

# Continuing to Grow In A New Year

It is a new year and we are happy to celebrate a fresh start. Today we are talking about continuing to grow in a new year.

## Introduction

We like to use the new year as a starting point to make life changes. We are not alone in this. Many people make new year resolutions or use the new year as a turning point in their life. Over the next few videos, we are going to be discussing tools you can use to draw closer to God, deepen your relationship with Jesus, get more in tune with the Holy Spirit, and dig deeper into the Bible.

All of these areas are connected. As you dig deeper into the Bible, you will draw closer to God and deepen your relationship with Jesus. As you deepen your relationship with Jesus, you will become more in tune with the Holy Spirit. The more in tune with the Holy Spirit you are the more equipped you are to serve others in your community. These are all interconnected. The first step to all of this is to grow by digging deeper into the Bible.

## Planting Something New is First

Jesus equated a lot of his teachings to fishing and farming. Some will say this is because those were the predominant occupations and ways of life when he was walking amongst the people 2000 years ago. We think it is because these are relatable situations to everyone regardless of where you are or what time period you are living in. We have all seen the effects of physical growth of people, animals, and plants. Knowing this we can easily understand the parables Jesus taught and the concepts he shared using agriculture and fishing as examples.

Before you can continue grow this new year, you must be planted. Sometimes we plant from seed and other times we plant from taking a cutting from another plant. Life is similar. Our families grow by parents loving each other and having a baby, but sometimes our family grows through adopting children that are not our own but grafting them into our family. In any case, we must be planted and connected to our environment.

The size of the seed is not relevant. Some seeds like the mustard seed can grow into very large plants while the large seed for corn or maize yields a plant that can be smaller than a mustard plant in some cases. Both produce a crop that is good when planted correctly in a good environment.

## To Grow You Must be Fed Regularly

Let's read Matthew 13:1-9

### Matthew 13:1-9

(1) That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. (2) Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. (3) Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. (4) As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. (5) Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. (6) But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they



withered because they had no root. (7) Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. (8) Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (9) Whoever has ears, let them hear."

This is a great example of the environment we need to grow. The farmer is casting the seed out and it is falling in all sorts of places. Some places are good for growth, some are not. Some conditions are good for the seed and some are not.

The same holds true for our lives. Our physical life depends on a healthy environment and good food to feed us. The continued growth of spiritual life is the same. We need to be in a spiritually good environment and feed our souls with spiritual nourishment. This is prayer and Bible reading. It is also gathering together with others who love the Lord also.

Philippians 4:6 says this about prayer:

Philippians 4:6

(6) Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Prayer is a conversation with God. We talk with God just like we talk to any other friend. We share our hearts and concerns. We present our requests and praise Him for his provision. We worship Him in prayer and celebrate everything He has set before us.

Imagine being best friends with someone but never speaking. It doesn't work. Communication is one of the most important aspects of a relationship and our relationship with God through Jesus is no different.

The Apostle Paul writes this to Timothy concerning Bible study and reading in 2 Timothy 3:14-17:

2 Timothy 3:14-17

(14) But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, (15) and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (17) so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

To continue to grow this year we must read the Bible regularly and study it. All scripture is useful so we can be thoroughly equipped for everything God asks us to do. Even reading a few minutes each day, will help bring you closer to God in Christ Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews addresses staying connected with other believers in Hebrews 10:24-25:

Hebrews 10:24-25

(24) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, (25) not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.



We must stay in good company to grow well. This helps us maintain our focus on Jesus and devote ourselves to His teachings and life. This is what builds us up to do greater things for Jesus for His glory.

Just as the parable Jesus shared talked about seed being planted we must be planted in good ground and fed regularly. Some say yes to Jesus but quickly fall away like the seed planted along the path and in the rocks. Some get fouled up with worldly humanistic theories and politics like the seed that falls amongst the thorns and weeds and the gospel gets choked out of them.

Be the seed that is planted in good ground and flourishes and grows, bearing much fruit. This helps us continue to grow in this new year.

### Use It Or Lose It

Another important aspect of growing and something we need to stay aware of is avoiding distractions. There is an old adage that says, "Use it or lose it". Have you ever learned something and then not used what you learned for many months or years and then gone back to it? It is difficult to pick it back up.

Maybe you learned to play a musical instrument when you were young and now 10 or 20 years have passed since you played. Do you think you could remember and play as well as you did all those years ago? Maybe you could speak a foreign language, or operate a piece of machinery or a tool but it has been years since you did. You have to take time to refamiliarize yourself and refresh your memory. You have to practice some.

We must continue to pray and read our Bible so we can stay fresh in the ways of the Lord and continue to grow this new year. We must continue to study scripture so when we are asked a question we can answer. 2 Timothy 4:2 says:

### 2 Timothy 4:2

(2) Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

### Be Ready In Season and Out Of Season

We must be ready at any time to give an account of our beliefs and our life in Christ. We must be ready to answer questions people have and encourage them with scripture.

The only way to be ready is by spending time in the Bible and prayer regularly. We recommend at least a few minutes each day in prayer, Bible reading, and meditation on scripture. It is in this that you will be able to answer questions people have and face the situations the world throws at you confidently and with the assurance of your salvation never wavering.

### Bereans

There was a city that the Apostle Paul and Silas traveled to and shared the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Jewish Synagogue there. Let's read what happened in Acts 17:10-12.

### Acts 17:10-12

(10) As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. (11) Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined



the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. (12) As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

Those that heard what Paul and Silas were preaching about Jesus went and studied the scriptures with great eagerness. They didn't just read, they studied. They wanted to make sure what Paul and Silas were teaching was true, and they found that it was. This caused them all to believe and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior!

Be like the Bereans. Don't just listen to someone teaching or preaching. Take what you hear and study it yourself. Talk to the Lord about it in prayer. When you don't understand something in the Bible or that is taught or preached, ask the Lord to help you understand. This will draw you nearer to God and help you continue to grow in this new year.

### Resolve to Regular Study and Prayer

In this new year, we suggest you resolve to regular Bible reading and regular prayer. Make this a part of your life. It has been said that if you do something repeatedly for 30 days or more it becomes a habit. Making a habit of reading the Bible and praying is a very good thing.

As you look at this new year make this the time you decide you are going to read the Bible and pray every day, even if it is just for a few minutes. Continue to grow in Christ in this new year.

