

# SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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## Practical Steps to Help You Grow Closer and Stronger in the Lord

By Kesha Griffin

### GUIDING SCRIPTURES:

Jeremiah 23:13 - You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart

Deuteronomy 4:29 - But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul

Matthew 22:37 - And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

### My JOURNEY:

I grew up as an only child with my mom. I wasn't raised in a religious home, we didn't attend church and God was rarely, if ever mentioned. In fact, our home was filled with domestic violence, drugs, and for nearly six years I was sexually abused by my mom's live-in boyfriend, whom I called my step-father. Needless to say my horrific background created an angry, strong-willed, rebellious, quick-tempered woman.

Fast-forwarding to my college (in Texas) years, around the age of 19 I found myself on my bed, crying in pain, alone and isolated. It was then that I heard a soft, gentle voice say, "Are you done yet? Are you ready?" I knew that it was God asking me if I was ready to surrender my life to Him, and I replied, "Yes," and I surrender my life to Christ in my bedroom apartment.

From that point my spiritual journey(Part 1) began. I started going to a local church by my school, my prayer life increased and I started to make subtle changes. However, although I was making progress and going to church there were many things that I was still struggling with UNAWARE. Simply put, I had not dealt with the HIDDEN/SECRET things in my heart. The person that revealed these things to me was my then boyfriend Charles, now husband.

Fast-forwarding to the age of 24, Charles told me he wanted to separate, but didn't tell me why. At first I was very upset, hurt, crying, etc. Once again, I heard that soft, gentle voice, that told me that Charles was going to be my husband and that the separation was something he needed to do. I decided to take our time of separation to seek God and grow closer to Him. It was then I started Part 2 of my spiritual journey. This time it was different. Since I was now aware that I had some SERIOUS deeply-rooted issues in my heart, I began asking God to not only SHOW me those things, but then HEAL me of those things. I must admit what God exposed to me about myself was quite awful.

Fast-forwarding, I have now been married for three to four years. I had grown tremendously in my spiritual life and had a deeper relationship with the Lord, attending church, serving in Ministry, etc. HOWEVER, I was still not totally healed and my behavior as a wife, was not godly. I would go to church lifting up holy hands, singing praises and serving in Ministry, but at home, I was disrespectful, quick-tempered, non-submissive, strong-willed, angry, cussing and fussing, etc. My marriage was filled with arguments and friction...and sadly, I was mostly the blame.

The reason why I continued acting out with ungodly behavior is because I did not FULLY submit myself to the Lord. I did not make pleasing Him my priority. I did not continue seeking Him, His Word, etc. Seeing how my attitude and behavior affected my husband, forced me to really take ANOTHER look at myself. So, Part 3 of my spiritual journey began. This time, not only did I ask God to heal me, but also I asked Him to make me more like Him. I asked Him to help me be the godly woman and wife that He wanted me to be. I asked Him to give me a heart for Him, a heart that loves Him and wants to please Him. I decided I was not going to focus on what my husband did or did not do or how he was acting. This was between me and the Lord, and I was determined to be ALL that God commanded and desired for me to be as a woman of God and wife.

My healing and deliverance came when I allowed God to examine my heart, break my heart from its pride, destroy my ungodly THOUGHT patterns, and then mend me with His love, His peace, and His joy. It was a painful and tearful experience, that took WORK AND EFFORT on my part. But without this experience I would not be who I am now.

Here is how I became the new creature that you see today.

## PRACTICAL STEPS

Just like every personal goal we want to accomplish...our goal of growing spiritually takes INTENTIONAL effort. Here are some practical steps we can take IF we truly want to grow closer to God.

- 1) We must first decide that we want to grow spiritually. We must make up our minds that we want to make God the priority in our life.
- 2) Now that we know what the goal is (spiritual growth) we must come up with an ACTION plan on how we will get there. Our action plan should be detailed...outlining exactly how we will accomplish our goal of growing spiritually. For example...
  - a) I will begin going to church every Sunday and Bible Study (once a month, or twice a month. Just make a step towards going faithfully and consistently).
  - b) I will begin praying every day for 5 minutes a day
  - c) I will begin reading my Bible at least 2 times a week
  - d) I will begin seeking out Godly friendships, etc.
- 3) We must get rid of any distractions that will prevent us from accomplishing our goal. To grow spiritually we...
  - a) Can't hang out in the same places that we use to.
  - b) Can't hang out with some of the same people we use to. (At least until we are strong enough spiritually not to fall back into our old ways...but I would be even cautious of that)
- 4) We must SACRIFICE. Every goal requires sacrifice and growing spiritually is no exception. It will take sacrifice of...
  - a) Our time
  - b) Our energy
  - c) **Our money** (Investing in a good Study Bible, Christian books on spiritual development & growth , etc.) **NOTE:** There are lots of free on-line resources. See the Resource Section.
- 5) We must have PATIENCE. Most goals require you to be patient because they take time to accomplish. Spiritual growth is no exception.
- 6) We will have setbacks and want to give up. KEEP TRYING...dust off and get back on track.
  - a) We will have obstacles/ people who discourage us and say things like...(oh you're Holy now, we don't hang out like we use to, you're too good for me now, etc, etc.) Excuse my Ebonics ...but DON'T TRIP. Don't be caught off guard and try to please people. REMEMBER YOUR GOAL.
- 7) We need an accountability partner. Someone who can motivate us and encourage us in accomplishing our goal to grow spiritually.

IMPORTANT: This accountability partner should be someone who is SERIOUS about their own spiritual growth.

Preferably someone who is more mature than you are spiritually and who can serve as both mentor & motivator.

## PRAYER, FASTING & WORSHIP

The three major habits I incorporated in my life were prayer, fasting and worship. All three were vital in helping me grow closer to God and stronger in my faith.

### PRAYER:

I made prayer a part of my daily routine. Even if only for a couple of minutes, I never go a day without prayer.

I pray for: a heart after God, a desire to know God more, a desire to live for God, a cleansed heart, a desire to read His Word, a desire to be the best woman of God I could be.

### FASTING:

My fast started off as a one-day fast, then over a period of time (a few years) I increased to a three-day fast.

The fast:

- 1) I committed to no eating during my fast, only liquids (no soda). When hungry I would pray, read the Word if I could, or even simply think about God if in a place where I couldn't pray or read.
- 2) I listened to praise and worship music.
- 3) I spent time reading His Word. This was to get to know Him better and to KNOW what is in His Word. I read on topics such as : Peace, forgiveness, godly character, the heart, etc.

NOTE: You can choose to read through the Bible starting with the New Testament. There are great bible reading plans, devotionals, etc.

## WORSHIP:

Worship became a part of my life. There is power in worshipping God. It allows us to release our burdens to Him and to magnify Him. Worship helps us to acknowledge who God is and that He has all power and is in control of everything.

In worship:

- 1) I would turn on music and at times I would get on my knees, bow down, prostrate myself on the floor and pray as the music was playing. I would simply pour my heart out to God.
- 2) I often worship in my car as I listen to Gospel/Christian music. Again praying, thanking, and magnifying God.

## SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Reading the Word and learning Scripture is important for spiritual growth. You will not always have a Bible with you, so you want to know Scripture and “hide it in your heart”. Also, when reading the Word, pray before reading it, don’t rush through the text and don’t try to read too much at once. The goal is to think about the Scripture, meditate on it and see how you can apply it to your life.

Here are some Scriptures that I like to meditate on and keep fresh on my mind. I encourage you to find your favorites.

### **NASB version**

Roman 8:28 And we know that all things work together for the good of those who love God and who are called according to His purpose

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect

## CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

Aside from attending church and reading the Word at home, I’m constantly reading blogs, articles, listening to sermons, etc. to build myself up spiritually. Here are some of my favorite resources:

Grace to You- Pastor John MacArthur

Ligonier Ministries-Pastor R.C. Sproul

Stand to Reason- Apologist Greg Koukl

Please Convince Me- Apologist Jim Wallace

Turning Point-Pastor David Jeremiah

The Bible App on the phone or computer (you can read daily devotionals and bible plans)

Ariel Ministries

Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Focus on the Family

New Life Ministries (Christian counselors)

Dr. Gary Chapman (Christian counselor & marriage expert, author of “The Five Love Languages”)

NOTE: Every couple must read this

Stormie Omartian (author of The Power of a Praying Wife) NOTE: Every wife must read this

**My Prayer for You:** *Heavenly Father I come to you thanking you for these women who desire to get closer to you. I pray Lord, that you will give them the strength, energy and focus needed to develop themselves spiritually. I pray that you give them a heart that longs after you and desires the truth of your Word. Reveal to them the secret things in their hearts that only you know about. Heal them from all past hurts and pains, Break all generational curses. Give them a transformed mind-set and help them to begin to think Biblically about all things. Help them to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Help them become the women of God that you have called them to be. Help them to be the godly wives that you called them to be. Reveal to them their spiritual gifts and help them to utilize them to help build your Kingdom. May they be role models for their children and may they live their lives in full submission to your will and your Word. Protect them and keep them from the plots and schemes of the enemy. May you get the glory from their lives. In Jesus name Amen!*