

Thy Word is a Lamp unto My Feet Lesson 12 2Q 2007

Growing Through the Word

Read memory text – thoughts?

What does it mean to be an infant and what does it mean to grow up?

Is there a difference between growing physically and growing spiritually?
Are there similarities? What are the differences and what are the similarities?

Is it possible to grow physically without growing spiritually? - yes

Is it possible to grow spiritually without growing physically? – no – What does it mean to grow spiritually? To mature in character, to have love established as the base of operation and selfishness removed, to have our motives change, to become Christlike – can this happen without changes in the brain? Without growth of healthy neural pathways?

One of the founders of our church stated:

Physical inaction lessens not only mental but moral power. The brain nerves that connect with the whole system are the medium through which heaven communicates with man and affects the inmost life. Whatever hinders the circulation of the electric current in the nervous system, thus weakening the vital powers and lessening mental susceptibility, makes it more difficult to arouse the moral nature. {Ed 209.2}

Thoughts? This was written more than 100 years ago and science has proven that physical activity improves mental functioning. Not only that, there are proteins called neurotrophic factors which cause neurons to stay healthy, grow out their connections to other neurons more quickly and have new neurons form. One of these factors is called Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor (BDNF). It comes from a precursor protein called Pro-BDNF. An enzyme is required to cleave Pro-BDNF into BDNF. If this enzyme is not there Pro-BDNF doesn't get cleaved and Pro-BDNF causes the neuron to die. BDNF causes the neuron to stay healthy and grow stronger, Pro-BDNF causes the neuron to die – the key is the enzyme which cleaves Pro-BDNF to BDNF. What determines whether the enzyme is present? Electrical activity in the neuron – if the neuron is firing then it produces the enzyme, if it is not then the enzyme is not produced.

Therefore the choices we make determine which neurons fire and thus which grow stronger and which are slowly degraded, so science is showing how truth this statement really is.

So we cannot grow into maturity of thinking or mental functioning without a corresponding growth in neural circuitry – that is simply just how we were designed to operate.

SUNDAY

The lesson suggests we read Hebrews 5:12-14

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Thoughts? Notice the immature are not acquainted with righteousness and the mature have developed some ability – what is it? The ability to discern the right from the wrong, the healthy from the unhealthy, to true from the false – and how have they gotten this skill? By practice, i.e. by exercising their reasoning powers to think through issues for themselves and come to their own conclusions – the immature would be people who refuse to think, refuse to ask questions, prefer to be told what to do, prefer to simply follow rules because the ruler said so.

Read verse 6:1,2 – the continuation of Paul's thought

Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

Does this add any further insight on what it means to be an infant? Infants focus on what? “repentance from acts that lead to death, faith in God” how to be baptized, religious ceremonies etc.

“Hey, I have confessed my sins and have faith in God, I don't need to ask any questions. God's ways aren't my ways, I just have faith.”

Does this help? Where is the focus? On self – what I did wrong, how do I get baptized, what happens to me in the judgment and resurrection; and concern that others are doing things just right – focus on the rules and law.

What might the mature focus on? The truth about God, His character, methods and principles and how to help others experience transformation of character so they again are at one with God in heart, mind and motive. They have come to understand the reasons behind the rules and have been fully persuaded in their minds about God and His methods and principles.

Last paragraph “It’s clear from...” –thoughts? Let’s train our faculties with practice right here to discern the true from the false –

How many like this paragraph? Is it true or false? Let’s take it apart, is the first phrase true “It is clear through the Word that we are saved by faith...”

“We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.” Acts 15:11

It is by grace you have been saved. Eph 2:5

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. Eph 2:8,9

So are we saved by faith or by grace through faith? Is this just semantics or does it make a difference? What difference?

Grace is “God’s work” all the activities God is doing for our healing. Faith is “trust”. So faith is necessary in order for God’s grace to benefit us, why? Because love cannot be forced, God cannot work in our hearts and minds to transform us unless we trust Him, but will our trust in God heal us? No, God heals us, but we must trust Him.

What about the next phrase “though our acceptance with God is based on the righteousness of Jesus credited to us by grace through faith alone...”

First what does this phrase mean? Is grace in this phrase used to mean God’s work to heal, recreate and restore us into actual Christlike people or is it used to mean “unmerited favor” that God bestows because Christ died for us? In other words our acceptance with God is not because we are now healed and in harmony with God but because Jesus died and

has "credited" to our accounts His perfect righteousness so the Father accepts us as if we are as perfect as Jesus even though we are not.

Does this make any sense to anyone? Is this not some elaborate shell game, con job, hoax? What is the truth? God accepts us because we have been won back to trust – the lies that separate us from Him have been removed and we open the mind/heart to Him and healing, recreation is the inevitable result. We are actually recreated to be like Jesus in heart mind and character – this is why we are accepted by God!

This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us. "All our righteousness are as filthy rags." Isa. 64:6. Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. But the Son of God "was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin." Sin is defined to be "the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:5, 4. But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. He said of Himself, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." Ps. 40:8. When on earth, He said to His disciples, "I have kept My Father's commandments." John 15:10. **By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.** {COL 311.4}

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and **developed a perfect character.** These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have **remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.** More than this, Christ **imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ.** God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}

Thoughts?

MONDAY

Read Hebrews 4:2 and then the second paragraph “What makes the..”

For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Heb 4:2

Thoughts? What is the lesson? What is the point? Do miracles establish faith? In Christ’s day did He perform many miracles? Did the religious leaders get faith? When the serpent talked in the garden was that a miracle? Should it have established faith in what the serpent said?

Zechariah 4:6 – “not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord.”

How does the Spirit work? Through love and truth!

Faith is trust – and how is trust established? If you want to get someone to trust you will you get it my merely displaying overwhelming power?

“What is the deepest in God? His Power? No, for power could not make him what we mean when we say God. A being whose essence was only power would be such a negation of the divine that no righteous worship could be offered him; his service would be only fear.” MacDonald, George, *Discovering the Character of God*, Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989, p. 29.

Thoughts?

Read third paragraph “So often people think...” Thoughts?

Let’s exercise our faculties again to train them to discern the right from the wrong – what are signs and evidence? Are they the same thing?

What about the idea that “faith isn’t an intellectual matter” it is a “heart matter”? On what basis do you determine to open your heart to someone? On what basis you do you “trust” someone? Is there a difference between faith and trust?

A patient told me that her friends were constantly telling her she needed to turn her life over to God, but she said she couldn’t do it. I said, “of course you can’t.” This surprised her, as she expected me to tell her what

everyone else had. So I asked her if she would give the keys of her car or house to a stranger in the mall and she said, “no way.” Then I asked, “If you won’t give the keys of your house and car to a stranger how do you expect to give the keys of your life to a stranger?” Can we turn our lives over to someone we don’t know? And when we get to know someone will there be evidence upon which to base our trust?

John 17:3 says life eternal is knowing God, has God provided evidence of His existence, trustworthiness and reliability?

How much truth and evidence supports Satan in his attack against God? None, how much truth supports God as innocent of all charges? 100% so who wants you to believe you can have faith without evidence? The one who doesn’t have any!

What is the root principle to spiritualism? All forms? The pursuit of knowledge without the use of reason or investigation of the evidence.

The word of God, like the character of its Author, presents mysteries that can never be fully comprehended by finite beings. But God has given in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine authority. His own existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. True, He has not removed the possibility of doubt; faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration; those who wish to doubt have opportunity; but those who desire to know the truth find ample ground for faith. Ed 169.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? What is this love that God commands us to practice? Can someone describe it or give me Biblical references or examples?

Can love be commanded? What do you think it means that God used such language?

Do people sometimes want to be told what to do? What is the right and the wrong? Is being told the same as coming to understand why it is right and wrong for yourself?

So what does it mean when God commands us to love? Is He threatening? Is He dominating? Controlling? Or is He like a loving parent who says to a child, “A new command I give you – breath, get your head out of the water and breath”? Isn’t love the basis of life? And what if we were all underwater, drowning, but God had intervened and given us all

underwater respirators connected to His oxygen tank, in other words He by His grace is artificially holding drowning/death at bay and giving us an opportunity to get our heads above water. Is God merely saying, love, give, live, breath – this is the way to live!

TQ page 143 states, “New birth owes nothing to the will or the power of the human being. We are born again simply by accepting what God has made possible through Christ and letting the Holy Spirit transform the old self into a new creation.” – thoughts?

Is it possible to “accept” God or anything without a “choice” which requires the exercise of the will? Are we mere passive puppets or putty in the hands of God or do we have a role to play?

continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Phlp 2:12,13

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, Romans 8:13

Can we cure ourselves/save ourselves? NO! Can God save any individual without the cooperation/participation of that individual?

Can God save the race/species without the help of anyone else? Yes – He has already done that in Christ!

TQ 143 “We are a new creation because self is no longer our master, but Christ. We are a new creation because we now reject old ways of thought, action, and relationship and accept God’s will and way...”

Thoughts? First – “we now reject old ways” do we all agree with this? Who is rejecting old ways? But I thought we don’t have any role to play?

What does it mean that “self” is no longer the master? That we as individuals, with our own power of choice, identity and individuality are no longer making the choices for ourselves? Or does it mean that “selfishness” is no longer our master and we, with hearts renewed in love by the Spirit exercise our free wills and individuality to live Godly lives?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Gal 5:22,23

Who is in control? Does God want to control us? If you surrender your will to God saying, "take control" will He? No, why? Because love can only exist in freedom and if God took control He would destroy our ability to love.

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

WEDNESDAY

Read first two paragraphs – thoughts? Should we have the attitude, "The Bible said it, I believe it, that settles it"?

Is it enough to say, "The Bible says it, so do it"? Or must we first say, what does it mean and does it apply to me?

Are there things in the Bible that don't apply to us?

What is genuine obedience, the obedience God wants from us? Is it to do what He says because He says so? Is that what God wants?

Parents, do you want as the ultimate obedience from your children for them to simply do what you say, like a well trained dog?

Does God want the obedience of a well trained dog? Or does He want understanding, freely given cooperation?

Read first sentence of last paragraph – what does it mean? Does it mean that it is Jesus' individuality, Jesus' mind, Jesus' will, Jesus that is actually doing the thinking and deciding or does it mean that we receive the attitude, love, motives, methods, desires and character of Jesus which infuses our unique individuality so that we freely choose to act like Jesus acts, live like Jesus lives?

But to pray in Christ's name means much. It means that we are to accept His character, manifest His spirit, and work His works. The Saviour's promise is given on condition. "If ye love Me," He says, "keep My commandments." He saves men, not in sin, but from sin;

and those who love Him will show their love by obedience. {DA 668.2}

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph – was Jesus speaking of baptism by water here? What is happening in the context – Jesus says, unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God – was Jesus saying, unless a man is immersed in water he cannot see the kingdom of God? Or was he saying unless a man is renewed in his mind/heart?

Nicodemus replies, how can a man enter his mother's womb and be born again – so where did Nicodemus take the conversation – to a river or a womb? And Jesus immediate response is:

“I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” John 3:5,6.

So is Jesus speaking of Baptism primarily here or is he answering Nicodemus and saying you must first be born into the world i.e. water birth, the flesh birth, and then reborn by the Spirit?

Were Enoch and Elijah baptized? Did they see the kingdom of heaven? Were they both born of the water/flesh and reborn? Yes!

Second part of the paragraph – no question the role of the Spirit is essential, and the Spirit absolutely reminds us of what we have studied, but is that all the Spirit does? Does the Spirit ever enlighten with new thoughts, ideas, perspectives, insights that we hadn't previously known or thought of or been taught?

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? What about the idea that life is not sustained by a direct miracle? Would we say that God created life to operate in harmony with certain principles and if those principles are followed life will sustain itself i.e. God isn't constantly performing miracles to keep life going, but God designed life to live in harmony with certain principles and it will if those principles are followed?