

Essentials for Spiritual Growth and Freedom

Introduction

A. Success in the spiritual area of our life, as in all the other areas, is dependent on at least six factors.

1. A knowledge of what to do: Knowing enough about Christianity to live it. John 8:32
2. A knowledge of how to do it: Knowing how to make decisions of faith, love, and hope, and practice the obedience that comes from within. Phil 2:5-15
3. Personal honesty: Knowing and rejecting selfishness, pretending, manipulation, role playing, and a hardened unteachable attitude. Help only comes to those who admit then- need and are willing to change. I Cor. 2:1-5; II Cor. 7:8-11
4. Aggressive and patient obedience: Doing what is right in spite of emotional turmoil, setbacks, misunderstanding, and apparent lack of growth/freedom. Mark 8:34-38
5. Understanding the key is, first of all, in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and that the basic issues are usually personal and internal. Matt 11:28-30
6. Recognizing the importance and need of others to teach, counsel, admonish, and do healing prayer. James 5:16

B. The above list does not mean that we must earn salvation or spiritual growth and freedom. The grace of God ("grace" designating all the benefits the Lord Jesus died to give us) is free. However, if we are to grow and live in freedom, we must learn to live in harmony with the truths inherent in God's grace.

I. Essential #1 - One Must Be A Christian.

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." John 3:3

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in His name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12

Comment: When one is merely religious (goes to Church, prays, reads the Bible, and live a moral life), they are as lost and cut off from God as the worse sinner. Such a person is under the judgment of sin, caught in the bondage of sin (pride and self-righteousness), is owned by the Devil, and unless there is repentance and belief in the Lord Jesus, he/she will spend eternity in Hell. Rom 3:23; 6:23; John 8:34,44; Matt 25:41,46

II. Essential # 2 - One Must Be Honest.

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? Jer. 17:9

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Prov. 28:13

Comment: While it may not be necessary to tell others some of the most serious sins we have committed, we should be open to whatever God asks us to do. And we are told in James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. There is no hope for spiritual growth and freedom as long as we hide our sins from God and refuse to confess to Him, repent for them, and forsake them. It is very common to have a "hidden area" in our life, through believing error, that we do not recognize as sinful. Such a practice can cause great pressure, confusion, and seriously hamper our walk with God and fellowship with one another. Examples of such areas would be anger, bitterness, grudges, evil habits (alcoholism, pornography, lust, dependence on drugs), manipulating people, criticism, negativism, grudges, believing One is inferior, gossip, laziness, greed, jealousy, etc.

III. Essential #3 - One Must Know Enough To Live the Christian Life.

"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32

Comment: One of the most common reasons why a person does not grow in their spiritual life and live with joy and freedom is because no one has cared enough for them to teach them – or perhaps they have not taken advantage of opportunities to be taught. We recognize how essential it is to know the truth, and how to practice it, in all the other areas of life (science, medicine, baking bread, overhauling foe car), but when we come to the Christian life we seem to forget that truth.

IV. Essential # 4 – One Must Not Be Spiritually Passive And Disobedient.

"Why do you call me, Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Luke 6:46

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey? Rom 6:16

Comment: Too often we make foe serious mistake of thinking that obedience is simply going to Church, reading the Bible, praying, etc., and thereby miss how important it is to obey God in taking control of our thoughts, motions, our body and our daily life. Many failing Christians simply allow almost anything to happen to them (emotional upheaval, temptation, fear, family problems) and they don't respond in a Biblical way. They just allow it to happen.

V. Essential # 5 ~ One Must Practice Truth And Not Error.

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fell from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. II Peter 3;17,18

Comment: For most Christians the error that troubles us is not doctrinal but internal. We tend to believe many lies about ourselves, life, God, Church, etc., from how we were taught or treated as a child. It is often necessary to identify such error, confess it as the sin it is, stop putting it into practice, and correct it by the Scripture. We must also recognize how we may interpret events incorrectly.

EVENTS-->INTERPRETATION-->PRACTICE-->BONDAGE-->FAILURE