

# The Teacher and Their Personal Growth Plan for Life-long Learning

## Key Verses

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.  
(Ephesians 4:15-16)

## Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Understand the need for a personal, long-term growth plan
- Know how to develop a personal, long-term growth plan
- Develop a personal, long-term growth for him or herself

## Key Terms

Know: a competent teacher knows himself and all areas for personal growth

Be: a competent teacher is aware and able to develop and meet needs

Do: a competent teacher plans and works for life-long learning and personal growth

Continuing education – a systematic effort to pursue learning after formal schooling has ended.

Devotion – a time and approach for the human spirit to commune with God

Life-long learning – a plan to continue learning throughout a lifetime.

Meditation – a means of commitment to God in dedication through the Word

Personal Growth – efforts to advance and improve knowledge and skills in all areas of life and work.

Quiet Time – a special time *each day* set aside to meet with God in prayer and Bible reading for personal growth.

Tradition – religious heritage, practices for spiritual growth.

## Introduction

### Why Life-Long Learning?

In most cultures, the early years of life, childhood and adolescence, are spent in formal education. As a person matures, learning becomes more specialized along lines of interest and work skills. Rapid advances in knowledge and technology require constant study to maintain performance. Directed learning in education must extend beyond usual academic goals. Adults plan to continue learning and personal growth. The call for life-long learning is due to the need for knowledge and skills in the workplace. A teacher must plan a life-long learning program to improve work efficiency and keep up-to-date in meeting needs of students. One study (Dolence and Norris, 1995, *Transforming Higher Education: A Vision for Learning in the 21st Century*) estimates that each person needs an equivalent of thirty credit hours of instruction every seven years to keep up-to- date.

Academic learning is only one area in which a Christian teacher must continuously grow. He must also give attention to spiritual, moral, and emotional development. Plans for growth in these areas assure that he will understand the physical and social growth needs of students. This calls for Christian teachers to:

- Devise a “total growth plan” (life-long learning), and
- Choose ways and methods to continue learning in all areas of their lives.

### I. Identify Areas of Growth Potential for Life-long Development

From infancy, a person has potential to grow to maturity in all areas of personality. He grows in body, mind, and spirit. Physical and mental growth is rapid through the early years. Emotional and spiritual growth and social relations soon follow as the individual gains moral understanding and interacts with others.

The life of Jesus, the perfect person, reveals growth principles and areas for continuous growth (Luke 2: 39-52).

- His infancy was observed “according to the Law of the Lord” (v.39).
- The child grew strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and grace of God on Him (v.40).
- His parents celebrated the religious tradition of Passover every year (v.41).
- At age twelve Jesus chose to “be about my Fathers business” (v.49).
- He returned home under the authority of His parents (v.51).
- Jesus increased in wisdom (v.52).
- Jesus increased in stature.

- Jesus increased in favor with God.
- Jesus increased in favor with man.

Two principles include:

1. Spiritual development and religious tradition dominated his life from infancy. As a result:
  - God blessed him with a strong spirit and wisdom.
  - He came to love the annual religious (Passover) celebrations in Jerusalem
  - He discovered His God given mission early in life.
2. All growth and development was under authority. As a result:
  - He was subject to the will of His parents for Him.
  - He grew mentally (in wisdom).
  - He grew physically (in stature).
  - He grew spiritually (in favor with God).
  - He grew socially (in favor with man).

Today individuals are to grow and develop in all these areas throughout their life spans. Paul told us that first comes the natural then that which is spiritual (I Corinthians 15:44-47). For this God puts us under family authority for physical growth and under church authority for spiritual growth.

In Jesus' life, wisdom (mental growth) is noted first. Development of the mind and intellect is part of the soul of man, tied to his will and emotions. These are to be submitted to the authority God provides. With the faculties of the mind, people are able to perceive the world around them and to store knowledge, process information, and make choices. With the will, they are able to commit to keep laws and follow decisions that are profitable to them. Emotions help them determine the correctness and value of choices and preserve their sense of belonging, security, and well being. Individuals cannot be ruled by emotional feelings, nor can they be governed by inflexible will; they need a proper balance. Care of the soul includes time away from stressing mental activities, quiet times for reflection on the will, and emotional healing. Jesus called His disciples to rest (Mark 6:31-32).

### **Jesus grew in stature**

The physical body is provided with senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling) that interact with the world. Under authority the senses develop and allow

the brain to control body activities and direct actions to meet the demands of life. The body is maintained for useful work by discipline of the senses. Wisdom chooses or denies what the senses “desire” for the good of the body. Apostle Paul likened the church to a body with many members (I Corinthians 12:14-27). After being born again, a person is a temple for the Spirit of God. It is to be kept clean, sanctified, and in subjection to the spirit of man and Spirit of God. Body needs are simple: food and water, exercise, rest and recreation, and protection from extreme heat and cold. With body members, they serve their own body, soul, and spirit, and honor God.

## **Jesus Grew in Spirit**

Spiritual awakening and morality develop as a child ages. Spiritual growth emphasizes authority of God and those He places in one’s life. From the model of Jesus, it seems that the spirit increased to dominate all aspects of His growth and development. Finding a mission in life gives focus and direction for all growth and education.

When Bible school students have no mission, it is imperative that teachers help them discover what God intends for their life. Knowing life mission provides direction for study and skill development.

The spirit of man most closely relates to God, who is Spirit (John 4:24).

- With the spirit man directs and reflects mental attitudes and feelings.
- Spirit faculties include ability to choose to rebel or submit to God.
- It is the starting point of redemption.
- A redeemed spirit relates to God in morality, ethics, and holiness.
- A holy individual intuitively perceives the nature and intent of Gods work.
- The spirit of a man brings life to the body and soul and when it departs, all other activities die.
- The spirit is to be in control of a person with body and soul faculties submitted to it.

When a person is born again, he or she comes “in favor with God.” The body is cleansed from sin and the soul freed from guilt of sin. Jesus places His Holy Spirit in men and women to guide and direct growth and development. He places redeemed mankind in the body of Christ for authority. Without regeneration by the Holy Spirit, a person’s growth in any area is limited for he or she has neither guide nor authority. Maximum growth occurs when body and soul are submitted to the authority of one’s spirit, which in turn is submitted to the Holy Spirit.

## Jesus Grew Socially

Social growth, “in favor with man,” develops in community with others. First, in the home one learns to respect the will of parents and their authority. It is seen in Jesus’ relations with the doctors of the law in the Temple. A person quickly relates to church community leaders and teachers. Social development allows us to establish personal relations based on respect, trust, and love. The quality of these relations is professionalism. Bible teaching and Christian living is practiced in a social environment.

### A. The Need for Balanced Growth in All Areas

Roger Koren (*Nurturing the Total Growth Sunday School*) says a teacher cannot afford to become engrossed in one area of development and ignore the others. The individual’s plan for growth must call both for excellence and balance. Every teacher should strive to excel (Ecclesiastes 9:10), keeping in balance the knowing, being, and doing.

- Balance love and dedication to God with their family’s need for love and nurture.
- Balance work in service to the church with service to develop himself.
- Balance spiritual growth with mental growth.
- Balance mental growth with physical growth.
- Balance physical growth with social growth.
- Balance personal private development with public social development.

Excellence means balance, and balance is a body fitly framed together, whether a human body or a church body.

*What you are is God’s gift to you, what you make of yourself is your gift to God.*

### B. Teacher Assessment for Balance

A teacher’s plan for growth should begin with assessment of current standing. In order to assess your status as a growing teacher, respond to the statements in the following quiz.

## Teacher-Building Test<sup>1</sup>

To gain insight to how well we perform, and our strengths and weaknesses, consider statements in five areas.

Give yourself a 5 = perfection, 4 = excellent, 3 = good, 2 = fair, 1 = poor.

### Mental Growth

- I have many interests and am curious about life.
- I understand educational trends and how they influence my students.
- I am a creative and innovative teacher looking for new ways to teach.
- I keep up with current events and read widely (newspaper, books, and magazines).
- The Spirit transforms my mind and what I think about in down times.
- I accept ideas from my students and other faculty members.

### Spiritual Growth

- I enjoy and daily pursue thinking about spiritual things.
- I am a student of the Bible and teach nothing I do not practice.
- I enjoy grappling with difficult concepts in Scripture.
- I know in what areas I am not growing spiritually.
- I submit to God and die to the flesh daily.
- I rely on spiritual gifts and talents in teaching.

### Emotional Growth

- I am enthusiastic and excited about my life and work.
- I am fun to be around.
- I know how to listen and empathize with other people's problems and joys.
- I talk easily with peers and strangers about my relationship with Jesus.
- I accept myself as an adult leader and mentor among my students.
- I am able to admit my weaknesses to myself and others.

### Physical Growth

- I am content with the way God made me.
- I make myself as physically attractive as possible.
- My dress and demeanor reflects my commitment to Jesus, not to the world.
- I eat and exercise regularly to maintain physical fitness of my body.
- I honor my body as the Temple of the Spirit and refuse to defile it.
- I get sufficient rest and recreation to maintain body efficiency.

### Social Growth

- I get along well with my own family members.
- I practice a healthy relationship with my spouse and close friends.
- I nurture my children to respect and obey me.
- I do not have to be the center of attention to enjoy group interaction.
- Jesus Christ is honored in all my social activities.
- I always conduct myself in such a way to be an example to my students.

Add each area; you need to initiate a growth plan for any area less than 18 and a total growth plan when the sum of all areas is less than 90.

*The insight you gain from this exercise is more important than the numeric score.*

<sup>1</sup> Marlene D. LeFever *Creative Teaching Methods*, David C. Cook Publishing Company 1985 [excerpt modified from Bruce Wilkinson, *Almost Every Answer for Practically any Teacher*, Multnomah Pubs. 1991 page 28-29]

### **C. What a Competent Teacher Knows, Is, and Does**

As shown in the above test, balanced continuing education embraces all areas of the spirit, soul, and body. This includes the mind, will, and emotions, as well as body senses and conscience. Since ministry is to people, the competent teacher must also consider the professional interactions in a social community setting, that is, within the church. Understanding what competent teachers need to know, be, and do, enables one to set goals for growth.

Barlow (*Educational Psychology*) defines a competent teacher as one who is able to know, be, and do effective teaching.

A competent teacher:

1. Is familiar with learning theory of how people learn and grow.
2. Exercises mature judgment and knows:
  - How people develop and the relation of age to maturity.
  - Growth processes, differences, styles, and personality of learners.
  - How people learn and process new information.
  - How teaching relates to learning through motivation.
  - How to develop personally and professionally as a teacher and facilitator.
3. Knows the importance of the teacher in guiding the teaching/ learning process.
4. Has self-understanding and is aware of areas where continuing growth is needed.
5. Knows how to develop and maintain sound mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

The adversary, Satan, is a hinderer with many demons to help him. He works through the flesh (Galatians 5:17-21) and blinds the mind (II Corinthians 4:3-4). A teacher must enter courageous spiritual warfare from a sound mind. (II Timothy 1:7)

<b>Exercise 1:</b> Given the above traits of a competent teacher, list some aims and goals for your own life-long learning and personal growth.
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### **D. Aims and Goals for Life-long Learning and Personal Growth**

The teacher's goal must be to grow in all the areas as Jesus (Luke 2:52). The purpose is to grow up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ (Ephesians 4:15). The teacher must ask how one should grow in order to serve God and how to instruct others to grow up into Him.

Apostle Peter commanded believers to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). By adding to faith, virtue and to virtue knowledge, and the knowledge temperance a person can partake of the divine nature (II Peter 1:5-9). A teacher's spiritual growth plan demands that he stretch himself to reach it. If it is noble, consistent with God's will, and he hungers after it then he will apply himself to reach it.

A teacher's goals should include doing and being as well as knowing:

- Helping students change spiritually and develop by the Word of God.
- Aiding people to commit to live for Jesus.
- Learning more effective teaching methods, skills, and techniques.
- Providing a more appealing class environment, which is warm, friendly, and exciting.
- Studying for greater personal knowledge of Scripture as well as the subject matter taught.
- Developing physical health and stamina through proper diet, exercise, and rest.
- Advancing mental health and personal growth by reading, study, and research.
- Increasing skills by writing articles, keeping a journal, presenting training.
- Promoting emotional stability by planned recreation and vacation.
- Acquiring social influence through trust, respect, and love.
- Manifesting spiritual power by growing up into Christ.

Directed growth occurs in all areas and must be in balance between body, the physical flesh, with its senses; the soul with its faculties of mind, will, and emotion; and the spirit, with faculties of communion, conscience, and intuition. The body with its flesh must die daily, the mind must be renewed, and the spirit submitted to the will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

The teacher's continuing education should plan for better service to students. To be a better teacher, Biehler & Snowman (*Psychology Applied to Teaching*, 662] suggest the following aims:

1. Work to be sensitive, capable, and have a caring classroom.
2. Be able to cope with frustrations of working with people.
3. Be mature and able to:
  - Develop self-awareness.
  - Stay alert for new possibilities.
  - Reevaluate total work load and seek help when needed.



- Welcome new experiences and find satisfaction in other areas of life.
- Talk to peers and friends and stimulate group discussions.
- Exercise physically for release of tension.
- Avoid taking out frustration on others but seek help of a mentor.
- Withdraw in extreme cases.
- Evaluate dissatisfactions and listen to student evaluations and suggestions.

## **II. Plans for Continuing Education in Life-long Learning**

### **A. Identify Sources for Continuing Education and Life-long Learning**

Continuing education begins where formal education ends. It is a planned program of systematic study for learning in ministry and service. It may be done in association with the Bible college, or seminary, on or off campus. It can be a mentor guided study in the field or Internet research. It might consist of:

- Attending short-term conferences and workshops
- Enrolling in short courses in classrooms and laboratories
- Evening classes for church people who work during the day
- Classes for workers at college and nonresident students
- Education related to on-the-job work activities

Opportunities for life-long learning and personal growth come through continuing education programs within:

- An institution.
- Certification training.
- Extended study institutes, seminars, and workshops usually held when the regular programs are not.
- Adult education courses.
- In-church courses.
- External studies.

Specialized training may be provided by:

- Schools,
- Employers,
- Government agencies, and

- Nonprofit organizations.

Continuing education programs are learner-driven, and often make use of computer technology and the Internet. National and international networks provide information databases available to learners at any place and any time.

## **B. Areas Teacher Should Focus on in Continuing Education**

In addition to general knowledge, a teacher's personal plan for growth must consider future changes affecting the teaching learning process. Barlow (*Educational Psychology; The Teaching Learning Process*, 487) notes three trends manifest today.

**1. Trend to technology.** This means use of computers for teaching and learning, electronic calculators, fiber optics, information processing systems, and Internet research programs. Delivery in the classroom is by personal media such as CD and DVD run from laptop computers. To use these systems calls for skill and intuition that clearly favors the intuitive, visual, and kinesthetic learner.

**2. Information age.** A teacher is influenced by changes in the value system and in the way we think in a pluralistic multicultural society. The information age in the twenty-first century<sup>2</sup> :

- Is powered by the personal computer.
- Enables students to replace factual knowledge with and mental effort to magnify capability (instead of knowing facts student know how and where to find facts).
- Provides information that cannot be depleted, like natural resources.
- Provide information management education as the driving force in society.

**3. Demographic shifts.** Worldwide access of citizens of any country to work and study in other countries results in population shifts. Numbers of ethnic minorities, temporary residents, and aliens has increased in developed countries. Also the age structure of citizens has shifted. Abortion has deprived world societies of millions of children and potential workers. Thousands of middle-aged people are dying of diseases such as AIDS. In no case can any educational program afford to waste human resources.

A teacher's growth plan should reflect concern for the future. Can a population deal with its problems, use of human and natural resources and also rapid changes that threaten them? Technological solutions alone will not be adequate, there needs to be changes in human thinking and behavior.

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur J. Lewis Lewis, "Education for the Twenty First Century," *Educational Leadership* 41:9-10. 1983

An urgent appeal for man's spiritual redemption is increasing. Through life-long learning, teachers can prepare themselves to help with solutions and adapt students to meet the future. A teacher must know how to grow in his or her own spirit in relation to the Holy Spirit.

### **C. Ten Commands for the Teacher Growth**

In summing up preparation for continuing education, ten commandments are offered to help a Christian teacher with personal development to know, be, and do. (Adapted from Barlow *Educational Psychology; The Teaching Learning Process*, 477)

1. Thou shalt be clear that the God of the Bible is the ultimate reality; and have no other gods before Him.
2. Thou shalt meditate constantly upon the fact that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life.
3. Thou shalt prepare thyself to be academically excellent in your field of knowledge.
4. Thou shalt understand that time, talent, money, and energy are not to be wasted, but are to be managed as a matter of good stewardship
5. Thou shalt commit thy way daily unto the Lord, before engaging your students in the learning process.
6. Thou shalt look upon thy students with respect as persons made in the image of God, even though all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
7. Thou shalt teach with genuine joy, and discipline with genuine love, that your students may grow in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man.
8. Thou shalt remember that the human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and treat it accordingly; that thy mind is to be yielded to the mind of Christ; that thy spirit is to be in submission to the Holy Spirit.
9. Thou shalt commit thyself to life-long personal and professional development, as a teacher called of God.
10. Thou shalt undergird thy calling with prayer, the reading of God's word, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

### III. Plans for Personal Growth

#### A. Plan for Growth: Spiritual Maturity

The spiritual goal of a personal growth plan in continuing education is to reach spiritual maturity and have Jesus Christ formed in us (Galatians 4:19). When spiritually mature the disciple is as his master (Luke 6:40) and all areas of life, whether mental, physical, or emotional are under Spirit control. Concepts of maturation embrace physical, mental, and social as well as spiritual areas.

A growth plan implies direction, and direction requires goals. Growth is called for in Ephesians 4:11-16. Philippians 3 encourages pressing on to maturity as a gift and goal. Les Steele (*Spiritual Maturity in Evangelical Dictionary of Education*, Michael J. Anthony, editor, 659) gives the following spiritual goals:

- To conform to the image of Christ, through grace to sanctification.
- To grow in holiness (I Peter 1:15-16).
- To grow in loving God with all being, heart, mind, and soul (Matthew 22:37-39).
- To sacrifice and transform with concrete ethical applications for daily life (Romans 12)
- To prefer others, true neighbor love.
- To exhibit constantly virtuous character; fruit produced in you by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Maturity is manifest as change in what a teacher knows, is, and does. Mature behavior is always Christlike. Teacher life style must be marked by peace and simplicity, not “conformed” by the world with its covetousness, lust, prejudice, and hatred.

Teacher maturity is characterized by a life-long development in personal and social holiness.

- Maturity requires private devotional time of reflection, prayer, meditation and communion.
- Scripture reading is essential to faith development.
- Worship of God in community is central and essential to growth.
- Personal piety (goodness, faithfulness, godliness) acts accompany acts of social piety.
- Neighbor love is manifest in specific actions.

Maturity in Christ occurs in a sequence of stages.

- After redemption, to restore the image of God in man, he must grow in godliness.
- Be perfect, first in love for God and love of God (Romans 5:5).
- Christian growth is a life-long journey, using precepts from psychology and human growth and development, but applying Bible truth.
- A teacher must grow up in Christ and accept greater responsibility than a child.
- Spiritual maturity integrates the cognitive (means thinking and knowing), physical, emotional, and social areas of a teacher's life.
- Developing a mature faith focuses fully on God.
- Maturity moves beyond a preoccupation with the self to do the will of God.

## **B. Plan for growth: professionalism and relations**

Most teachers know the need to constantly upgrade themselves professionally to stay abreast of their teaching responsibility. Taking courses, study, and attending meetings must result in personal development and not in mere accumulation of credits or courses. What happens within the teacher and how it is used in teaching is important to both personal and professional relationships.

In the school, teachers should evaluate and think through the main areas of their relationships to:

1. **Students.** Successful teachers follow a planned schedule in a structured environment and make demands of the students.
  - Materials are less important than pupils.
  - A teacher must spend more time with the class as a whole than with individuals.
  - Individuals are urged to work at their best performance and more should be required of the more able students.
2. **Other faculty and staff.** This doesn't always mean agreement but it does mean:
  - Respect for them
  - Positive, face to face ways to resolve differences in private
  - Being willing to compromise without violating moral principles
  - Promoting unity
  - Being encouraging and helpful

3. **Administration.** Teachers must maintain loyalty to the school and to their administrator to set a standard for students. Honest disagreements and conflict should be voiced and resolved in private before appealing to higher authorities.
4. **Church members.** Students are usually members of the church and often their family attends the church. Plan to deal with church members.
5. **The community.** Schools often belong to the community and viewed with satisfaction and respect when students learn and are changed for the better.

In relating to professional organizations, teachers should be able to synthesize and utilize information without compromising doctrine, beliefs, or integrity. Their presence will bring a higher standard to professional training seminars and workshops. In a secular society and education, teachers may contend with individuals and groups holding widely different points of view. They are not always free to speak Bible truth and convictions but must listen and tolerate views of others.

In no case should personal development be dominated by:

- Social experience founded on humanism contrary to Bible truth.
- Any practice that denies God-conscious mental and behavioral discipline.
- Curriculum that prescribes what is to be learned without regard for Bible demands.
- Any philosophy that Christianity is not essential to and in education.
- Cultural pluralism that weakens common values and focuses teacher attention on purposes other than holistic student development.

### **C. Plan for Growth: Four Questions on Spirituality**

All personal growth plans for the teacher begins with an unshakable spiritual foundation. The questions on spirituality are answered from Cully (*Harper's Encyclopedia of Religious Education*, 609).

#### **1. What promotes a teacher being spiritual?**

Being spiritual is more easily described than defined. Spirituality relates to the inner person and his or her interaction with God. Spiritual growth is more readily continued among people who practice religious tradition. From antiquity, Jews placed a high value on a tradition of annual religious festivals combined with morning and evening sacrifices. Their actions included periodic paying tithes and giving offerings.

Early Christians practiced community meetings, home meetings, and spiritual discipline as they shared their gospel and their bread house to house (Acts 2:46).

## **2. How can spirituality be developed?**

Spirituality is developed through knowledge and imitation of godly, devoted people. Every child should know and love the Bible stories of individuals such as Abraham, Moses, Esther, David, Daniel, John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, Paul, and others. The events in the life of great men provide a wealth of understanding of what a teacher should do to be acceptable to God.

## **3. What is the foundation for spiritual development?**

Man is born a spiritual being. A foundation for spirituality is nurtured from infancy. First, infants learn trust from a caring adult (parents). Through this faith they come to trust God. Individuals who develop self-esteem and initiative in the family readily make faith commitments as children. A sense of personal identity gained during adolescence enables teens to understand intimacy and closeness to God and to love other people.

## **4. How is spirituality accomplished in adults?**

Adults actively pursue and practice planned activities that promote spiritual growth. It occurs in people who have a spiritual tradition of learning and practice. Spiritual awareness is cultivated in regularly planned worship, meditation, prayer, and Bible reading. Growth comes through openness and submission to the Holy Spirit. The believer's life is a quest and a pilgrimage to become Christ-like. Abraham, Moses, and even Paul went out, not knowing where the journey would end but trusting the promises of God.

# **IV. Routes to Personal Growth Through Continuing Education**

## **A. Grow in a Community of Believers**

A believer's route to spiritual growth may be actions practiced in:

- Assembly with others
- Small groups
- Family
- Private

Believers are commanded “to forsake not the assembling of yourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). The assembly or community of faith is a worshipping church congregation that allows:

- A teacher to seek spiritual gifts and practice compassion and edification
- Growth through interactions within the community, its worship, and personal expressions of devotion
- Examination and testing of Bible doctrines
- Traditions for growth and ways to bring about personal change for every age

**The worship community (church) also promotes spiritual growth through:**

1. Study, understanding, and applying Scripture, the key source of information on change.
  - Scripture calls for believer transformation as he participates in the Bible drama.
  - Scripture lets him identify with men and women of the ages who obeyed the call to spiritual life.
2. Practicing prayer in all its forms:
  - Prayers of thanksgiving, exhortation, edification, and adoration.
  - How to rebuke the enemy in Jesus Name.
  - How to plead the blood of Jesus in times of crisis and need.
  - To intercede for the unsaved, infirm, and needy,
  - To commit himself to obey the will of God.
  - To rely on Spirit when making intercession (Romans 8:26).

Collections of prayers written in moments of duress, as well as victory have endured for centuries and deepen the spiritual life. Prayer has a place of highest priority in the Bible (533 times the word is mentioned). Prayer must be a high priority in the life of all believers, especially those who teach.

- The disciples asked Jesus, “teach us to pray,” not merely how to pray (Luke 11:1).
- The Bible commands prayer: “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6).
- “Pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17).
- Pray in a secret place and “your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:6).



- “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24) (Also see John 15:7; Philippians 4: 19).

Every great revival had its beginning with prayer by saints of God. When God chooses to do something big in the earth, He calls His people to prayer. Prayer is for God’s children not for the unbeliever, unless he or she seeks to repent.

3. Use Psalms and hymns to:

- Offer words for deep human emotions of longing, despair, and hope.
- Recognize our human helplessness
- Voice a protest against evil, injustice.
- Offer thanksgiving for deliverance.
- Extol the mighty acts of God and in faith and hope.
- Call for God’s action on the half of believers.

3. Celebrate sacraments, taking of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper helps believers to:

- Examine themselves regarding the faith
- Remember Jesus’ words and His ultimate sacrifice
- Renew and strengthen spiritual commitment to love and unity through forgiveness and tolerance of individuals who differ
- Purify their life calls by dying to and separation from the things of the secular world
- Dedicate themselves in service to God (I John 2:15)

## **B. Grow in Small Group Interactions**

A small group offers an intimate route to personal growth in the following ways:

- Developing social skills in personal relations
- Individual ministry though intercessory prayer, fasting, sharing and outreach
- Encouraging testimonies and shared understanding of biblical truth in group meditation
- In the shelter of small group intimacy, a growing teacher can seek and begin to practice the use of spiritual gifts and talents

## **C. Grow with a mentor**

Submission to a spiritual guide calls for complete confidence and trust. A guide is a person who is deeply aware of the Spirit’s will for another person. He also grasps

the capacity and potential for that person's life. The mentor must study and be aware of any spiritual gifts and talents if he is to be an able guide. The interaction calls for regular meetings done with total honesty to plan and review events. Meetings allow time to seek help in crisis moments, and obtain counsel for making specific decisions. Together they enter into prayer, fasting, intercession, study, and other dimensions of developing spirituality. There must be unreserved openness and mutual accountability between the director and the directed.

Three types of mentoring relationships are profitable for a teacher to have:

1. An elder for guidance and wisdom in decision making
2. A peer for correction and reproof
3. A youth for instruction and modeling

#### **D. Grow Through Religious Retreats**

Military leaders often withdraw following a battle for the purpose of regrouping and planning strategy before going back into battle. Jesus called a retreat for His disciples (Mark 6:31). A retreat for spiritual renewal should be:

- For two to three days duration
- At a place away from routine schedules where peace and quiet will not be interrupted
- Guided by a leader who gives the purpose, and offers instruction and counsel
- Planned with time for group worship, singing, prayer, and testimonials
- Scheduled with free time for private rest, meditation, reading, prayer, and reflection on one's spiritual quests and priorities

#### **E. Grow Through Observing Planned Annual Events**

The teacher's growth plan should include religious activities throughout a calendar year (liturgical or church year). The Bible shows that the ancient Jews practiced several holidays including: a weekly Shabbat for rest on the seventh day; Passover, marking the date of deliverance from Egypt; Pentecost, fifty days after Passover; Feast of Booths, harvest celebration; and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) when the High Priest entered the Holiest of Holies. These events called for solemnity and celebration with feasts and festivals according to a calendar given by Jehovah.

Christians, in addition to meeting the first day of the week (Sunday) for worship and praise, should celebrate special events. Exciting celebrations encourage believers

to follow closely in the steps of Christ and the apostles on a monthly and annual basis. Participation in the sacraments and holy days reminds worshipers of God's plan for redemption.

## **F. Grow Through Personal Devotions**

No personal growth plan would be complete or successful without personal devotion. Personal devotion includes a time for Bible reading and study, prayer, meditation, and reflection. A special meditation occurs when one puts himself into a Bible story or event and reflects on how he should respond.

Devotions help teachers decide a course of action before being faced with unseen temptations and challenges. When tempted with sin, Joseph chose to flee. When tested with compromise, Daniel negotiated an acceptable alternative. Their actions suggest commitment to a firm resolve made early in life.

Personal devotions helps a teacher renew strength, courage, and faith. By reflection, his progress can be evaluated and gauged. Intentions are made pure, and convictions deepened for the work of the ministry during devotion time.

Teachers need to practice daily a devotional life of study to know and feel, meditate, and apply the wisdom of the Bible. Personal devotions are often done in a quiet time with God, a time of great benefit when we, like Jesus withdraw for communion with the Father.

The following concepts on devotional Bible study from *The Teacher's Devotional Life*<sup>3</sup> offers ideas on how teachers can practice personal devotional Bible study.

- Set apart a time daily to schedule your Bible study. Don't rush. In learning, the study is your aim.
- Dedicate a special place, a table, desk, or a corner in the home or office, to your cause. Keep books, supplies, and resources at that site.
- Write in a notebook any questions, reflections, impressions, and discoveries you make.
- Pray before each study period. Pray for cleansing from sin and filling with Holy Ghost.
- Pray for guidance, and for insight, remember the carnal mind is enmity and cannot understand God (I Corinthians 2:10-3:4).

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<sup>3</sup> *The Teacher's Devotional Life*. Sidney L. Poe Lesson 9 in Global Sunday School Training Manual, General Sunday School Division UPCI, 2004.

Study the Word with specific aims in mind, allowing it to fill your life (Proverbs 2:1-5; Acts 17:11).

- To transform believers into the image of Christ.
- To prepare the mind and organize efforts for specific ministerial work.
- Study for general knowledge; research to discover truth equips a teacher for his work.
- Studying the Word inspires action to do something.

Bob Gordon (*The Foundations of Christian Living*, 1988), from which the following points are taken, recommends a dedicated daily quiet time to pursue God and the spiritual life. A quiet time is a regular systematic time to study, meditate, and commune with God. The quiet time is more effective when teachers:

- Meet God alone in prayer and open reflection.
- Have no interruptions (Matthew 6:6; Mark 1:35; Matthew 14:23).
- Use a definite time built into the activities each day (Daniel 6:10).
- Give God their best “prime” time and wait for God to speak to them.
- Realize quality time with God is more important than duration.
- Practice regular fellowship or communion to know God and have a relationship with Him.
- Express one’s love for and commitment to God
- Seek and receive direction and guidance from the word of God
- Become equipped for the day they receive strength and resources to do His will
- Are encouraged, renewed, and strengthened through the process of correction, rebuke, and instruction in righteousness (I Timothy 3:16).

The quiet time alone with God allows teachers to:

- Speak to God in prayer.
- Listen for His response.
- Read the Bible.
- Meditate on truth and values. (See Psalm 119: 105).

## Conclusion

- A. Growth occurs in all areas, spirit, soul, and body under guidance of the Holy Spirit given at the new birth. Every teacher needs a definite plan to grow. Submission to the Holy Spirit brings the flesh, mind, and human spirit under the control of the Spirit. Progress is both divine and human. Teachers must apply themselves to study, devotion, and spiritual exercises. Healthy spiritual growth occurs in company with believers. Religious exercises and gifts can be experienced for edification as the group yields to the Holy Spirit leading.
- B. Spirituality is the immediate result of Spirit control. Carnal characteristics, those controlled by the flesh (Romans 8:1-13, I Corinthians 3:1-4; Galatians 5:19-21) are out. In are characteristics controlled by the Spirit (Romans 8:4, 12; I Corinthians 2:15-16; Galatians 5:16-18, 22-23). Spirituality is the dynamic relation to the Spirit that enables growth and service (Galatians 5:25-6:10).
- C. The Holy Spirit produces growth. When believers walk according to the Word, they will grow in grace and knowledge of Christ (II Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 1:17-19; I Peter 2:1-2; II Peter 3:18). Grace, in turn, leads to better understanding and expanded ability to learn from the Spirit's direction.
- D. The Holy Spirit brings maturity. Mature teachers are properly adjusted to life's relationships, duties, and demands, with proper addition and development of character. Spirituality may be gained in an instant, but maturity requires time. It proceeds according to the Spirit's purpose for us as we allow the Spirit to plan and encourage teaching.
- E. The Holy Spirit produces effective ministry. The Spirit has given gifts and encourages development of the gifts to be more effective in service (I Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:12; I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6). The Spirit prompts edification (I Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 2:10; 4:12) and cultivates personalities and skills (II Timothy 3:16-17). All teaching should involve training the entire person in Scripture and practical matters to evangelize and to edify. The Spirit creates awareness of need, promotes desire to know truth, and directs learning.
- F. The Holy Spirit assures the right relationship to Jesus Christ required for spiritual life.
  - One must be filled with the Holy Ghost, as part of the new birth experience. Without Christ there will be no spiritual life (John 1:12-13, 3:36). A right relationship assures one of being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Under Spirit control, teachers honor Christ (John 15:1-5; Galatians 5:16-17; 5:25-6:10).

Their submission to God assures obedience to three basic commands:

1. Do not resist the Spirit flow (I Thessalonians 5:19).
  2. Do not grieve the Spirit with unconfessed sin (Ephesians 4:30).
  3. Walk in the Spirit, depending on His power and direction for effective life in service (Galatians 5:16, 25).
- Teaching is enhanced by spiritual gifts. Not all teachers are equally effective but the gift of teaching allows some to excel. Gifted teachers have ability to explain and apply truth and make the Word of God personal. The gift of teaching rates first in importance after the gifts of apostles and prophets (I Corinthians 12:28; 13:8-10; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5-6). The gift of teaching may be improved in quality by growth, training, and exercise, by stirring it up and keeping it going (I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6).

### **Suggested Class Discussion**

1. What should a competent teacher know and be able to do.
2. Define continuing education and how can it be achieved by faculty in your school.
3. Characterize an emotionally mature teacher.
4. How does Bible examples help one mature spiritually?
5. Describe an ideal personal devotion quiet time.

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# The Teacher and Their Personal Growth Plan for Life-long Learning

## Lesson in Review

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nation: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is a personal growth plan necessary? Defend your answer

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2. What areas of growth should the plan include?

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3. How does one implement a personal growth plan?

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4. Explain Luke 2:52. How is the life of Jesus a pattern for personal growth?

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5. Have you developed your personal growth plan? If yes, have you implemented it? If not, why not?

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6. What changes have you noticed in yourself since you started following your personal growth plan?

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7. List ten (10) things to consider in developing a personal growth plan.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_
- F. \_\_\_\_\_
- G. \_\_\_\_\_
- H. \_\_\_\_\_
- I. \_\_\_\_\_
- J. \_\_\_\_\_