

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS – Part 3

GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN

A GROWING IN FRIENDSHIP IN THE GROUP

Talk together about something that has excited or discouraged you this week.

B THE CHRISTIAN’S RULES FOR HEALTH

Many years ago I learned about some of our needs for healthy bodies: good food, fresh air, cleanliness and exercise. A Christian has counterparts for all these.

a) GOOD FOOD – THE BIBLE

The Bible is a collection of 66 books by 40 different authors, originally written in 3 languages, in a variety of literary styles (prose, poetry, history, story, biography, straight instruction, etc.)

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17 What do these verses have to say about the origin and the purpose of the bible?

Its main theme Salvation – God’s intervention into our world to rescue us from our self-centeredness. It shows us who God is and how he wants us to relate to him.

Why do we read it?

It is described as:	- a mirror	James 1:22-25
	- a sword	Ephesians 6:17
	- a hammer	Jeremiah 23:29
	- a sweetness, milk	Ezekiel 3:3, 1 Peter 2:2
It:	- nourishes	1 Peter 2:2, Hebrews 5:12-14
	- cleanses	Psalm 119:9
	- guides	Psalm 119:105
	- gives us peace and wisdom	Psalm 119:165, Proverbs 4:4-6
	- keeps us in touch with Jesus	John 15:7

How do we read it?

Choose a modern version (NIV, Good News, etc.)
Have a scheme with some notes (Scripture Union, Every Day with Jesus, Bible Reading Fellowship, etc.)

Look for: - promises - warnings
 - commands - prayers
 - good (or bad!) examples of behavior

Ask: *What did this mean originally?
 *How does it apply to me now?
 *What have I found to turn into prayer?

b) FRESH AIR - PRAYER

Prayer has many aspects. We can think of it as tuning into God, or as having a conversation with him.

In prayer we: - discover his mind Ephesians 5:10,17
 - join in his purpose Matthew 9:35 - 10:1,6

Prayer includes:

- ❖ Worship (telling him how wonderful he is) Psalm 96:7-8
- ❖ Confession (getting rid of blotches) Psalm 32:3-5
- ❖ Thanking him for his forgiveness and generosity Psalm 103:1-5
- ❖ Meditation (reflecting on Scripture) Psalm 119:48
- ❖ Interceding for other people Romans 1:9-10
- ❖ Offering ourselves for service Romans 12:1-2
- ❖ Listening (start by asking his Spirit to prompt us
 about how to pray) Romans 8:26

Learning to pray:

Learn by doing:

- ❖ Regularly (Daniel 6:10) and ‘arrow’ prayers (Matthew 14:30)
- ❖ Alone (Mark 1:35) and with others (Matthew 18:20)

Learn from Jesus:

- ❖ The prayer he taught (Luke 11:1-13), the way he prayed (John 17)

Learn from books:

- ❖ From Psalms, hymns and songs
- ❖ From the prayer book and from books of prayers
- ❖ Learn from the Holy Spirit, who teaches us to pray

Make a regular time to pray when you can be undistracted and stick to it.

c) CLEANLINESS

Unconfessed sin spoils our relationship with God (Isaiah 59:1-2). The Christian's calling is to be clean in our thinking, in our speech and in our behavior (1 Peter 1:13-16).

d) EXERCISE

None of us are too new as Christians to start asking God, "How would you like me to work for you by helping other people?"

If your prayers seem unanswered – do you actually pray? (James 4:2) And mean it? (Matthew 7:7) Are your goals selfish? (James 4:3) Do you persevere in prayer? (Luke 18:1-8) Are you seeking God's will? (Mark 14:36)

Answers may not always come in the form we expect or at the time we demand. We may be meant to answer our own prayer (Matthew 9:38, 10:5). The answer may be "no" or "wait."

C A VERSE TO LEARN Psalm 119:105. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

D BIBLE STUDY SECTION

Read Colossians 1:3-14 – one of many examples of the way Paul prayed for Christians.

- a) What are the main ways Paul thanks God in the lives of these people he had never seen?
- b) Why is thanksgiving such an important part of prayer?
- c) Paul is not slow to ask God for things in prayer. What are the main things he asks for? How should we pray for our friends?
- d) Paul prays that they may know God's power; what sort of things is that power to do?
- e) What are the main marks of Christian discipleship in this passage?

E TIME TO PRAY

Spend a moment to think about the things we have talked about and start to put together a short prayer about one of these things. Join together in prayer out loud.