

6. Jesus Showed How to Develop Spiritual Life – Part 1

Christ taught the disciples many things. One of the things Christ showed the disciples was how to develop their spiritual life. Many people develop a great knowledge of the Bible, and know many facts about the Bible, but that knowledge has not changed and transformed their lives. In the time of Christ, the Jewish religious leaders had a great knowledge of the Old Testament, but they had no spiritual life. Some of the Jews who became Christians had spiritual life, but they had not grown. Hebrews 5:11-12 says, “Of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” They had been Christians long enough that they should have been able to teach others, but they had become dull of hearing and still needed the basics.

In contrast, John wrote all of the books he wrote about sixty years after Christ called him to be a disciple. As he began the book of First John, the first thing John wrote about was the need for fellowship with the Father, and with Christ, because he realized how that had changed his life. 1 John 1:3 says, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” The second thing John wrote about in that book was the need to have fellowship with others in the body of Christ. 1 John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Christ had shown John how to develop his spiritual life. He realized that only happened as people learned to develop their fellowship with the Father and with the Son. That had such a great impact on the life of John, that he wrote about that first as he began his first letter. In the same way, the first thing we want to help both developing leaders, and new Christians, learn is to develop their spiritual life by learning to have fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

In order for us to develop our spiritual life, as Christians, the first thing we must learn to do is develop our fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Christ taught His disciples how to develop fellowship with the Father, by His own example. Mark 1:35-37 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’” In these verses, we see that Christ taught the disciples, by His example, the importance of fellowship with the Father. Mark 1 shows that this happened very soon after Christ invited these men to follow Him.

Many times, new Christians are told the things they should not do as new Christians. They may be told some things that they should do. However, many new Christians are not shown how to develop their fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, for many years. Many Christians have never been shown how to develop their spiritual life. As a result, many Christians think that they are good Christians because they don’t do certain things, and they do other things. Many times, new Christians are told to pray and read their Bibles. However, they are never shown how to pray or how to understand what they read.

Growing Christian Leaders Series – Developing Leaders Who Are Becoming Like Their Teacher 1. “Jesus Showed How to Develop Spiritual Life – Part 1”

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One of the first things people have to be shown to develop their spiritual life is the difference between saying prayers and learning how to pray. Before most people even become Christians, they have learned how to say prayers. Matthew 6:7-8 says, “And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.” Christ made it very clear that we do not develop our spiritual life by just saying prayers. Many new Christians are told that they should pray. If they have been saying prayers before becoming Christians, they think that to pray means to say prayers, and so they may continue to say prayers for years.

Christ let the disciples see, and hear, Him pray. They saw that His prayer life was not just saying prayers. As a result, Luke 11:1 tells us that the disciples asked Christ how to pray, not just how to say prayers. That verse says, “Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’” Instead of giving them a prayer to repeat, Christ gave them an example of how to build their relationship with the Father through prayer.

Luke 11:2-4 says, “So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’” Christ said that we build our relationship with the Father by:

- recognizing our personal relationship with Him – “our Father”
- recognizing that He is the One who is over all – “in heaven”
- recognizing that He is holy – “hallowed be Your name”
- praying for His work in the world – “Your kingdom come”
- praying for His will in the world – “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”
- praying for our daily needs – “give us day by day our daily bread”
- praying for forgiveness – “forgive us our sins”
- praying for strength to forgive others – “for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us”
- praying for victory over temptation – “do not lead us into temptation”
- praying for victory over Satan – “deliver us from the evil one”

Christ knew that He must show the disciples the difference between saying prayers and sharing His life with the Father. Christ showed the disciples how to develop their spiritual life by learning to talk to the Father and sharing their life with Him, not just saying prayers. Christ did this by giving them many opportunities to listen as He talked and shared His life with the Father.

Christ also showed the disciples the difference between reading the Bible and letting God lead and guide them through the Word. In Luke 24:27, we read, “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” He helped those disciples realize they could only understand the Old Testament if they understood that it was talking about Christ, not just their Jewish history. Luke 24:45 says, “And He opened their

understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Christ knew that the disciples needed more than knowledge to develop their spiritual lives. They needed to understand the spiritual truths in what they were reading and studying.

Christ had given them this understanding while He was with them day-by-day. However, He knew that He was returning to heaven. In John 14:25-26, we read, ““These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”” Christ made it very clear that spiritual understanding, of the things He taught, must come from the Holy Spirit.

Christ also helped the disciples realize that the Holy Spirit would teach them many more things, in the future, after Christ returned to heaven. John 16:12-13 says, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” The Holy Spirit would guide them and lead them so that they would continue to grow in their spiritual life. He also showed them what to write in the New Testament.

Many Christians do not understand the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Just as many people said prayers before becoming Christians, many people have read the Bible before becoming Christians. Just like the Jews, in the time of Christ, before they are given the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation, people view the Bible as a history book.

That is why 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 says, “But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” We need to show new Christians, by our own example, the importance of asking the Lord to give us understanding and wisdom as we study the Word of God. We also need to help developing leaders learn the importance of showing new Christians, by their example, the importance of asking the Lord for understanding and wisdom, so that the Holy Spirit will give them that understanding.

Jesus showed the disciples, by His example, how to develop their spiritual life as they built their relationship with the Father, and with the Son. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders develop their relationship with the Father, and with the Son, and show them how to help new Christians develop their spiritual life.