

Making Plans to Grow in Godliness (part 2)

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[0:00] Okay, we've been working through some lessons on growing together in godliness. And this week we're going to finish up what I didn't finish last week.

! And you'll see why I didn't finish it last week, because it will take me a full lesson today to do what we're going over today. We're continuing that lesson on making plans to grow in godliness. Just this morning I was reading an article in the New World magazine that came. And the first paragraph of this particular article relates to what we looked at last week and what we're going to be looking at this morning.

And so this is what it says by Andre Sue Peterson, this lady whose father-in-law just moved in with she and her husband.

And this is how she starts. My father-in-law moved in with us from Michigan. This is rubber meets the road time. At the end of the first two weeks I said to my husband, I've been kind and tender-hearted toward your father for two weeks now.

[1:10] But what happens when he starts to see the real me? And then her husband responds with a question. My husband replied, So you plan to stop putting on Christ at some point?

And it really struck me that really that's what we're talking about. Whether it's formal planning, written down planning, or just planning we do in meeting the situations every day in our minds. That kind of planning. But throughout the first two weeks of her life with her father-in-law in the house, she understood what needed to be done.

Obviously was thinking about that, was being a doer of those things. But now two weeks has passed. What am I going to do now when the real me comes out?

And her husband helping her understand, Well, really you're going to keep on doing what you have been doing. Plan on doing what you have been doing.

[2:14] But the idea of planning. We go through that process on a regular basis. You know, what are you planning on doing tomorrow?

Well, I'm planning on getting up and going to work or going to class or doing this, that. What are you planning on doing for Christmas? Well, we're planning on doing this. We're getting together here. What are you going to have to eat?

Well, I'm planning on making this, that, or the other thing. And so on and so forth. So we are people really designed to prepare for the future and to make plans.

But do we go through that same process, again, whether it's a real formal process, a written down process, or an unwritten process, do we go through that process when it comes to our growth in godliness and think about it to that extent so that we are making progress in growing in godliness?

Well, that's what these two lessons are about. Last week and this week, and last week, we took a look at some things to remember when we start going through these specific steps of planning for our growth in godliness and then also took a look at the importance of identifying where we do need to grow in godliness.

[3:43] And we had you raise your hand if you could pick out one particular area in your life where you knew you had to grow in godliness. You just know you have to change in this area.

You know, I've been struggling with this in my life for quite some time and just haven't seemed to be able to make progress in my growth in godliness here. But you are able to identify that.

Well, this week, we want to move to the planning stages. Okay, what can we do to really assist us in making progress in our growth in godliness?

Understanding, again, this is all of God's grace, the work of his grace through his Holy Spirit who is working in us, moving us little by little, transforming us into the image of Jesus Christ.

And it's only because that is true that we can take these specific steps in disciplining ourselves in this direction of godliness.

[4:45] And so we can be people of hope in this whole matter of growth in godliness. So looking this morning, I'm planning for change or our growth in godliness.

And first of all, related to our inner man. And again, when I'm talking about growth in godliness in regard to our inner man, I'm still recognizing God is the one who changes the heart.

I'm pursuing what God wants me to do, to nurture a heart, to nurture my affections, my thoughts that set apart him as supreme.

So I'm working in conjunction with God who is performing his work in me. And what can I do? That's what I'm thinking about and considering.

What can I specifically do to nurture, to encourage what God is seeking to do, what God is doing in me for his glory and my welfare?

[5:51] Well, the first thing we can do is pray. Psalm 86, 11b. And this is that set of verses that I mentioned last week we continue to go back to.

And the psalmist is praying here, give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name. Yeah, it is God who works in us.

God is the heart changer. But what do we see the psalmist doing here? He's praying and asking God, give me that kind of heart that I need to really make this kind of progress in my life, to revere your name, give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name, that I might set you up as supreme, that in my daily walk, what I say, what I think, what I do, would show that I revere you above everything else.

That's what the fear of God is. It's that recognition of who God is, the truth, the reality of who he is, and basing what I think and say and do upon that.

I fear him. I revere him. And so for me to have that kind of heart, recognizing I just can't do that on my own, I go before God and ask him, Father, give me an undivided heart, a heart that is singly focused upon you and your glory, so that I become this person, like we talked about in the verse.

[7:24] Pursue this. This is what happens. And so make that your prayer for yourself and for one another. Next thing.

Renew your affections and commitment to God. We do that in prayer, certainly, but what can I do, say on a daily basis more specifically, to really direct my affections, my desires for him and my commitment to truly live for his honor and glory and to revere him.

Well, renew your affections and commitment to God, to the personal triune God. And I say that because sometimes we don't think of God as personal being, especially with, what's this new movie that's coming out?

Isn't there a new movie coming out pretty soon? It's going to hit the movie theaters. Yeah, the young adults, no. Star Wars, the next whatever, or, you know, let the what be with you, the force be with you.

Man, my son-in-law, Alkhart, would be embarrassed to think that nobody spouted that right out at the level of a Star Wars fan that he is.

[8:48] But let's recognize that it's not a principle or a force that we're relating to. It is God, our Father.

And we have that great honor and privilege of calling him Father. Galatians 4, 6. And I won't read all these verses that I've got listed here, but that mentions that now we have that great privilege of calling him Father.

In Psalm 57, 9 through 10, the psalmist says, I'll give thanks to you, O Lord, among the people. I will sing praises to you among the nations, for your steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the cloud.

You see, he sees him as a personal God, one that he relates to in a very personal way with his affections and desires.

And certainly the Son, when we think of the Son, do we think of the Son as our bridegroom, Ephesians 5? I mean, there's some tenderness on the part of the bride when she thinks of her bridegroom.

[9:56] It's not some impersonal relationship. You know, it's something very tender and close and strong. But then the Holy Spirit as well, the one dwelling in you, actually working out your sanctification.

So this is, when I talk about renewing our affections for God, that means we've got to think of him the way that he is so that we are moving in that direction of relating on a personal plane, seeing him for who he truly is.

We'll talk about that a little bit more later on. So renewing your affections and commitment to God, to the personal triune God, and to love him supremely.

Psalm 73, when Asaph was struggling, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, he was troubled about that, wrestling with that, and really was becoming distressed about that until he actually went to the sanctuary of God and saw things for how they really were.

And then he says, Whom have I in heaven but you? You know, he had seen everything else and thought he was missing out on something. But now he's bringing himself back.

[11:19] You see what he's doing here? You know, I think this is part of renewing our affections, remembering who this one is that we're related to. Not impersonal, but see how Asaph is communicating with him here.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire beside you. That's what he was wrestling with before. The affections of his heart were over here and being tempted, you know, these desires that wage war within us.

We talked about that a few weeks ago, trying to draw him away from where his affections really should be. And now he was wrestling with that, but he's come to the place, he's won the warfare, and now he's repeating to himself what is true and what is good and what is supreme.

And there is nothing on earth that I desire beside you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. So we're telling ourselves those things that are true and renewing our affections and commitment to God.

Next, to pursue his designed purpose for you. I'm committing to that again. Philippians 3, 10 through 12. I want you to know Christ, or Paul says, I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

[12:52] Not that I've already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. You see what he's saying over and over again.

He's really renewing his commitment to his Savior, Jesus Christ, and saying this to other people, and really holding himself accountable for what he wants to pursue in life.

And so, what's the harm in us starting our day that way? As we know, boy, I know things are going to be a challenge for me today in school and class and work, but my main ambition here is that I want to know Christ and the joy of fellowshiping in his sufferings.

Instead of thinking, man, I sure hope this goes okay today, and the last thing I want to have happen is this, and I hope I can avoid that from happening. Things are going to happen, and so let's cultivate within our minds going in this direction so that we're ready to walk in the way of godliness when those things do come.

So, we're talking about working at growing in godliness in the inner man. Different things that we can do to renew our affections and commitment to God.

[14:19] Well, let's talk about renewing your minds. Make God's thinking or his counsel your thinking. We're talking about plan a specific way in which you can change the way you think about how you have been sinning.

You already identified last week that one area in which you really want to change or where you need to change. We're talking about the change now that needs to take place in your inner man, whether it's your affections or now in regard to your thinking.

Obviously, your thinking needs to change about what you've been doing. And so, part of our growth in godliness that needs to take place within our inner man relates to our thinking.

And one of the areas of change in our thinking that needs to take place is in regard to God. when we sin, we really have taken on a wrong view of God.

Now, give me some input in regard to that. Give an example of how a person takes on a wrong view of God when he sins. What is he thinking at the time that's wrong about God that contributes to his choice to sin with his words or his actions?

[15:46] All right. And we'll talk about the wrong view of himself next. God is not here.

And this is where we think, you know, is doctrine really that important? You know, we talk about God as omnipresent. But when we make that choice of sinning, to some degree, we are denying that I believe that God is present.

I mean, none of us would do that sin if Jesus was actually standing here in our presence. I mean, I can confidently say that I wouldn't do that.

But because I don't see him with my eyes and the fact that he's not here with me in the flesh, and I go and do it, you know, I'm denying the reality, the truth of the character of God, the person of God, that he's omnipresent.

What else? We tend to kind of trivialize sin. We rank sin as big, bad sin, or lose. All right.

[16:55] Yeah. So, we even have a wrong understanding in regard to what we are doing, the activity that we're doing. And in that sense, we're denying the holiness of God.

That it's somehow, well, this really will be okay as a child of God. I can do that. It's really not that bad.

But no, the holiness of God demands that we set ourselves apart from that sinful activity. Anything else?

Michelle? Yeah. Yeah, he doesn't know what he's doing. And that's what Adam and Eve, you know, and Satan, you know, what did God say?

Well, he says, well, if we eat, we'll die. No, you won't die. He doesn't know what he's doing. And she acted upon like God didn't know what he was talking about. And we do that same thing.

[17:50] No, you know, really, this is what will be best. Even though God says, this is really what will be best, my downfall won't happen. No, but, so, you get the point.

There's things that we are denied that are true about God. So we need to renew our thinking in regard to God. Here's a quote from Paul Tripp's book, Awe.

I think it's a new book that has come out recently. The seedbed for a life of obedience is awe. When awe of something other than God replaces awe of God, disobedience will replace obedience.

A life of submission to God's will, plan, commands, and purposes flows out of the worship of the one who has given those commands. Obedience is not the impersonal following of a set of arbitrary and abstract laws.

That's what I was talking about earlier. Just not abstract principles that we're following. Obedience is being in such awe of God that you're blown away by his wisdom, power, love, grace, all those things that make up God, which makes you willing to do whatever he says is right and best.

[19:13] Obedience is deeply more than begrudging duty. It is duty, certainly, but it's not begrudging duty. It's a response of joyful willingness ignited by, stimulated by, and continued by a heart that has been captured by God's glory, goodness, and grace.

So anytime we go in this direction of sin, we've forsaken something that is true about God. And as a result, we need to renew our minds in regard to God himself.

Now let me move through some of these others. Certainly I need to renew my thinking, or I need to think differently about myself. When we sin, we've taken on a wrong view of ourselves. I've set myself up as preeminent, or as the all-wise one, who knows the beginning from the end, and what is good and what is not good.

And therefore I make this choice against God. And maybe I've forgotten my identity. We talked about in past weeks as well. I'm a child of God, a saint, an ambassador of God.

Now I need to live out of the reality of who I am. Or maybe I need to change or think differently about others. Maybe an unsaved individual who's walking in darkness in need of hearing the gospel and seeing how a Christian lives in difficult situations.

[20:38] The person who has interrupted my day or my plan is in need of learning how to do something that would make him more effective at his responsibilities and a better contribution to the group project.

What's going on? We can't expect an unsaved person to live like a saved person. And what's the reality of that person's condition? Well, he's still a person who's lost in sin.

I'm not saying you ignore the problem that's arising because of that individual, but now we're looking differently at the situation because I know this person's true condition.

Yeah, he's not acting in a way that certainly is convenient for me, but why? Because he's still in darkness held by the chains of Satan and sin.

And God providentially has set me in this position where I'm in contact with him. What does this person need to see about God and one whose life has been affected by a relationship with God? [21:37] And so I'm understanding this person differently instead of this person is a and he's disturbing my day and so on and so forth.

The problem is there? Yes. Does it need to be solved? Yes. But it's solved and we pursue a resolution to the problem, the difficulty for God's glory and that person's welfare and good and his relationship with God and relationship to his surroundings as well.

Oh, there's so many others but we've got to keep on going here. You know, when children, our view of children might need to change when we're having a hard day at home with the children, do we actually think of them?

This is God's gift to me. One that he has given me the responsibility to nurture in the admonition of the Lord.

I'm God's steward in the life of this child. There's still issues you have to deal with with the child but we can't forget the truth, the biblical view of that child because that will affect how we pursue that relationship with this child.

[22:55] I've got to skip the others here so we can go on. But as I've said in the past, if you want copies of the notes, just give Carol your email and we'll send the notes to you.

Another thing, to plan for growth and godliness in the inner man. Make use of the scripture, God's wise, loving counsel, as a way of inner renewal. Remember, as human beings, we're designed by God to hear, receive, and joy in his counsel.

That's not how we always respond and it's certainly not how an unsaved person responds, but as human beings, that's how we are actually designed. We are designed to hear, to receive, and actually joy in God's great counsel to us.

And so we need to make use of his counsel, whether it's by Bible reading, Bible study, both publicly, as we're here this morning, morning service, evening service, other times you have, or private study of God's word, scripture memorization and meditation.

memorization, it's an area that probably many of us fall down to or struggle with, as you saw me appropriately display this morning. But memorization, memorize verses that give you a right view of, and that nurture a love for God.

[24:22] Remember, if we're denying certain things that are true about God, well, let's go to his word and renew our minds in regard to that specific way that we have been living against, or contrary to, struggling against understanding God is present, God is loving, God is faithful, God is kind, God is sovereign.

Plenty in the scriptures that will give us counsel about that, so we take into our day this right view of who God is that will help us to have the kind of responses that we need to have in challenging times.

So memorize those verses that give us those kind of right thoughts of God. And meditation, think about God's love for you, and what your love for God looks like.

In situations, you tend to love something else and to give in into sin. So we're talking about this renewal of the inner man. And now I'm going to have got this verse memorized now about God.

Okay, this is how I've responded in the past in these situations. And part of the reason I've responded this way is because I've thought this way about God and my affections have been turned to love.

[25:42] Okay, so if today this situation, a very similar one comes up here, now what do I bring into the situation now that's different? Well, I bring into the situation this view, this truth about God.

God, what else do I bring in? Well, I bring in that my commitment, my affections are for this one who loves me. All right, so now how will that influence what I do, what I say, what I think in this situation? You're not in this situation yet. You're just thinking. You're meditating about this scripture passage and how it had the implications of it in a situation where you've generally gone the other way in sin. We're talking about growing in godliness, taking those necessary steps that relate to our inner man that will help us to grow in godliness.

So, taking those steps of scripture memorization and meditation. Well, let's move on to the outer man.

[26:49] Okay, we've focused on the inner man, things that we can do specific steps. Well, now what about the outer man? Because we've talked about in the past, they go together, really.

The good man out of the good that's in his heart produces good things. The evil man out of the evil of his heart produces evil things. And so we're focusing on both areas of our person, the inner and the outer.

So related to the outer man or our words and actions. Well, we're going to pray. Psalm 86, 11.

Teach me your way, O Lord, in regard to how I use my mouth, the words that come from my mouth, what I do with the members of my body, my eyes, my hands, etc.

Father, I need you to teach me your way. Give me your counsel so that I would know how to speak and how to act in different situations while I'm in this world because I know I'm your child, I'm your ambassador, and you are my God, and you are the one that deserves all the glory and honor.

And so we're praying that like the psalmist prayed it in Psalm 86, 11. But then we're also going to think about how you would use God-glorifying words and actions to replace sinful words and actions you used in the past.

[28 : 15] If you've identified sinful words and actions that aren't honoring to God, now what you need to do is consider what would be honoring to God. Think about how you would put those into practice in those situations in which you used to sin.

Example, let's talk about worry. I asked a professional worrier what some of the things are that cheat practices in the past.

some of the examples she gave me was you can't sleep because of imagining the worst in a situation or you get grumpy or you don't listen well to others because you're preoccupied with thinking seriously about something else or worrying about it and you don't care for responsibilities that you have on a daily basis.

I mean, those are the specific identifications that you've made that result from giving your inner man to worry.

Again, because you've done that, there are outward manifestations of it. So now you've got to identify certainly the heart issue, but you're also going to identify what is it that I usually do as a result of what's going on within me that really isn't honoring God and isn't glorifying God, isn't giving the accurate testimony of witness of who God is.

[29 : 48] So now you go to the scriptures and you find out, well, what's the replacement for that? Well, this person indicated thankfulness. You do your responsibilities.

You take an interest in others and you serve them with your full attention. Or maybe when you're going to sleep at night, you listen to music or songs that remind you of what is true of God or the scriptures.

Put the scriptures on the CD, on the radio and listen to that so that your mind can be taken up with what is true. And in the past we've taken a look at Ephesians 4, 25-29, where Paul goes through this kind of exercise with the believers there and helps them identify, you know, this is what you used to be.

I don't want you any longer to live like the Gentiles, those unsafe people who are living in the vanity of their mind, their thinking. That's just not who you are anymore.

But instead, this is what you need to do. You need to put off the old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your mind, to put on the new self that's really created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

[31 : 07] And if you want some very specific examples, then this is what it really looks like. And then he says in verse 25-29, each of you must put off falsehood and what?

Speak truthfully to one another and to his neighbor. In your anger, do not sin. Don't let the sun go down while you're still angry and, you know, the put on, the replacement, I would be, you know, solve the problems.

Don't put them off. Don't cover them up, but deal with the problems biblically, so we don't give Satan or the devil a foothold. If you've been stealing, well, don't steal any longer.

But now what you need to do is work. Do something useful with your hands. And instead of stealing from others, well, take from yourself and give it to those who are in need. You see the replacement principle here that the Apostle Paul is helping these people to see.

You know, don't let any unwholesome talk from your mouths, but let's give ourselves to what is helpful for building others up. So it's not like you're not dealing with the problem that exists there, but you're taking a new pathway toward the resolution of the problem.

[32 : 20] And you're speaking those things that lead to a resolution of the problem, as I've said. Something that would actually be helpful for the person. What does this person need to see and

understand so that they could be glorifying God, certainly, if they're a believer, or so that they could relate better in this situation, maybe even do their job better at this time?

What can I say that would really help them be more effective as a person who needs to bear the image of God in this world and in this situation? I don't think that enough myself in the heat of the moment, but if I take time to think about it before I'm in the situation, I can train myself and discipline myself so that when I'm in the heat of the moment, it's more likely to come up then, and I'm praying, God, help me to think what is right in that time so that I can actually be a doer of what is right. And then what we can also do is ask a godly, wise friend for input in your planning. Last night we had a CT gathering in one of our breakout groups we were talking about, actually the Acts 2 passage and the togetherness they were enjoying there and how we need to exercise ourselves toward that and what that can look like is sharing back and forth prayer requests and asking how you're doing.

And I made comment in our group that, you know, I don't have a problem asking somebody how they're doing. My problem is letting them know how I'm doing. And if they ask me, you know, somebody said, don't just give them the American fine.

I'm fine. Everything's fine. Life is fine. When it's not really fine, there are some areas that I'm struggling with and I need to discern how to share that.

[34:22] And this is how I grow in godliness. Ask your spouse, a sibling, or a close, wise friend. You know, what do you recognize? I think this is what I'm struggling with is have you seen me really act on that sometime in the past?

How does that come out? And I might be missing something here. And if they love you enough, they'll let you know and help you gain the insights that you need.

Okay, so we've talked about looking at the inner man, planning for that change in the inner man and outer man. So where do we go from here? In the last few minutes that I have, there comes a point when we have to put it into practice.

We're not just going to sit in our rooms and make all kinds of plans of what we need to do. There comes a time when we need to be doers of the word, not just listeners.

And so, again, we go back to Psalm 86:11. Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will, what he says, I will walk in your truth. He knows the end result of his connection with God, his prayer to God, and learning from God, God's way is that he will be a doer of the word.

[35:41] I will walk in your truth. And so that's what we're looking for here. And so we're going to move in that direction now of doing what we've planned, what we've been meditating on and thinking about.

And Paul encouraged the believers in Philippi that that's where they had to move to. Philippians 4:9, whatever you've learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice.

That's where it's got to get to. And he says, and the God of peace will be with you. James 1:22, we know this verse, do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves, but do what it says.

The blessing of knowing the truth of God's word actually comes in the doing of it. In John, is it 13, when Jesus was there with the disciples, he took the towel himself and actually set the example of humble service.

And I think it's in verses 16 and 17, he told them that this is what you've seen me do, now do it and you'll be blessed as you do it.

[36:57] So there is a blessing, we know what that is, we experience that. When we choose to do what is right and we walk away from that situation, it's been a real tough situation, but we've committed ourselves, we've made our plan, we've done it, and boy, there is a real joyfulness within us that we experience when we do what is right.

And that's a blessing in that, that boy, God, thank you for the victory in that, for the counsel that proved itself to be true in this situation, that led to your glory and really led to my welfare and my well-being and really in the whole situation there.

There's a real settledness that comes from being a doer of the word that we can experience here in this world. In 2 Peter 1, 5-8, we know these verses as well, for this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge, knowledge self-control, and he goes on through that list.

In verse 8, he says, for if you possess these qualities, in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, when I see those phrases in there, make every effort to add to your faith. That doesn't indicate to me a person who's back here sitting down waiting for something to happen to him in his growth in godliness.

[38:33] But again, he's a person who's taking into account what the verses said prior to this, that all that he has now in Christ Jesus and all the provisions that God has given him, now he's moving out and making every effort in his thinking, in his planning, so that he would add to his faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, etc., etc.

And then as we do this, then we will keep ourselves, we will be, it will keep us from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, we're going to be growing in godliness as we follow through with this. So we're doing what we've planned and then certainly ask someone to pray for you and ask you about your progress.

You've planned on asking somebody, now you're going to do it. Hey, you know, I've been thinking about this, I made a plan on asking you and I'm going to ask you now to help me through this. Would you pray for me specifically about this and would you check up with me, say at the end of the week or whatever, see how I'm doing on this. And the apostle Paul did this at different times, Ephesians 6, Philippians 2.

[39:50] And then our last point is here, don't quit, but persevere in love for God and others, God's glory and your joy in walking in newness of life, Hebrews 12, 1 through 3.

Let us run with perseverance, the race that's marked out for us. I don't know what God has marked out for you this week, but you can help your, your, prepare for your effective response to whatever he has marked out for you by identifying and planning to respond in a way that would be honoring and glorifying to God.

Well, we have to stop. I think next week what we're going to take a look at is, okay, well, what do I do if I fail? What does really forgiveness and repentance look like in those times?

Because, hey, we all fail, and that's going to be part of our progress in growing together in godliness. So there's some things I'm going to have to take care of with God in my repentance and confession and quite possibly with other people.

So what does that look like so that I can keep moving forward for the glory of God? Let's pray.

Father, this morning we thank you again for your goodness to us, your good counsel to us, your indwelling spirit, the fact that we can be a body of Christ, walking together in this world, waiting for Jesus to come again.

[41:31] and now we pray that today you again would help us be those who move to be doers of the word and honor you, encourage each other, Father, until Jesus comes again.

In his name we pray, amen. Amen. Thank you.