



# CHRISTIAN GROWTH THROUGH STUDY

## Overview

**Talk #7**  
**Youth**

**15–20 minutes**

**Day Two**  
**10:30 A.M.**

**T**his talk is about growing as a Christian and about the place of study in that growth toward our Christian ideal in Jesus Christ. The previous talk on COMMUNICATION THROUGH PRAYER began the second day's theme of "Hope," expressed by rising with Christ. First, the talk explains what it means to grow in Christ. Like the COMMUNICATION THROUGH PRAYER speaker, the CHRISTIAN GROWTH speaker builds on the tripod (or milk stool) image to illustrate the three key disciplines for moving toward a life of growth in Christ. Second, the talk explains the role of study (the second leg of the tripod) as the application of the mind to our Christian ideal. While prayer is giving our hearts to God and growing in the heart of Christ, study is giving our minds to God and growing in the mind of Christ. Study is a call to take charge of our lives and to learn what we need to know to live effectively as Christian people and leaders. Because the outline contains a large amount of content, the speaker may find it necessary to emphasize certain aspects of the outline over others. The speaker should share experiences of study and learning that have been important for spiritual growth and progress toward his or her ideal. The speaker should plan to refer to some of the study resources that will be on the book table after this talk.

The outline elaborates on the meaning of the points, not to provide a script but in order to stimulate the speaker in developing the talk in his or her own words. Personal examples are to be used as the speaker feels comfortable and as they fit the text. This talk should be no longer than 15–20 minutes. Visual aids help convey the main points of the talk. The reflection guide will pose the following questions:

1. What does growing in Christ mean to me? Do I feel I am growing?
2. What areas of study and discovery do I enjoy most, not only in school but in any part of my life?
3. If I could ask God to give me greater understanding of any one thing, what would it be? What kind of study would make it possible for God to give me that understanding?

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**ALD**—“With a clean sheet of paper, pen in hand...”; followed by the before-talk chorus, at which time the speaker will enter the conference room (participants should be standing for the chorus). The speaker will ask the participants to join in “The Prayer to the Holy Spirit” found on the last page of the Chrysalis Worshipbook. The speaker will then ask the participants to be seated.

## Introduction

Share a brief story, illustration, or experience that helps get people’s attention and leads into the theme of Christian growth. For example,

Bring in a small plant. Point out that the plant’s growth depends on several conditions: sun, water, good soil. Our growth in Christ is like that. Certain things need to be in place to grow as a Christian.

“My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and the title of this talk is **CHRISTIAN GROWTH THROUGH STUDY.**”

## I. Christian growth is growing in Christ

- A. These three days are about Christian growth. Christian growth is growth in the likeness of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, we see our goal—a whole human being, a perfect image of God’s nature (Gen. 1:27; Col. 1:15; Gal. 4:19).
- B. Christian growth involves daily dying with Christ to anything that gets in the way or takes the place of our relationship with God. At the same time, Christian growth involves daily rising with Christ.
- C. What is necessary to support our growth in Christ—our becoming Christlike? The tripod is a helpful image. The three legs represent prayer, study, and action.
  1. Prayer is giving our hearts to God; it is learning to open our hearts to the heart of Christ.
  2. Study is giving our minds to God; it is learning to open our minds to the mind of Christ.
  3. Action is giving our hands and feet to God; it is learning to open our hands to receive and to take up the work of Christ in the world.
  4. *Present the tripod image.*
- D. Prayer and study help us grow in Christ. In the talk on COMMUNICATION THROUGH PRAYER, we focused on the spiritual discipline of prayer as a means of Christian growth. In this talk we will focus on study as a means of Christian growth.

**II. Study is the second leg of the tripod that supports our growth in Christ.**

- A. Study is what we do to learn. It is the application of our minds to gain knowledge that will help us reach our ideal, do what we want to do, or become who we want to become. Through studying we can learn
  - 1. better skills for better jobs;
  - 2. techniques for healthy relationships with others;
  - 3. ways to improve our minds to feel self-confident in what we do, think, or say.
- B. Study is a constant part of our lives. We study what we feel will improve our lives or get us where we want to go. *Give one or two examples of how we find ways to learn what we need to know, such as*
  - 1. A person who wants to become a good tennis player chooses to take lessons, imitates great tennis players, practices, reads books about the game. Someone who likes cars learns how cars work by watching, reading.
  - 2. Study is not just school work. It is the way we apply ourselves to anything we want to know more about or do better.
  - 3. Study is the discipline of continual discovery and leaning.
- C. Study for Christian growth applies the same principles.
  - 1. It's applying your mind to your Christian ideal, Jesus Christ.
  - 2. It's loving God with your mind, as well as your heart. Study is faith seeking understanding.
  - 3. To be a disciple is to be a learner. To be a Christian disciple is to accept Jesus as your lifelong teacher and to devote yourself to learning how to live as Jesus lived (Matt. 11:29; 23:11).

**III. Through study in three areas, we can grow in the mind of Christ. We can expand our understanding of God, the world, and the Christian life.**

- A. God. Greater understanding of God can lead to greater love for God and a more mature Christian life.
- B. World. Greater understanding of the world, nature, and people leads to greater desire to care for God's creation, serve people, and make a difference with your lives.
- C. Christian living. Christian living is not having your head in the clouds. It is receiving God's truth and applying it to everyday life. The world needs people and leaders who are informed about human need and who will respond to the needs with the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1-11).
- D. *Share a brief experience of how study has helped you grow in the mind of Christ.*

**IV. What are the sources of study for Christian growth?**

*Only suggest two or three ideas under each heading.*

- A. Scripture. Scripture is the most important source for regular study as a growing Christian. The Bible contains the Word of God addressed to us through the story of Israel, Jesus Christ, and the early church. Scripture reveals God's will for our lives and the way of eternal life. Scripture not only tells us about God but is a place where we meet God as we read and listen to God's message for us. How do we study scripture?
1. Join a group to read and study one book of the Bible. Read a little bit every day.
  2. Read one of the shorter books each day for a whole month.
  3. Read one Gospel several times over a period of two or three weeks.
  4. As you read, ask yourself, "What is the author trying to say?" "What is God trying to say to me through this passage?"
- B. Tradition. Tradition is the rich supply of wisdom about God's word and the Christian life gained from the thoughts, writings, experiences, and stories of God's people throughout the centuries. You can read these alone or read and discuss them with friends. Tradition includes such things as
1. Spiritual classics: *Give some examples of Christian classics you have read or want to read, such as,*
    - a. Augustine's *Confessions*
    - b. *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan
    - c. *Hinds' Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hurnard
    - d. Teresa of Avila's writings, which use the image of the silkworm, chrysalis, and butterfly
    - e. *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis
    - f. *A Testament of Devotion* by Thomas R. Kelly
    - g. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* by Josh McDowell
    - h. Ask your pastor or other adults what one book most influenced their Christian life.
  2. Stories of ancient and contemporary Christians. *Name a Christian model, past or present, whose life story serves as an inspiration for you. Give some examples of other Christian saints, heroes whose lives of faith warrant study. For example,*
    - a. Francis of Assisi
    - b. Dietrich Bonhoeffer
    - c. Dorothy Day
    - d. Corrie Ten Boom
    - e. Toyohiko Kagawa
- C. Reason. Reason refers to people's best thinking today about Christian beliefs and Christian life.

1. Stretch your mind beyond childhood images of God or narrow images of Christianity by reading books, such as
  - a. *The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C. S. Lewis
  - b. *Mere Christianity*, by C. S. Lewis.
  - c. *Joshua*, by Joseph F. Girzone
  - d. *In the Name of Jesus*, by Henri J. M. Nouwen
  - e. *No Wonder They Call Him the Savior*, by Max Lucado
  - f. *Share a book that has been especially helpful for you as a Christian. Refer to the book list and book table.*
2. Stretch your mind by reading magazines, such as
  - a. *Devo'Zine*, a devotional magazine for youth that contains stimulating reflections on faith.
  - b. *Alive Now* has brief readings about aspects of Christian life, with helps for talking about them in a group
- D. Experience. People's experience of God and the world today is an important source of learning, especially when we reflect on it in light of scripture, tradition, and in conversation with others. Some sources for learning through life experience are
  1. Newspaper, news magazines, TV news shows for learning people's experience of this world. *Share the best sources you have found for learning what is happening in the world.*
  2. Message movies and special TV series can offer meaningful reflection on life experiences. *Give an example of movies with a message to discuss, such as Iron Will, Spitfire Grill, and so forth.* Get a group together to watch shows with good messages and to discuss them afterward.
  3. Music and music videos. Reflect on them individually or with friends.
  4. Events and experiences. Pay attention to God's speaking to you through life experiences.
  5. People you know and respect. Learn about God and life by asking people you respect about their life stories and experiences of God.
- E. *Share how you have experienced growth through study, discovery, and learning. Share what you have done and are doing to cultivate the mind of Christ in yourself.*

## V. In closing

- A. Study is the second leg of the tripod. A speaker will explain the third leg of the tripod later.
  1. When completed, the tripod (or milk stool) will be balanced and stable. When one leg is longer or shorter or when one is absent altogether, you cannot sit on it; it will not hold you up. When all the legs are in balance, it provides a solid support for you.

2. When prayer, study, and action are in balance, we can face life with hope and confidence. We will rise with Christ with an inner sense of growth in the knowledge of God and the grace of Jesus Christ.
- B. *Explain that a book table has been set up. Give necessary information regarding the book table (procedure to purchase books, and so forth).*

*At the close of the talk, the table groups may begin discussion using the two-page reflection guide that follows. Permission is granted to make one copy per participant.*

## TALK #7: CHRISTIAN GROWTH THROUGH STUDY

Study is giving our minds to God. Greater understanding of God can lead to greater love for God, and a more mature Christian life.

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3. If I could ask God to give me greater understanding of any one thing, what would it be? What kind of study would make it possible for God to give me that understanding?

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### Scripture References

Genesis 1:27  
Colossians 1:15  
Galatians 4:19  
Matthew 11:29  
Matthew 23:11  
Philippians 2:1-11

### Spiritual Classics

Augustine's *Confessions*  
*The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan  
*Hinds' Feet on High Places*, by Hannah Hurnard  
Teresa of Avila's writings use the image of silkworm, chrysalis, and butterfly  
*Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, by Josh McDowell

### Ancient and Contemporary Christians

Francis of Assisi  
Martin Luther  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
Susannah Wesley  
Dorothy Day  
Oscar Romero  
Toyohiko Kagawa  
Corrie Ten Boom

### Reason

*The Chronicles of Narnia*, by C. S. Lewis  
*Mere Christianity*, by C. S. Lewis  
*Joshua*, by Joseph F. Girzone  
*In the Name of Jesus*, by Henri J. M. Nouwen  
*No Wonder They Call Him the Savior*, by Max Lucado