

# Planning to Grow

by Harold Hancock

God's word encourages and even demands that we grow spiritually: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints..." (Ephesians 4:11,12). "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:1,2). "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..." (2 Peter 3:18). Determine to grow spiritually this coming year.

Some Christians never grow spiritually because they have no plan for growth. Others lack patience- they are not committed to growth and/or fail to work their plan for growth. Make sure that you plan for growth this coming year and work your plan.

In the interest of growth, consider these suggestions:

1) Choose a Bible subject or Bible character that interests you or that you think you would be especially helpful to you and make an in-depth study of this subject or character.

I personally have chosen Abraham. I have printed out and placed in a loose-leaf notebook the Bible chapters that pertain to Abraham's life (Genesis 11:26 - 25:11) along with other Bible references to Abraham. This gives me the Bible text and allows me to make extensive notes. I intend to read, reread, and study these passages of scripture until I become very familiar with them and glean as much information about Abraham as I can. I have also begun to collect books and articles about Abraham. I want to know more about him.

Now, spend some time reflecting on the matter (but not so much time that you lose your enthusiasm for the idea) and select a study for yourself. To help you work your plan, tell others of your choice, and if you need it, get help getting started or seek help throughout your study. (I'll be glad to help you any way I can. I am sure the elders and other mature Christians will assist you, also.) If possible, set a regular time each day or week to pursue your study. (Don't get discouraged if you have to readjust your schedule or have to miss the study at times. Just stay committed.) Use "spare" moments for your study. You'll be surprised at how much you can read or learn in your "spare" time. Perhaps, you could find others interested in the same subject or who have a similar goal; meet with them periodically to share helpful sources, discuss each other's findings, or challenge each other's thinking with questions. You will grow in knowledge if you have a plan for growth and work your plan.

2) The second thing I suggest to help you grow this coming year is to choose an area of "Christian living" in which you are weak or can improve and work to become stronger

or better. Perhaps, you can attend Bible study or worship services more or encourage your family to. Many need to establish better habits of prayer. Perhaps, there is a relationship that must be improved in order that your spiritual relationship with God can improve (Matthew 5:23; 1 Peter 3:7). Perhaps, you could spend more time assisting others with their needs, maybe just visiting them or encouraging them. Call or visit newcomers or those who regularly miss our assemblies. Prepare yourself to teach a Bible class- we need more good Bible teachers for all ages. Make it your aim to "bring someone to the Lord" this coming year. There are many ways we can improve ourselves in the Lord. Choose some and start working to be better.

These suggestions are aimed at encouraging you to grow spiritually. You may or may not choose them; you may have some ideas of your own. Growth, however, is not optional. God is displeased with us when we fail to grow (Hebrews 5:12-14). Therefore, plan to grow and grow!