**Growing Spiritually While Isolated from our Pastor and Church Community**

With churches closed and people not allowed to meet, many of us are struggling with our spiritual growth, especially those of us who rely heavily on the church, the pastor, and our Christian brothers and sisters for spiritual support.

***So, how can we continue to grow spiritually when we are isolated from our Christian brothers and sisters and cannot go to church?***

Fortunately, our Heavenly Father has given us the Bible to guide us on how to live, no matter what our circumstances are.

All teachers, coaches, and professors know that if we desire to grow in a certain area, we need to **spend time** focusing on that area. Fortunately, many of us now have extra time on our hands, and should dedicate a significant amount of our extra time to spend with God.

How, you may ask? Let’s look to the Bible, and we’ll find 3 key ways to grow spiritually.

1. **Spend TIME in prayer**

Mark 1:35 gives us a great example of how Jesus stayed connected to His Father. It says, *‘Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.’*

This is one of many verses showing Jesus’ dedication to prayer! Clearly, **prayer** is a key component in growing in our relationship to God. Taking time to talk with our Heavenly Father, thanking Him for all of His blessings in our life, sharing our concerns, struggles, and worries with Him, and also praying for others and their families is a vital part of our spiritual growth. The more you spend time with someone, the better you get to know them. So, spend time with God through prayer.

**2. Spend TIME Reading, Studying, and Memorising God’s Word.**

Another good practice is to **read, study, and memorise scripture**. This is clearly encouraged throughout the Psalms. Psalm 119:9 says, *‘How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.’*

And Psalm 1:1-3 mirrors this saying, ‘*Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.’*

If you desire to live according to God’s ways and produce fruit, you need to know what God’s ways are. The best way to do this is to read and memorise God’s word.

Maybe reading the Bible is something new to you and you are not sure where to start. You may wish to call your Pastor and ask for some suggestions, or, an easy way to begin is to start reading through one of the Gospels, like Luke or John. As you read, continue to ask God to reveal to you what He wants you to learn from that passage. Once that book is completed, move on to another book. Some other favourites are the Psalms and Proverbs as well.

Each week, pick a verse that stands out to you and memorise it that week. You will find that as you fill your mind with God’s truth, then God’s truth will guide you as you are faced with life decisions.

As Psalm 119:105 reminds us, ‘*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.’* If you wish to grow spiritually, then spend time reading, studying, and memorising God’s word!

**3. Spend TIME serving others**

A third and most important way to grow spiritually is putting our faith into action. Taking time to **serve others** builds our faith and grows us into mature Christians. Ephesians 2:10 makes it clear: *‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’*

So, why would God create us to do good works? Ephesians 4:11-15 thoroughly explains why:

*‘So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,* ***to equip his people for works of service****, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and* ***become mature****, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.’*

Now, let us ask ourselves, ‘What are some practical ways we can serve others and encourage them to grow spiritually as well?

**Our family** is a good place to start. A few suggestions might be:

* + Help our spouse or children with some of the work around the house.
  + Encourage our family to read the Bible together.
  + Memorise scripture as a family. Make it a fun game or competition.
  + Sing songs together as a family.
  + Lead a family church service.

**Our Church Community** also needs encouragement.

* WhatsApp groups are a great way to keep connected. Set up a WhatsApp group and agree to read specific passages of scripture each day. Chat about what you hear God saying through His word. In this way, you can have a virtual Bible study with others from your church community.
* Call and pray with each other over the phone.
* Provide meals or collect food for the elderly who cannot get out and shop for themselves.
* Challenge each other and encourage each other to memorise passages of scripture.
* Continue to give your Tithes and Offerings in order tto meet your pastors needs.

**Our Community also has many needs.**

* Go to the store for the elderly so they don’t have to go to the store.
* Help your neighbour plant and/or harvest their garden.
* Call and text those who may be lonely or unable to care for themselves.
* Pray with people over the phone or through WhatsApp.
* Share TRUTH with others.

In closing, as we walk through this time of lockdowns, social isolation, and uncertainty, let us take advantage of the **TIME** we have to grow closer to our heavenly Father through prayer and fasting, reading, studying, and memorising scripture, and by serving others.