

I noticed the problem by the water under my car in the garage. A slow yet very steady drip off one of the pipe connections by the water heater. It seemed serious yet not emergency. It needed a bucket to catch the drip. And I needed to determine the fix necessary. Crack in a connection? Loose strap holding the rubber pipe on the fitting? Something worse? The biggest question for any homeowner, can I fix it myself? For me that thought lasted all of a minute.

I'm not completely helpless, but I'm also not a plumber. I don't have the training, patience, or tools. I could see things getting worse before they ever got better if I started to fix it. I've grown in my maturity; I know when to call for help. You're not unaware when it comes to God. You're also not perfect either. You've tinkered, looked at the tools, and you understand the basics. But you've still got life to deal with. It's time to become more spiritually mature.

It'll be reinforced by reading it again that our mission statement says 'grow in grace'. To grow we get more, become more familiar, and gain more knowledge. The second component of the mission vision statement has us looking at the first lesson recorded in the Psalms. We find the place where we need to do our growing if we want to be more spiritually mature and able to deal with life as it happens around us appropriately...

### **Grow into spiritual maturity through Bible study**

I discovered the leak on a Friday night. It was slow enough I could wait till Monday to call the plumber. But I had to check the bucket frequently to see how quickly it filled up. I didn't want it to overflow. It did fill up slowly enough that I could empty it just twice a day. That's kind of like how sin gets worse and progresses to take us over and fill us up. The Psalm writer noticed progression in three stages. Like a slow steady drip sin keeps coming. The more we engage with it, the closer we get to it, the more comfortable we are. Without something to empty us of sin we'll fill up with it and overflow.

Watching television isn't sinful. Although we might admit to watching too much, it's the content that can be suspect. Shows bombard you with things said and actions done that are in fact sinful. But over time our conscience is dulled so we don't notice them as sins. We may laugh at the joke and tell ourselves we're not sinning, we're just watching. But we're walking **"in the counsel of the wicked."** That leads to being comfortable with people who do sin and maybe getting into it a little ourselves. We go too far with a boy or girl we're dating. We don't say anything and parents don't say anything, so sin is accepted. We might even argue some "sins" aren't really sins but choices. We're more advanced, smarter than previous generations. Suddenly we're okay with sin and **"standing in the way of sinners."** Finally sin influences us long enough that someone slips from Christian to mocking Christians. Sin is so comfortable that any who say something is sin are mocked. God's Word is considered old fashioned. Such a person **"sits in the seat of mockers."**

Sin is filling you up right now. But you can stop from getting comfortable with it and repent. Sin is to be repulsive. It should be something we're aware of so we might avoid it. To do that we have to study what God considers sinful. That requires Bible study. Then we can **"delight in the Law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."** The Law of the Lord is the psalmist's way of saying God's Word. That's both law to show our sins and gospel to show our Savior. We see our sinfulness and Savior only when we're in the Word of God. Every page in the Bible speaks about Jesus. To meditate on God's Word is to find Jesus there. Jesus alone can stop us being filled up with sin. The Bible is the only way to find Jesus. So to be right with God, to recognize sin, and avoid it we need to be studying the Bible regularly.

With drought conditions like we're facing still some grass is green. Of course those are the people still watering. We all know that if you water you can keep your grass green and plants from dying, even in this heat. Trees, plants, and grass with water don't worry about growing, producing fruit, or dying. There's water. God says the same about someone who studies God's Word. Those that delight in God's Word and meditate on it regularly will **"be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither."** The person studying God's Word doesn't worry about growing, producing fruit, or dying. They've got the source for life.

What if you didn't have time to water the plants in the morning before work, everyday this past week? Your plants probably don't look good. Watering takes time and effort, and so does Bible study. Things can seem more important. Your spouse, your kids, your boss. Sunday morning during Sunday school time, that's breakfast, time to play with the kids. It takes major effort just to get out of the house for church. That's good you come here, but you could be getting up earlier and making it out the door in time for Bible study, we start at 9:50. Studying and reading the Bible at home seems challenging. But you aren't planting yourself by the water of God's Word by being more productive for the boss or spending time satisfying your stomach but not watering your soul in Bible study.

If you're sitting there believing in Jesus as your Savior and trusting in him for forgiveness of sins that's fantastic. You know the Bible talks about Jesus and you've got the basics. Jesus died on the cross, he rose again, he lives forever. You might be asking, what more is there? Having the basics is like being a tree planted and just getting the minimum water to stay alive. Knowing the basics gives you life. But a tree or plant that gets more water more regularly is going to produce more fruit, more flowers, grow stronger and bigger. Not more alive, just stronger. You get closer to Jesus through Bible study and you won't be more alive in him, just stronger in him with benefits.

You're saved, you think, isn't that enough? Would you like to make more God pleasing decisions more often? Would you like more blessings from God filtering into your life? Would you like an easier time when temptations come your way or when difficulty and pain enter your life? Who wouldn't? Those benefits are waiting for you. It requires more watering from the Word of God. It requires studying to see the depth Christ went to in order to save you from your sins. It includes marveling at the grace which flows into your life through his cross. It means gazing at that cross and the empty tomb to experience God's grace right now. That's Bible study. It's getting closer to Jesus. Its habits formed to look to Christ first when things go wrong. It's studying what pleases God so we can make those decisions easier. Those are all natural when you're in the Word.

That's not just Sunday either. That's a great place to start, but we offer other opportunities. Bible studies with fellow Christians that increase knowledge, generate discussions, and have you diving into God's Word deeper. All the while you're getting closer to Jesus. Families, this happens at home too. Cracking open the Bible shows children that it's important. It shows encouragement and strength for every situation are found there. In good times and bad we can pop the Bible open for study. Try reading a chapter of a gospel each night with your family. Use the Meditations booklet and the Bible readings on the bottom of its page. Read the lessons from Sunday morning again. Use a devotion calendar with a verse the kids can read. Experiment and have fun. Reading the Bible and studying it is fun.

Find time for yourself too. Imagine a strong feeling each morning where weighty decisions can be made with confidence and pain and stress are reduced and dealt with. Imagine a life where these things don't happen because you're such a great person, but because the Word of God is so much a part of your life. Reading the Bible in the morning reduces stress and gives you a positive outlook. Reading the Bible privately at night or right before bed allows you to see the issues of the day in fresh ways and from God's perspective. This is what waits for you when you get into the Word of God yourself, I promise you. Maybe you have sections of the Bible emailed to you each day. Maybe you get an app on your phone that gives you a verse to think about or memorize. Maybe you listen to the Bible on your iPod while you clean or exercise. Push yourself and you'll find the way that works for you.

Maturity allowed me to make the smart decision and call the plumber. The problem was fixed within 15 minutes of his arrival. Maturity only came after many failed attempts to do things I shouldn't have done. Perhaps you've tried and failed to come more for Bible study or do more at home. Maybe you came but didn't get anything out of it. It's not too late to grow into spiritual maturity through Bible study. Exposure to more of God's Word can only help. Start today. Come next week on Sunday morning, read some tonight at home. It's never too late to start letting God's Word speak to you through Bible study. The Word of God is how we maintain our connection with God in the first place and how we grow in that relationship with him. Whatever we spend our time on will occupy our hearts. To have Jesus occupy your heart make the commitment to grow into spiritual maturity by spending time with Jesus in his Word.