



The Laying Foundations (Phase II) materials is divided into 3 series: 1) Knowing God, 2) Understanding People and 3) Growing Spiritually. Inside you will find a Pocket Principle excerpt from Growing Spiritually, as well as the Table of Contents of all of the Pocket Principles.

Excerpt from Pocket Principle Lesson #10 (Growing Spiritually)

Man's Role in Spiritual Growth

"God, make me good, but not yet." - St. Augustine

The quote above attributed to one of the early church fathers, while perhaps tongue in cheek, contains a significant element of truth. Our goodness (growth in holiness) depends on God, but it also depends on us. God will not make us good until we are ready and willing to partner with Him in the process.

We have focused previously on God's role in our spiritual growth and meditated on the magnificent resources available to us. Now, we turn our attention to the flip side of the equation and focus on what is expected of us. The truth is that the believer plays a significant role in his own spiritual growth.

Consider, for example, the building of a garden shed. You may think about what you want the shed to look like, and you may draft plans for the structure. You may even secure all the necessary tools and materials to build the shed. However, at some point you have to actually get to work—to saw boards and hammer nails or the shed will never get built. Successful completion doesn't depend on your grand dreams or your good intentions. It comes about only through hard work. So it is with the Christian life. God has placed everything we need for growth at our disposal but, until we

actually start to use what we have been given, we will not make progress.

Paul wrote to his young charge Timothy that he should train himself to be godly (1 Timothy 4:7). Paul uses an athletic analogy to convey to Timothy that effort will be involved. The Olympic athlete dedicates himself to countless hours of rigorous training, all the while refraining from otherwise acceptable enjoyments to maintain discipline, all for the sake of achieving his goal.

So, too, the follower of Christ must engage in certain activities and refrain from others in order to achieve the goal of increasing Christlikeness.

A word of caution as we delve into this topic.

The Christian life is a marathon rather than a sprint. It takes time to develop the endurance necessary to run a marathon. It doesn't happen overnight. Some believers hear of great Christian saints who read many chapters of the Bible or pray for several hours each day. Inspired by their example and determined to imitate their dedication, they try to maintain the same habits. Rare is the person who can immediately achieve that level of

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discipline. Most of us never do.
And that's okay. As we will see
below, God does call us to study His
Word and to pray. But it is far better
to start slowly and develop
consistent habits than it is to try to
do too much too soon and give up
discouraged and disillusioned.

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