through the following;

- Take some time and find significant passages in scripture that are related to your idea / example – lying. Develop a list.
- Take some time to find related ideas (different words, opposite ideas) and add them to your list to consider.
- Do a study of all these ideas – immerse yourself with scripture on the idea in question. Take some time. Come to some conclusions from God’s word. **This step is basically a topical study.**
- Perhaps find a “key passage” and memorize a section of it.

Knowledge Continued:

Your Focus: _____

Related Ideas (Words):

The Opposite of Your Focus:

How to do a Topical Bible Study

1 / Choose your topic of study: think small to begin with, work your way into bigger studies.

2 / Define the parameters of your study: Perhaps it is how John uses the idea of “light” in the New Testament. As you begin consider keeping it smaller.

3 / Find related words and ideas: If you are looking at a topic consider finding related words to your topic that might increase the thoroughness of your study. In the example above, perhaps you examine “shine” and “illumine” too within that study. These can be English words that are on point, as well as potential Greek words that are similar.

Perhaps do your first few topical studies focused on the English Bible:

- Search the words with concordance for ideas

Work your way later into the Greek:

- Search the words in Louw-Nida for similar words nearby
- Search the words with Logos and examine the ROOT tab in the Bible Word Study guide.
- Search the words with Logos smart search with plain English: “Words similar to light in the book of John”

4 / Develop a list of passages and verses to consider a part of your study. After finding the significant words search them and make a list too consider during the rest of your study. Begin analyzing them. Categorize them.

A / Separate out passages that are incidental usages from the potentially more theologically significant passages / If you were studying the idea of “light” and you found a passage that said “it was light out” that is an incidental not a theological use of the word.

B / Indicate a key passage(s) to be the center of your study if possible. If you were talking about light in the book of John you might focus on John 1, and John 9-12. A key passage is one that talks about the subject at hand in greater detail.

B / Sometimes I like to physically print out all the Bible verses in a study and start, cut them into individual strips of paper, examine them and pool them into different groups with similar themes. There’s no telling what you might learn from this.

5 / Study as thoroughly as you can the key passage(s) as you would any other passage study, thinking about context and meaning. Use the other passages that you have as “related passages” or “cross references” deepening your study.

6 / Start developing a list of principles learned about your topic. Again, if you are studying “light in the gospel of John” you might have noticed (1) Jesus is the light (2) when we follow Jesus we become “light” too, etc.

7 / As you study and examine the Scripture’s handling of a topic or an idea, adjust those principles with further knowledge.

8 / Take your principles list and find something concrete to put into practice, apply scripture.

4 + *self-control* (tell yourself “no”)

Add self-control. Now, it takes more than just a desire to improve, the right knowledge to know how or know why – it takes the self-abasing ability to “do” the Word – the Epistle of James majors in this idea. Self-control is the ability to tell yourself “no” or tell yourself “yes you will” in the realm of obedience to God. Not an easy step.

Think through the following;

- Our sin nature is alive and well – and needs to be killed – and we alone can do it – and it needs to happen in small and big ways.
- Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit / Gal 5:22-23. How can we rely on his ministry?
- Think through the knowledge you have gained and begin to enact specific change.
- Once again confession is a part of this project. Confession to God, sometimes to our fellow man. If something you have done affects someone else, perhaps you should confess it to them. This will help you obey knowing this is the Godly thing to do.
- Make a list of application points from the study you did in step 3 above.

5 + *steadfastness* (*keep it up!*)

Add steadfastness. In other words keep the self-control application over time and against opposition, (1) from within [self sin, the flesh] and (2) from without [others sin, the world, the devil].

- What is keeping you from long term obedience? *trials?*
- What strategies do you need to implement to keep going?
- What roll will prayer and scripture have?

6 + *godliness* (*results appear*)

Add godliness. This is the idea of devout practices of obligations. I believe that this means we begin to “do” what we desire to do not because we have to, but because we want to – for God. This is a change of heart toward a godly attitude. This is a result of the earlier steps. It is all through Christ and his Spirit.

- Do we see any evidence of a change of heart?
How long will it take?
- Ask God for this change in character.

7 + brotherly love (not for just self)

Add brotherly love. This is the equivalent of “familial love.” Affection. It is a powerful love that recognizes the importance of others. Your actions should never intend to hurt those around you – particularly your family.

- How does your “sin” or weakness effect others, not just yourself? Write a list of possible effects. *Pray. Confess.*
- Consider how the positive growth of not doing this thing would have on others. Write down some of the potential results. *Pray. Confess.*

8 + *Love / agape (the God-kind of love)*

Add love. Moving from a familial love to a Godlike love where we (1) seek other people's good to the extent that (2) we are willing to sacrifice ourself to help meet that good for them – our time, our goods, our self. Sacrificial servanthood.

- Will we begin to factor in other people's good in our obedience and judge our behavior by that standard?
- Answer the questions from 7 with this change of the level of love – cranked to “10.”
- Confess how you fall short / to God, to others.

Takeaways!

One thing to do...

One thing to consider...

One thing to tell the Lord...

~ Growing Spiritually ~

2 Peter 1:5-7

Romans 5:2-11

James 1:2-4

– Faith –

Virtue

a desire to grow

Knowledge

truth from the Word

Self-Control

learn to be obedient

Future Hope

God's Testing
Trials of Various Kinds

...produce...

Steadfastness / Endurance / "keep on going"

Godliness

Brotherly Affection

gain affection for others

— The Results —

Character

"Its full effect"

— The Goals —

Love

Selfless Christlike Care

Hope

Holy Spirit / Reconciliation

Completion

Maturity / Wisdom / Life

See Also 2 Corinthians 3:18...

Christlikeness

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are **being transformed into the same image** from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.



Spiritual Growth Sequence Passages

*Much can be learned by examining and studying these passages
that discuss qualities and steps that build on each other
and move us toward growing in various ways.*

2 Peter 1:3–15

3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, **4** by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. **5** For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, **6** and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, **7** and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

8 For if **these qualities** are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. **10** Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice **these qualities** you will never fall. **11** For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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James 1:2–4

2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, **3** for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. **4** And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Romans 5:1–11

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 3:18

18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Growth in the New Testament

These are not all the occurrences of these words, but rather those that are theologically significant for the study at hand. This is a good beginning point in seeing how the NT uses words that indicate growth in people. Other areas of growing, such as numerical growth of groups is removed.

Greek Words to Consider

- **grow** / auxanō / increase in size, grow /
Eph 4:15, 2 Peter 3:18, 2 Cor 9:10, 2 Cor 10:15, Col 1:6, Col 1:10, 1 Cor 3:6-7
- **grow** / auxō / to grow, to increase, cause to grow /
Eph 2:21, Col 2:19
- **growth** / auxēsis / growth, increase /
Eph 4:16, Col 2:19
- **abundant growth** / hyperauxanō / grown abundantly (hyper) /
 2 Thes 1:3
- **increase** / pleonazō / increase considerably /
 1 Thess 3:12, 2 Thes 1:3, 2 Peter 1:8
- **increase** / prostthēmi / add to /
 Mark 4:24, Matthew 6:33
- **degree** / apo doxa eis dox / from one degree of glory to another /
 2 Corinthians 3:18

Growth words in the nt

- Ephesians 4:15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,
- 2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.
- 2 Corinthians 9:10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.
- 2 Corinthians 10:15 We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged,
- Colossians 1:6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,
- Colossians 1:10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;
- 1 Corinthians 3:6–7 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.
- Ephesians 2:21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
- Colossians 2:19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Ephesians 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Colossians 2:19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

2
Thessalonians 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

1
Thessalonians 3:12 and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,

2
Thessalonians 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

2 Peter 1:8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 4:24 And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

2
Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the



Purpose Statement

What is First Hand Truth?

First Hand Truth exists to equip people to study God's Word. We attempt to both **encourage** greater desire to study the Word and to **educate** people to raise their confidence to study the Word for themselves.

We do this through weekly local workshops in Battle Creek, MI, called Adventures in Bible study, and through **speaking** and **workshops** with individuals, families, churches, and schools both locally and distant.

Why is it important?

Studying scripture firsthand is important because...

It is listening to the most important voice we could possibly hear, not just our own opinions, or the opinions of those around us or our culture. We must learn to listen to God first. God has given his word so that we can make sense of our world.

If we give so much attention to other avenues of knowledge, why not more attention to God's very Words? We put vast effort into other areas of knowledge, why would we pay God's Word less attention than other less important things?

Scripture has many benefits for our very soul. It enables peace with God and peace with others. It provides wisdom when we are so lacking of it. It exposes our sin and helps us find the cure in Christ. It gives us joy even when we are in difficult situations. It helps us understand the purpose of life and endure its difficulties. It can bring us to the point where we learn to truly love God and then — somehow — love others as we ought. It can help us in our making of decisions, our life priorities, and our ethics as we learn to treat others with more respect. Its benefits are literally without limit (Psalm 1, Psalm 19, Psalm 119).

What is it going to do for people?

Studying scripture firsthand helps us to know God better and know truth. It helps us...

To help people fulfill their ultimate purpose / the Westminster Shorter Catechism reminds us that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. We cannot enjoy someone we do not know firsthand, and study of the Word helps us meet this great goal. If we are fulfilling our purpose, we will enjoy this life more and be a better person to those around us.

To help people become Jesus' Disciples / to connect people to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, their one **authority**, their one **guide**, and their one **teacher** is the ultimate outreach of the people of God (Matthew 28:16-20); in other words, to make disciples. We should not seek disciples after ourselves or after our churches or denominations (Acts 20:30). We primarily need a **teacher-student** relationship with Jesus, not a secondary **teacher-other teacher-student** relationship.

To help people become like Jesus, to grow / to develop in people the ability and desire to move into an intimate, Spirit-empowered, Word-driven relationship with God firsthand is necessary — it is this kind of relationship that little by little conforms us to His very image (Ephesians 4:13, 2 Corinthians 3:18). God does indeed help us grow through circumstances and trials, but we can exponentially improve that growth through desiring change, seeking the Word, applying that Word — through intentional growth by attention to scripture (2 Peter 1:3-15).

To help people be more apt to recognize error / one of the benefits of growing in the knowledge of God is being able to see the patterns of theological/spiritual error or misuse, both in our own lives and in the lives around us. We must deepen our relationship with God so that we will not be "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes" and rather "speak truth in love" and "grow up in every way into Him who is the head, Christ (Ephesians 4:15-16)."

To help people to be better witnesses / the better we understand God's will and the truth, the better we can explain those things to those around us and teach them to believe and obey Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20).