

The Road to Better Living

Class Series 101

Vision



Purpose



Action

by
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Class Introduction

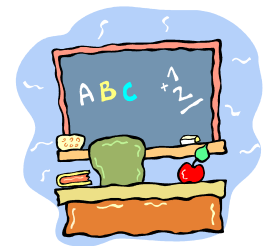
Class Topics: Vision, Purpose and Action

Purpose of the Class: To assist each person in creating a personal vision, discovering or rediscovering their purpose and take action upon each goal to create better living.

Plan of the Class: To provide material, homework, direction and general discussion, in order to gain a great focus on the life to come.

Contents of the Class:

1. Introduction to "The Road to Better Living"
2. Creating Vision #1: Finding a Vision
3. Creating Vision #2: Realizing a Vision
4. Creating Purpose #1: Finding a Purpose
5. Creating Purpose #2: Making Purpose Personal
6. Creating Action #1: Work
7. Creating Action #2: Progress
8. Creating Action #3: Growth
9. Creating Action #4: Plan
10. The Final Step to Achievement



What Should You Bring to Class?

- An attitude filled with gratefulness, preparedness, willingness and hopefulness.
- A Bible
- A writing instrument
- Paper if you want to take extra notes. (*Class lessons sheets and homework assignments will be distributed.*)

Why Have a Class on Better Living?

- Why not?
- Most people want to have a better life.
- Some people have lost their focus.
 - A lack of focus produces a lack of desire.
- A lack of desire produces a lack of action.
- A lack of action produces a lack of growth.



"Vision without action is a daydream,
Action without vision is a nightmare"

Japanese Proverb

- **NOTE:** *Many times a lack of action produces a decline in growth, leadership, efforts and membership.*

Creating Vision

"Where there is no vision, the people perish..."
(King Solomon, Proverbs 29:18, KJV)

Your Vision Must Begin Now!

The topic of vision is a serious one. King Solomon said without vision, people are destined to fail. The person determining your vision is you. There is no one who knows yourself better than you. You must act and you must act now. There must be no delay.

The dreams of today can become the achievement of tomorrow, and the possibilities of today can become the growth of greater opportunities of tomorrow.

What is Vision?

- Vision is what you "see" before you:
 - It is not what you see with your eyes, but with your heart and mind.
 - It will reach to the very depths of your thoughts and emotions.
- Vision is what you shoot for:
 - It is your dreams.
 - It will guide you by answering the question, "What is your aim?"
 - It will keep you progressing forward by asking, "What are your goals?"
 - It will keep you steadfast and secure by asking, "What is my focus leading me toward?"
- Vision is focus toward the future:
 - It guides you in future by setting goals.
 - It leads you on your journey to success.
 - It involves great planning as you travel the success journey.



Why do I Need Vision?

- Vision focuses on the future.
- Vision focuses on the possibilities of what can happen.
- Vision takes advantage of the opportunities that help to achieve the vision.
- Vision allows you to set goals for the future.
- Vision allows you to see the obstacles in the road.
- Vision looks beyond the past.
- Vision overcomes the past.
- Vision takes effort. (*a.k.a. action*)
- Vision involves others. (*family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, church members, etc*)
- Vision takes you on a journey.

"Dissatisfaction and discouragement are not caused by the absence of things, but the absence of vision."
Anonymous

"Vision is the art of seeing the invisible."
(Jonathan Swift)

Words of Vision:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Future○ Goals○ Achievable○ Ever-improving○ Journey○ Passionate○ Lifetime○ Purpose○ Quality○ Oneness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mission○ Mission statement○ Passion statement○ Motivation○ Sight○ Focus○ Leadership○ Toward the future○ Looking to○ Pointing to | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Dreaming of○ Acting on○ Living in○ Growth○ Progress○ Hope○ Security○ Everlasting○ Guarantee○ Eternal |
|--|--|---|

Vision is NOT:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Just words★ Just a mission★ Just sight | <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ Just thoughts★ Just the future |
|--|---|
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Where Do I Begin with My Vision?

Do you like where you are in life?

You may or may not be satisfied with your current place in life. It is said that the average American changes jobs approximately 4 times before they are forty. Some of those changes may be drastic, others may be small, but changes happen. One reason many people change jobs or positions is they do not like the direction of their life. Unhappiness causes some people to make drastic changes to their lives; whether positive or negative.

What changes have you made because of unhappiness?

Think of five areas in which you have changed in the past ten years.

"...Creating a vision for the future begins with a "now" decision..."

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Did any of those changes improve your life? Have any of those changes helped you reach your vision?

You do have a vision, right? Do not confuse vision with a mission statement; your mission statement will be filled on the way to your vision. In fact, a mission statement will continue to be fulfilled after you achieve your vision. Remember this: once a vision has been achieved, a new vision needs to be created to continue with growth.

Personal Vision Inventory

"You want to know what keeps me up at night.
Figuring out what we're going to need not next year but five years from now."
(Chris Collins, Vice President, Jet Blue)

To find vision for your life, you must be willing to take a personal inventory of your current condition. A couple who has a goal of debt-free living must first take inventory of the debts and incomes they currently possess. After careful examination, they begin to ask serious questions to direct them in the path they choose to take together!

You must ask yourself some serious questions about your search for your true vision. Always remember, serious questions deserve serious answers.

Questions of Personal Willingness:

1) Are you willing to start and finish the task?

How many people do you know who start various projects and never finish them? Chances are you know many people who start but never finish; you might even be that person. These lessons are not designed to fail, they are designed to work. I challenge you to finish the work you begin. If you get stuck, try harder. No one ever became great by quitting when the road become tough. They overcame the obstacles ahead of them. You can too! I know you can.

Start with the end in mind! Set yourself to finish the course! Only you can do it. I know you can!

2) Do you want a vision?

It seems like a silly question at this point, but I must convince you this is a very appropriate question. Without the willingness to work and the motivation to do it, you will not use all of your abilities, emotions and thoughts to travel the journey of success.

There is a difference between wanting a vision and the willingness to create a vision.

- Wanting is a longing for, a thirst, a desire, a lustfulness.
 - Think about this: there have been times where you worked outside in the 90+ degree heat. After working for a while, you began to get thirsty! You wanted a drink. Did you act upon your desire, or did you continue working? Acting upon what you want is willingness.
- Willingness to create a vision involves your actions.
 - It involves a desire to set aside part of your day to focus on your vision and remember the words that you will hear during these series of lessons. Your willingness will not only allow you to create a vision, but it will drive you to work toward your vision on a daily basis. You will become involved in your vision, the company's vision, your congregation's vision and your family's vision.

3) If you had a vision, what would you do with it?

"Empty pocketbooks never held anyone back; only empty heads and hearts can do that." (Unknown)

Personal Work #1

Throughout these lessons, I am asking you to put forth effort in a project to benefit your life. If this project is between two or more people, such as a family, business or organization, each of you will need to work together to come up with the proper vision.

Important Material:

What is the difference between a mission statement and a vision statement?

- Many mission statements only describe what you do and who you are.
- Your vision statement will reach to wherever you want to go. It will describe your goals and dreams. It also describes your actions on how you will get there.

Personal Work Assignment #1:

Write your first vision statement:

Points of Great Remembrance:

- This is only your first vision statement in this class.
- Your vision statement will change as you grow.

"It takes just as much time and energy to wish as it does to plan."
Eleanor Roosevelt

Vision Statement Helps:

- Write where you want to go!
- If you get stuck, take out another sheet of paper and write down some keywords to begin your vision statement. *(Refer to page 4)*
- Take your time! *(No one should rush greatness. This is yours, no one else's.)*
- Dream! Dream! Dream!
- "Shoot for the moon and you might hit a star!"

Scriptural reminders:

- Colossians 3:2
- Joshua 24:15
- Ecclesiastes 12:13
- Luke 12:16-21
- Psalm 119
- Proverbs 3:5,6



Creating Purpose

"Purpose is the engine driving your vision."
(Christopher M. Gallagher)

What is Purpose?

Your purpose will be the driving force behind your vision. To constantly dream of one thing is simple to do; trying to figure out why you want to achieve your vision is more complex. Instead of the answer, "because I want too," dig deeper into your reasons and thoughts concerning your purpose. Some will call your purpose a mission statement.

Webster's Dictionary defines purpose as "something set up as an object or end to be attained or a subject under discussion or an action in the course of execution."

Purpose will answer the question, "Why?"

How many people do you know who struggle with their purpose on this earth? How many books are written about discovering your purpose?

"Without a purpose to your vision, you are on a cruise to nowhere."



Why is Purpose Important?

Just because you have vision does not necessarily mean you are ready to accomplish every task. You must have a driving force behind your vision to propel you to greater service. Purpose is important because of the following reasons:

- Without a purpose to your vision, you are just sleeping.
 - *"Some people who think they are dreamers are just sleepers."*
 - *"Some people dream of worthy achievement, while others stay awake and experience it."*
- Without a purpose, your vision is useless.
- Without a purpose, your actions are futile.
- Purpose gives you direction toward your vision.
- Purpose gives you actions to take.
- Through a combination of your vision and purpose, your actions are magnified. (Acts 8:4)
- Your individual purpose will help others grow.
- Once your vision and purpose are in line with God, your actions will produce results.

Finding Your Purpose

You must understand your purpose will be different from the purpose many have in the world. You have a higher purpose because you have a higher standard. *(Remember, when we discuss purpose, we are talking about your spiritual purpose.)*

In your search for your purpose, remember one key thing...

****"GOD'S PURPOSE MUST BE YOUR PURPOSE!"****

Strong lives are motivated by dynamic purposes; *(See next page)*

lesser ones exist on wishes and inclinations.
(Kenneth Hildebrand)

Whatever you do, do not try to make your purpose God's purpose. Trying to make your thoughts God's thoughts will never work. (Isaiah 55:8, 9) Your thoughts must be focused on the thoughts of God.

****There is a difference between making my thoughts God thoughts and making God thoughts my thoughts.****

In seeking to find purpose, you ask, "What is God's purpose for me?" Through a brief but intriguing study, you will find that God's purpose for your life is quite simple.

To find God's purpose for your life look to the one complete book God has given to men today – *the Bible*. God loved you so much He gave His precious Son. (John 3:16) He also loved you to the extent He has given you "all things pertaining to life and godliness." (2 Peter 1:3) He has provided sixty-six books describing your redemption. From the beginning of man to the continuation of the church, He has given His words. As you read Paul's words to Timothy, you know every Scripture is from the mouth of God (2 Timothy 3:16); and, it is with those words that you are made complete. (2 Timothy 3:17) It is my belief you can be made complete by having your spiritual vision and your spiritual purpose blended to motivate you for greater action.

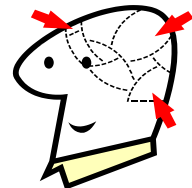
In finding your purpose, you must remember these points:

- God's seeks man's redemption. (2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Timothy 1:9)
- God gave His own Son to redeem men. (John 3:16; Romans 5:6-11)
- Jesus came to do the purpose of His Father. (Mark 1:38; Luke 4:43)
- Jesus came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10)

Paul wrote great words in 1 Corinthians 11:1. Take a moment and commit Paul's words to your memory. Paul's words describe his purpose in life. I believe that same purpose is for you.

Memory Work

Commit to memory 1 Corinthians 11:1. This verse will not only make you stronger, but it will help in defining your purpose.



When Peter wrote the verse below, he described the submission as a Christian in the midst of suffering. In those verses, Peter said that,

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps..." (1 Peter 2:21)

The example Christ left was one of submission to His Father. We should follow Christ's example to the greatest extent because Christ was submissive to His Father in everything, so we should be submissive to God in everything.

"Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also,
because for this purpose I have come forth."
(Jesus, recorded in Mark 1:38)

Personal Work #2

After you have taken time to work on your vision, now begin work on your purpose; this work will benefit you at the end of this study.

Please Note: If you have not taken time to work on your vision statement, stop and do it now. You must write your vision before progressing to your purpose.

Questions on Purpose:

- Is your purpose in life to:
 - Have a family?
 - Make money?
 - Gain fame and fortune?
 - Win an award?
 - Become the best in a certain field?
 - Annoy people?
 - _____
 - _____



- Is your sole purpose in life to:
 - Have a family?
 - Make money?
 - Gain fame and fortune?
 - Win an award?
 - Become the best in a certain field?
 - Annoy people?
 - _____
 - _____

Take Home Work on Purpose:

These questions are for you to examine and answer; no one but you can define or create your purpose. It must be a personal, heartfelt and thought out decision. Your answers will be important as you determine your purpose in this life.



- How many times does the word purpose occur in the Bible?
- What was the Apostle Paul's vision?
- What was Paul's purpose?
- Did Paul's purpose ever change during his life?
 - If so, why? If not, why not?

We will take time to discuss these questions and answers as each person becomes challenged in their purpose.

Making Purpose Personal

"Taking responsibility is the key to making purpose personal."
(Christopher M. Gallagher)

You need to make purpose personal!

If it is not personal, your actions will not be motivated to reach their full intensity.

Examining Paul's Purpose

Take a moment to examine the following passages relating to Paul's purpose:

- **Colossians 1:29** – "For this **purpose** also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."
- **2 Timothy 3:10** – "Now you followed my teaching, conduct, **purpose**, faith, patience, love, perseverance,"

Question to Consider about Paul's Purpose:

1. Did Paul have a definite purpose in his life?
2. What was Paul's purpose?
3. Did Paul teach or tell others about his purpose?

Personal Purpose Questions:

1. If the Lord were to come right now, would He be pleased with my work in the gospel?
2. Are you practicing godliness? (1 Timothy 4:7, NASB)
3. Is what you are doing today beneficial to your soul?

News commentator Dan Rather has a good way of keeping his professional objective always in mind. He says he looks often at a question he's written on three slips of paper. He keeps one in his billfold, one in his pocket, and one on his desk. The probing reminder asks, "Is what you are doing now helping the broadcast?"

Our Daily Bread.

The Son of God appeared for this **purpose**, to destroy the works of the devil.
(John recorded in 1 John 3:8, NKJV, emphasis mine)

Personal Work #3

"It will not become purposeful unless it becomes personal."
(Christopher M. Gallagher)

You must be willing to take accountability for your life! You must be willing to take accountability to fulfill your purpose. Remember, willingness is one thing and actually doing it is another. You must take action.

Defining Your Purpose

Spend a few moments examining the questions below. Do not answer them out at first; let the questions sink into your mind.

1. What is your purpose in life? _____

2. What is your sole purpose in life? _____

Realizing Your Purpose:

Below is a two-column list of people in your life who need to hear the gospel, be encouraged, be strengthened, etc. Take several moments to think about every person in your life who fits into each category and write his or her name.

In Danger of Hell

In Need of Encouragement

In Need of Strength

In Need of Service

Creating Action #1 - Work

"The dictionary is the only place where success comes before work."
(Unknown)

The Fear of Work

It is a small word, but one of the most feared in the English language. Some cringe at the sight or the sound of this little four-letter word. The word is **work**. Work is slowly becoming a terrible word. For many, the word "work" brings negative emotions and connotations.



Why would such a small word be a problem?

I believe it comes down to the attitude of an individual. Your attitude toward work will determine your words, mindset, thoughts and actions concerning work. You can tell much about a person by examining their attitude. Words are easily spoken, but actions are harder done. Attitudes developed in the mind, will show forth in actions. If a person loves to work, you will see it by the steps they take. If a person hates to work, you will see negative results.

Many hate work because they are only looking at the present. They cannot see the future of the project they are working on. Imagine a construction worker only focusing on the nail in the board in front of him. He would become easily distracted and troubled by a small step. Instead, he focuses on the final project – a complete house.

Focus will drive you to results. Use your focus to challenge your work to greater results.

What is Work?

Work is defined as a set of actions and progressions towards a goal or a reward.

How do you define work?

Why is Work Important?

- Work brings growth.
- Work brings progress.
- Work brings profit.
- Work achieves goals.
- Work gets results.

I never did anything worth doing by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident; they came by work.
(Thomas Edison)

“The only workout some folks get is jumping to conclusions, running down their friends, side stepping their responsibility, and pushing their luck.”
(Unknown)

Your Decision to Work is Important

Right now, you have to make a decision: do you want to work or do you want to sit back and do nothing?

Your choice to work or not to work will determine if you are traveling “The Road to Better Living.” If you really want to live better, you must decide to work.



Your decision to work is important for a variety of reasons: The decision will affect your family. Your family is watching every step you take and how far you take them. Children are little video cameras following everywhere you go. The old adage is true: what they see is what they will do. If they see you work, they will work. If they see you being lazy, they will be lazy.

****Your work is influence.****



Your work shows:

- Your commitment
- Your attitude
- Your zeal
- Your passion
- Your background
- Your leadership
- Your family
- Your self-esteem
- Your personal beliefs
- Your values

Your Spiritual Work is Important

Your physical work is important, but your spiritual work is ***much more*** important. Your spiritual work will determine your destiny.

The reason for importance:

- Your work is important because of the body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
 - Each member is a part of the body. (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - Members of the body suffer together. (1 Corinthians 12:26)
 - Members of the body rejoice together. (1 Corinthians 12:26)
- Your work is important, because it is unique*. (Romans 12:3-8)
 - Not all members have the same function. (Romans 12:4-8)
 - Each work is great because of unity. (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:12)
- Your work is important because other people need you.
 - The Lost (John 4:34-38)
 - **Remember your list from the Purpose Section? (Page 11)**
 - Weak members (Romans 15:1; Galatians 6:1)

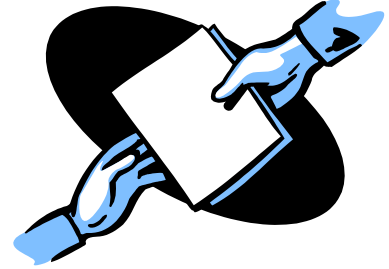
**Unique = one-of-a-kind.*

Personal Work #4

"He who cuts his own wood warms himself twice."
(Unknown)

Understanding Your Work in its Place

Before continuing, take a moment to review your vision statement and your purpose. Those written statements provide motivation for your work. Your vision and purpose statements assist in placing the active part of your life in step with overall goal.



Remember: Just as with your vision and purpose, your work will mean more when it becomes personal.

Remember this quote by Charles L. Allen, "Remember that you are needed. There is at least one important work to be done that will not be done unless you do it." You have a job to do that you can do.

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something; I will not refuse to do something that I can do.

Edward Everett Hale

Personal Helps:

- Do not use excuses to get out of work.
 - If you really want to get out of work, use truth.
 - "An excuse is nothing more than a lie with a suit on." – *Marshall Keeble (Preacher in the churches of Christ)*
- Do not use the phrase, "I can't."
 - Decide to do something and do it.
- Do not use the phrase, "I should have."
 - "It is true that hindsight is 20/20, but hindsight never won a gold medal." (unknown)

Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody would have done it, but Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody, when Nobody did what Anybody could have.

-Author Unknown

Will you work for those depending upon you?

Or will you work on letting them down?

Creating Action #2 - Progress

"The dictionary is the only place where progress comes before work."
(Christopher Gallagher)

What is Progress?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines progress as, "a forward or onward movement (as to an objective or to a goal)" and "a gradual betterment, the progressive development of mankind."

How Important is Progress?

Progress is a process which should never stop. It was the great cellist, Pablo Casals who responded to the question, "Mr. Casals, you are 95 and the greatest cellist that ever lived. Why do you still practice six hours a day?" with "Because I think I'm making progress."

Each one of us must make progress towards our goal every day.

Hindrances to Progress

Remember what was said at the beginning of this study, work can stop with few people. Great works have been stopped because the majority has remained silent.

- Automatic opposition to change
 - "I just don't want to."
 - "There is no way we can do it"
 - "It cannot be done."
 - "We tried that before."
 - "It cost too much."
 - "We don't have time."
 - "There is not enough help."
 - "Our church (group) is too small."
 - "We do not have the resources (money, people, equipment, room)"
 - "We have never done that before."
 - "You are right, but..."
 - "Let's give it more thought."
 - "Let's form a committee."
 - "If you want to work for God, form a committee. If you want to work with God, form a prayer group." (Unknown)
 - "Let's sleep on it"
- Ego
 - When you begin a work someone does not agree with, it affects their ego. When you battle against a person's ego, the battle gets personal.
 - You may think of this as a hindrance because of arrogance. (Arrogance is defined as the attitude of pride or over-confidence in oneself.)
 - Consider this: Who won, the tortoise or the hare?
 - Proverbs 16:18,19
- Emotions
 - Emotions can bring a person to their knees or it can raise their fists.
 - Think of the person whose family are not members of the church. When you discuss salvation they mention, "My daddy never believed that and



neither will I." Their emotional state prevents them from hearing the truth.

- Many of the statements listed previously for being against change are emotional.

- Past Accomplishments or Failures

- The success or failure of past actions will determine the progress of the new challenges.
- Remember Paul's words in 2 Timothy 2:15 and Philippians 3:12-16.
- Remember, success is a continual process.
 - "A successful man keeps on looking for work after he has found a job." (*Unknown*)
 - "There are three rules for success: the first: go on. The second, go on. And the third: go on." (*Frank Crane*)
- Remember, failure is an overcoming process:
 - "The only thing in life achieved without effort is failure." (*Unknown*)
 - "Failure is the path of least persistence."

"Success comes in cans and failures come in can'ts."
(Unknown)

You Must Make Progress Every Day

In your life, you must have progress. Your spiritual life should be continual progress.

For a great example, see 2 Peter 1:5-11

Faith → Virtue → Knowledge → Self-control → Perseverance → Godliness → Brotherly kindness → Love

Take special note of verse 8, "For if these are yours and abound..."

- The word abound means "ever increasing."
- The words "ever increasing" bring forth the idea that you are continuing.

Sharing the gospel with others takes progress. Remember, early Christians who were scattered to various parts of the world. Did they stop making progress because they were persecuted? (See Acts 8:4)



Questions about Your Progress:

- What have you done today to help in your spiritual condition?
- What actions have you taken today to share the gospel with one person?
- What progress have you made in adding to your faith?
- What progress have you made in a person you are studying with?

The Word of Progress in the New King James Version

- Philippians 1:25
- 1 Timothy 4:15
- 2 Timothy 3:9

Creating Action #3 - Growth

"Growth is required as a person. If growth stops, so do you."
(Christopher M. Gallagher)

How Important is Growth?

Without growth, you would never be where you are right now. Without the willingness to grow, you would not be involved in this class. Growth can take you many places: whether those places are physical, mental or emotional, growth drives you to the next level. The next level can be yours, if you will grow.

Let me give you a great personal example of growth:

Not too long ago, my sister asked me to help her with her math homework. Being the *great brother* I am, I decided to help. When I looked at the book, it was like trying to read the foreign language instructions while trying to put one of the daughter's toys together. I had no idea what I was examining. I was more confused than a new father trying to change a baby's diaper in the dark. I have not had a math class since High School. I informed my sister there was no way I could figure out what I was doing. She just laughed. (*She continues to laugh*)

I have not grown in my math skills because I have not used them. As a result, I look silly trying to figure out some large math equation. Other areas of your life can be the same. If you do not continually grow, the greatness will fade.

Personal Questions:

- How much have you grown in knowledge over the past year?
 - How many books have you read?
 - Have you taken on a new hobby?
- How have you grown in spiritual knowledge over the past year?
 - Can you still name the books of the Bible?
 - Can you still name the apostles?
 - Are you familiar with Bible words?
- How have you grown in the past month, week, day?
 - What are you doing right now to grow?
 - What have you done today to take your life to the next level?

"My people are destroyed
for a lack of knowledge."
(Hosea 4:6)

What to do?

(1) Decide to grow!

(a) This first step in growth is your decision to grow. No one can grow for you; you must be willing to grow yourself.

(2) Choose activities to help you grow!

(a) Several years ago, I read a statement I have tried to apply to my life in many different areas. The statement was, "If you want to grow, be around others who make you grow." It is a very simple statement with a great amount of truth.

- (b) Choosing activities to help you grow strengthens your mind as you seek to live better. You begin making a choice to do the right thing. Peter, Andrew, James and John all made choices for better activities. (See Matthew 4:18-22)
- (3) Continue to grow!
 - (a) Once you stop growing, you stop! There is no growth plateau; you are growing or you are not. Growth is vital to every aspect of life; from your work to your road to heaven, growth makes you a better. Peter encourages Christians to keep growing. (2 Peter 3:18)

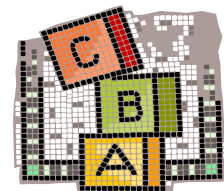
Our Text on Growth:

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

(1 Peter 1:5-11, NKJV)

Peter begins his letter with growth (2 Peter 1:5-11) and ends this letter with growth (2 Peter 3:18). Peter understood growth as a vital part of the Christian life. Without a doubt, Peter was the most outspoken apostle. He walked on the water then doubted Christ. (Matthew 14:22-32) He was the one who said he would stick by Christ's side through thick and thin (Matthew 26:31-35) but he left and denied Christ. (Matthew 26:69-75) Peter is the same man whom Paul confronted in Galatians 2. Peter knew what it was like to be on both sides. Peter knew what it was like to grow. Peter knew he needed to grow and he did. He tells others how to grow and increase their faith.

The building blocks on faith:



Remember to take extra special note of verse 8. Peter says, "If these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." As mentioned earlier, the word abound means to continually increase. Peter tells his readers they need to continue to growth in each of those areas. Peter understands the greatness of continual growth and is instructing the readers in continual growth.

You and I must grow continually. Our virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love must be abounding to be productive in the fullness of the faith.

Personal Work #5

One question: "Have you grown in your spiritual knowledge in the past year?"

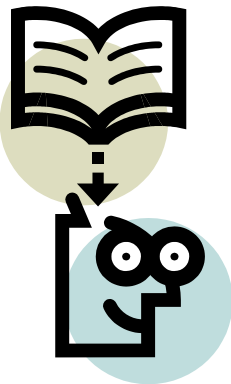
How have you grown in the past 365 days? Maybe your general Bible knowledge has increased, maybe it has not. Maybe you memorized a series of verses, maybe you did not. Maybe you did more service for the kingdom, maybe you did not. Whatever your answer, begin growing now. Do not wait until later to grow, grow now!

The reason I picked knowledge for this question is due to a verse which constantly comes to mind – Hosea 4:6.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

We know the words of God are true, just and something to be obeyed. The children of Israel had a problem with their knowledge or lack of knowledge producing actions toward God. In Acts 7, Stephen relates some of the problems of the children of Israel to the people. The descendants of Hosea 4:6 were the audience to whom Stephen spoke, and still the descendants did not want to hear either. They stoned Stephen for his admonishing words of truth.

When Stephen was stoned, a man held the coats of the executors whose name was Saul. Saul was an honest seeker, but his knowledge was wrong. When Saul was confronted by the true knowledge in Acts 9, he obeyed. (Read all of Acts 9 to see Saul's conversion.) Throughout the remainder of his life (known as Paul then) he grew more and more in his knowledge of Christ. He wrote in Philipians 3:8,



"Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ..."

Paul knew what it was like to lose everything for Christ. One thing I know, the Paul considered the knowledge of Christ as **excellent**. The knowledge of Christ is what provides motivation, encouragement and comfort to our lives and it will bring us to excellence.

Let us think about our first question again, "Have you grown in your spiritual knowledge in the past year?" Consider the question for ten minutes. Give the question time to challenge you.

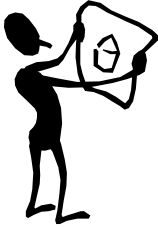
"Have you grown in your spiritual knowledge in the past year?"

"Will you grow in the next 365 days?"

Creating Action #4 - Plan

“When you fail to plan, you plan to fail”
(Unknown)

How important is planning?



The quote above brings a great truth. If you do not plan for greatness, you will never achieve it. It reminds me of the quote, “He who aims at nothing is sure to hit it.” Planning focuses thoughts for the future.

When you begin planning, you start on the road to readiness. You are getting ready to take advantage of every opportunity. Once again, I think of Paul. One of my favorite passages is found in 2 Corinthians 2:12.

“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord...”

Depending on your Bible, you may have a footnote for the word “door.” The footnote give an alternative meaning for “door” as being a “door of opportunity.” Paul was saying, a “door of opportunity” was opened, allowing him to take advantage of a powerful work. Paul was ready for the opportunity because he had prepared himself for every good work. When the door opened, he was ready to walk through.

Personal Questions:

- Are you preparing yourself to take advantage of every opportunity presented?
- Are you prepared to make your life better?
- Are you prepared to make the lives of others better?
 - Your spouse?
 - Your children?
 - Your family?
 - Your neighbors?
 - Your fellow church members?

Suggestions for Future Planning:

- Make God a part of all your plans!
 - Acknowledge God. (Proverbs 3:6)
 - Remember the rich man who forgot God. (Luke 12:16-21)
 - Trust God to meet your needs. (Matthew 6:25-34)
 - God will take care of you. (Luke 12:22-34)
 - For the results of not trusted God, see Psalm 52:7
- Decide to make wise use of your time!
 - Ephesians 5:16
 - The daily time each day (family time, Bible reading/study time, etc.)
- Prepare yourself for opportunities!
 - Time of opportunity (2 Corinthians 2:12)
 - Always be ready to answer (1 Peter 3:15)
- Remember to say, “As the Lord wills.” (James 4:15)
 - As you plan, You have no idea what will happen tomorrow or this week only God knows. (James 4:13-14)
- Plan for the Lord’s return!
 - Only the Father knows when that day will be. (Matthew 24:36)

Remember Matthew 7:24-27!



YOUR DECISIONS TODAY BRING TOMORROW'S JOY

The decision you make today, whether to travel **"The Road to Better Living"** or to stay where you are, will determine what you do and where you go. What will your decision be? There will be some who do nothing and complain. I find the words of Paul in Philippians 2:14 so filling,

"Do all things without complaining and disputing..."

Paul expresses joy through the book of Philippians. Through joy, Paul instructs the Christians not to complain or grumble. The great part is Paul does not stop there, he continued with,

"...that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

(Philippians 2:15, NKJV)

Paul does not want his readers to complain or grumble so they may become children of light. Simply stated, Paul wants them to grow. Paul wants you to grow! God wants you to grow. Christ wants you to grow. Will you grow? Will you become a child of light in our current generation?

My friends, the choice is yours.

- You must find the vision you need to have. *(Hint - that vision is only found in the scriptures)*
- You need to discover your purpose *(Hint - that purpose is only found in the scriptures)*
- You must be willing to work at what it takes to travel "the Road to Better Living."
 - You must be willing to work.
 - You must be willing to show progress.
 - You must be willing to grow.
 - You must be willing to plan.
- You must act!

Will you choose to travel "the Road to Better Living," or will you choose to be left behind?

I hope you will travel the road.

It is my prayer you will seek to be a greater person each day you live and assist others on "the Road to Better Living."

Decide to do it and do it!

Your decision today will bring tomorrow's joy!

Because of Christ,

