

Growing by the word and prayer

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Date: 13 January 2013

Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] We started last week looking at the subject of living and growing as a Christian.! It's an important subject because we need to live as Christians. We don't want to die and wither and drift.

We need to live and we also ought to want to grow as Christians, to develop, to progress.

And last time we've done a little plant there in a plant pot because we looked at the soil in which Christianity grows and the Bible says that Christians are rooted and that word should say foundationed or rooted, grounded in Jesus Christ.

And last time we looked in a little bit of depth at how you come to be a Christian, you receive Jesus Christ as Lord and the fact that you then grow as a Christian rooted and grounded in Him, in the same soil that you planted originally.

And what I thought we could look at just now is living and growing via the word of God or the word of Christ, not just any old words, but via the word of God and prayer.

[1 : 29] So there's two things to think about this morning. We live and grow, do we? By the word of God and prayer. And rather unusually, I'm going to take my text from Reverend Andy Christofides, who is a minister in South Wales.

St. Mellon's, funny name, isn't it? Anyway, don't go down that route. And he said, I remember him saying this in a talk, he said, I have got the secret of how you can live a Christian life that is full and rich and strong and how you can be effective in ministry.

And he built it all up and so we were wondering what he was going to say. And he said, it's this, it's read your Bible, pray every day. And he sang it, read your Bible, pray every day, pray every day, pray every day.

Read your Bible, something like that, you see. It's very simple. Is it actually a song? Yeah, okay, right. Well, I thought he made it up. So I won't give him the credit next time.

But I'd like to think about that. It's just a simple thing. Was he right? Is the song right? How, and why is that the case?

[2 : 54] And how can we put it into practice? Don't think I'm going to cover all of those things. But at least let's have a think about this. This is the text, read your Bible, pray every day.

That's what we're thinking about. Now, does, does, regardless of what Candy Christophides says, what does Jesus say?

And there is this text that we began with right at the beginning. I will find it in my Bible and read it to you. Because I don't always write it down on the screen with complete accuracy.

And if you want to, you could find it in your Bible. John 15, verse 7. This is the bit where Jesus is talking about being the vine and the branches. And he says, as part of what he says, If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves, or being, or as befits, my disciples.

[4 : 12] And you have to say that in this quote from Jesus, it's very, very much like what Andy Christophides said. He does say, if you remain in me.

So the importance, not of a technique, not of a ritual, but basically of Jesus Christ. He's saying, Do you remain in me?

So that links with what we were thinking last time, doesn't it? You remain in me. But he does link with words. And my words remain in you. Are my words in you?

Are they staying in you? And then he does link it to prayer. He says, If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

So he talks about prayer. And then he also links it with the Father's glory, and the fruitfulness of being a disciple. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, thus being, or showing

yourselves to be, my disciples.

[5 : 16] So that really says the same thing, doesn't it? So I pause to point out, that being a Christian, is not just a sort of, ours add on, to a life which is, just the same as everybody else's.

Jesus has this very radical view, what it is to be a Christian. It's being in Christ. If you remain in me. And it links to the word of God, and it links to prayer, and it links to the Father's glory, and that it's to do with bearing fruit, and being disciples.

So, that starts us off. Now, the next thing I'd like to do, is consider a couple of objections, because if you've thought about it, you might have thought, well, actually, I've tried this, and I've got some objections.

Number one, reading the Bible daily, is really heading towards, legalism, and a sort of, slavery. Reading the Bible daily, is heading into, legalism, and slavery. It's interesting to try and, define legalism, because there is, of course, such a thing as obedience.

[6 : 41] So, just being told to do something, doesn't make it legalism. Jesus commanded us, to love one another. That's not legalism. But legalism tends to have the idea, of something external, something that you, you do to earn favour, or something like that.

So, I've got a couple of answers to it. Number one, reading the Bible daily, daily, which is what, Andy Christofides was talking about, is actually a relatively, modern, idea.

Because, people haven't had Bibles, haven't had their own Bibles, for, well, when, when did, when was printing? I remember, I remember looking this up, but I don't remember, what the answer was. When did William Caxton, start printing? 15, something or other? 16th century. So, the idea of, actually being able to afford a Bible, or have a Bible, has only been a possibility, in the last, however many, what's that, 400 years?

If you consider that, 2,000 years, last fifth, of, the Christian era. So, if you, if you talk about, personal Bible reading, as such, that's a relatively, modern, idea.

[7 : 57] But I want to say that, meditating on God's word, more general, way of looking at it, is as old, as faith, itself. So, let me tell you about, Abraham.

I'm going to read you from, Genesis chapter 12, if you, would like to look it up, at the same time, you are more than welcome, to do so. Genesis, I'm sorry, Abraham, is the model, for the Christian. I know he's in the Old Testament, but he's held up to us, as being, the father of faith. He shows us, what it's all about. And, Abraham's story, gets into gear, with these, sentences, these verses, Genesis 12, the Lord had said to Abraham, leave your country, your people, and your father's household, go to the land I will show you, I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing, I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse, and all the peoples on earth, will be blessed through you, so Abraham left, as the Lord had told him.

That's the way the story of Abraham works, and as I say, it is a model for the spiritual life, it is a model for faith, and it is basically, a response, to God's words.

How did, what made Abraham, any different from anybody else? Well, it really comes down to this, God, spoke, to him.

[9 : 41] God, promised, things, to him. God, told him, to do things. That is all, to do with words.

You might, well, I'll come to another objection later, but Abraham, lived, the Christian life, or the spiritual life, by, the words of God.

That's what he did. Calvin, one of the old commentators, on this, says that, at some points in his life, Abraham had nothing, but the naked word of God, to hang on to.

Everything seemed to be going wrong, but all he had, was what, God, had, said. So, reading the Bible daily, is not necessarily, relatively modern, but hanging on to God's word, daily, is as old as, at least as old as Abraham.

Let me give you another example. Joshua. So I'll read from Joshua, chapter one, and how, was Joshua, to live, the spiritual life, or indeed, to serve, as a leader.

[10 : 57] And, I am going to read from Joshua, chapter one, from verse five, where it says, no one will be able to stand, up against you, all the days of your life, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you, I will never leave you, nor forsake you, be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people, to inherit the land, I swore to their forefathers, to give them, be strong and very courageous, be careful, to obey all the law, my servant Moses gave you, do not turn from it, to the right, or to the left, that you may be successful, wherever you go, do not let this book of the law, depart from your

mouth, meditate on it day and night, so that you will be careful, to do, everything written in it, then you will be prosperous, and successful, have I not commanded you, be strong and courageous, do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God, will be with you, wherever you go, and that's, pretty much the, sets the tone, for the spiritual life of Joshua, and I want to say,

Joshua was an achiever, through Joshua, the promises of God were fulfilled, the purposes of God went forward, and the people of Israel, entered, entered into the promised land, and what is, what is he told about this?

Well for a start, he's told stuff, the thing, that God, does to him, to get him going, in his ministry, is, to, speak to him, it's interesting, isn't it, God doesn't, we're not told God, put his hand on Joshua, although he could have done that, it doesn't say God, doesn't say God gave him a vision, although there are visions in the Bible, what it does say, is he spoke, to, Joshua, he was an achiever, and he's told, in these words, that he will be successful, and prosperous, via, meditating, on, God's word, verse 8, do not let this book of the Lord, depart from your mouth, meditate on it, day and night, so, think about it, talk about it, and do it, obedience, do not turn, to the right, or to the left, where does it say that, it says, be careful to obey, verse 7, the law my servant Moses gave you, do not turn, from it to the right, or to the left, that you may be successful, wherever you go, so, the principle is clear, isn't it, certainly for Joshua, what's going to make him, a successful achiever, it is, the word of God, which he thinks about, talks about, and obeys, not turning to the left, or the right, that's, that's how, now you might say, well it's different, it's different in the New Testament, well you might say that, but it was certainly that way, for Joshua, he was to take, to heart, the word of God, now as I say, he didn't read the Bible, every day, well he might have had a copy, but most people wouldn't, but he did, was to think about it, to have it, in his life, and in his heart, well, as objection number one, objection number two, whoops, no, answer number two, answer number two, so the, the objection was, that it's, makes us into slaves, and my answer is, that words, thinking about the words of God, meditating on the words of God, does not, make us slaves, but is the proper activity, of sons, now you know in the Bible, that these two things, are put as opposites, you could be a slave, which we're not supposed to be, we're supposed to be sons, it's a different way, of relating to God, we're not slaves, full of fear, and anxiety, and insecurity, we're supposed to be sons, who are secure, who are, in a relationship of love, and willing obedience, and closeness, and I'm saying that, words, are, part of, our sonship,

I say sonship, because that's, the way that, scripture often speaks, let me give you a couple of examples, of this, it's the word, through which, we become, members of God's family, I know it also says, born again of the spirit, but in 1 Peter, it says, 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 23, it says, you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living, and enduring, word of God, you've been born again, through the word of God, and let me give you another example, of words, and sonship, this way, this time, it's a, different way around, this is Galatians chapter 4, verse 6, where, Paul says, because you are sons, God sent, let me find it properly, 4, verse 6, because you are sons,

God sent the spirit of his son, into our hearts, the spirit who calls out, Abba, Father, so you are no longer a slave, but a son, since you are a son, God has also made you an heir, the language of sonship, is to do with being an heir, but my point here was, that here are some words, which are son type words, born again, through the word of God, and what is the particular, action of the spirit, who makes us, children of God, well we speak to God, we call out, Abba, Father, and that's a matter of words, isn't it, so I'm simply saying that words, are not the opposite of sonship, they are part of, being, in God's family, a son, Jesus of course is the great model of this, willingly, and happily, listens to his father's instruction, and calls out to him, in prayer, being a son, isn't it, listening to what, your father says, my son, listen to my instruction, is part of being, a son, not a slave, so two objections, one objection there, second objection coming up, this objection, that word based spirituality, loses, the spirit, so that if you're, thinking too much about God's word, you lose, touch with the spirit, this is the objection, and, the objection might also, be put like this, if you are, if you make your spiritual life, word based, it becomes, cerebral, okay, cerebral, is a, brainy word, which means, brainy, it means, brainy, and the idea of this objection, is that if, your spiritual life is brainy, it's not godly, now that actually is, quite a, a, a strong objection, and people will, object, [18 : 46] I suppose really, to the way we do things, in our church, on that sort of basis, they say, well you're all word, and you quench the spirit, well, we may quench the spirit, but it's not, just because, we honour God, through his word, there are a couple of, well here's, here's an answer,

quenching, and resisting, the spirit, now we don't want to quench, and resist the spirit, certainly don't want to do that, there are, I don't think there are many, examples in the New Testament, where it talks about, quenching the spirit, or resisting the spirit, but here are a couple, in 1 Thessalonians 5, 19, it says, don't, quench, put out, resist, throw cold water on, the spirit, but what, the way, what he says is, that that's what you do, if you resist, God's, word, what he actually says is this, do not put out the spirit's fire, do not treat prophecies with contempt, test everything, hold on to the good, avoid every kind of evil, have I put, done that right, do not put out the spirit's fire, do not treat prophecies with contempt, test everything, hold on to the good, now you see, one thing he's not saying is, let go of what God says, and then you won't, if you let go of God's speaking, then you won't quench the spirit, what he actually says is, hold on to what God says, isn't it, he says, do not put out the spirit's fire, do not treat prophecies with contempt, saying there's God's word, to quench the spirit, is to, have contempt, for what God says, and then he goes on to say, test everything, he doesn't say, take your head off, take your brain off, leave it outside, he says, oh, if you're not going to quench the spirit, you need to be thinking, you need to be testing things, you need to be holding on to the good, you see, respecting God's word, does not mean, that you quench the spirit, it's the opposite, if you, if you resist God's word, you quench God's spirit, let's have another example,

Acts 7, 51, this is the speech of, Peter, when he, accuses, his, hearers, of resisting, the spirit, and in what way, do they resist the spirit, well, in a fairly typical way, Acts 7, 51, you stiff necked people, with uncircumcised hearts, and ears, did I write that in, no I didn't, you are just like your fathers, you always resist, the Holy Spirit, well these people resisted, the Holy Spirit, how did they resist, the Holy Spirit, well, they resisted the Holy Spirit, because they resisted God's word, was there ever a prophet, your fathers, did not persecute, they even killed, those who predicted, the coming of the righteous one, and you have betrayed, and murdered him, you who have received, the law, that was put into effect, through angels, but have not obeyed it, so resisting the spirit here, is again, resisting what God has said, not listening, and not doing, what God says, it's interesting, isn't it, so word-based spirituality, does not lose the spirit, it's resisting the word, that loses the spirit, and my second answer, to this objection, is that word-based spirituality, is meant to be, the whole word of God, for the whole person, so that's all God's words, in terms of his promises, in terms of Christ, who comes to us through the word, in terms of the gospel, in terms of the hope, of the word of God, in terms of the warnings, of the word of God, and that is to come to us, not just in our brain boxes, but to form us, as people who are godly, and wise, people who have understanding, people who have faith, people who worship, people who repent, people who obey, and have all the range, of responses, that the human makeup, is capable of, including our emotions, our hope, our love, our fear, our joy, our sorrow, etc, etc, word-based spirituality, is the whole word of God, for the whole of our makeup, that's the way it ought to be,

I'm not saying it always is that, but that's what it, that's what it's, that's what the aim of it is, and at some point, I wanted to say, let's see what I've said it here, we're not talking about, just having a lot of words, the words, are there to be believed, and obeyed, and it strikes me, that you can have, a lot of words, with actually quite a small amount, of faith, and obedience, which is not what it's supposed to be, and you can actually have, a relatively small amount, of words, that the people, who have a relatively small amount, of words, capitalize on that hugely, and from that small word input, have a lot of faith, and a lot of obedience, so you don't just make the equation, a lot of words, means a lot of godliness, but, the Bible does say, is if you want to grow, the spiritual life, is to do with, having God's word, dwelling richly, within you, anyway, those two objections, let's go a little bit further,

I'm asking the question, would the Lord Jesus, say to me, read your Bible, pray every day, would Jesus, say that, interesting question actually, there isn't a place in the Bible, where he is quoted as saying that, I don't think he would have said it, because in his day, the Bible was not complete, there wasn't a Bible, like we have, in the time of the Lord Jesus, it wasn't written was it, and it wasn't printed, so as I repeat again, that actually having a Bible, is so useful, but it's not, of the essence, of the thing, but Jesus would have said, and he definitely did say, what he says in Mark chapter 4, what does he say in Mark chapter 4, this is a parable, about living, and growing, as a Christian, as a Christian, and he says, in Mark 4, 1 to 20, it's the one about, sowing the seed, do you remember this one,

Jesus taught them, he was gathered, around the lake, Jesus began to teach them, by the lake, and there was a big crowd, and he said, here, well, I'll tell you all about it, I'll tell you all about it, it's

about, it's like, a farmer going out, to sow seed, and he sows the seed, he throws it out, and it lands, in different places, and in the different places, it has different results, full stop, and, the people listening, are wondering, what was that about, it sounded great, and even the disciples, didn't understand it, it's a great parable Lord, really enjoyed that one, didn't actually understand, what you meant though, and Jesus says, I'm really surprised, because this is as it were, the master parable, it's the one that, it's the key, that unlocks all the parables, and, so perhaps, he does have to explain it, the farmer sows something, what is it that's being sown, do you remember, what Jesus explained it as, the word, the farmer, sows, the word, verse 14, chapter,

[27 : 32] Mark 4, verse 14, the farmer sows the word, that's what, that's the, where the, the seed of it is, and, the people, who, grow, the crop that grows up most, the crop that grows up most, is, Jesus explains it, he says, like the seed, that's sown on good soil, what is, how does Jesus say, he says, they hear the word, they accept it, and produce a crop, 30, 60, or even a hundred times, what was sown, what's the Lord Jesus saying, he's saying, I want to tell you that, tell you how the spiritual life works, in a very simple picture, is to do with the word, is to do with receiving the word, is to do with accepting it, and it grows, and produces fruit, it's not quite the same thing, as saying, read your Bible every day, but it's not far off, is it, it's not far off, it's saying to us, you want to be fruitful, do you want to be fruitful, as a Christian, hope you do, we ought to want to be fruitful, what's the secret then, it's having the word, and cultivating it, in our hearts and lives, so that we are fruitful people, that's what it is about, and maybe somebody will say, oh well that's cerebral, well okay, you can say what you like, but that's what Jesus says, is the way to do it, interesting isn't it, and Jesus also, just as a sort of, almost random example, a bit further on in,

Mark chapter 8, verse 38, talked about the crucial issue, of being ashamed of Jesus, and in Mark 8, 38 he says, if anyone is ashamed of me, in this adulterous, and sinful generation, the son of man, will be ashamed of him, when he comes in the father's glory, with the holy angels, he says it's really crucial here, to accept me, because if you don't accept me, I won't accept you, if you're embarrassed to, to, to have me, then I will be embarrassed, to have you, on that final great day, did you notice that, so you might be saying, well I'm not embarrassed, to have the Lord Jesus, that's good, did you notice the bit, I missed out, he says, if anyone is ashamed of me, and my words, if anyone is ashamed of me, and my words, you might be saying, I'm not embarrassed, about the Lord Jesus, I'm a bit embarrassed, about his words, can't be that bothered, with the things that he said, can't be that bothered, cerebral you know, and Jesus says, hold on a minute, if you're ashamed, if you're ashamed of my words, you're ashamed of me, if you're ashamed of me, and my words,

I will be ashamed of you, on that great day, it's interesting isn't it, the Lord Jesus says, if you have me, you can have my words, and, let me give you one other, example, from the Lord Jesus, Mark 14, 21, Mark 14, 21, this is just a little insight, into, the life of Jesus, at this crucial point, where he is, about to go to the cross, Mark 14, 21, he says, the son of man, will go, just as it is written, about him, that's just a little fragment, of what he says, the son of man, will go, just as it is written, about him, very interesting, that Jesus should say that, he's talking about, going to his death, on the cross, and you think, well, is this happening accidentally, is this a terrible tragedy, and Jesus is saying, well no, no, there is a deep, purpose, in my going to the cross, and how does Jesus get, how does Jesus, come to know that, well, apparently,

Jesus says, it is written, written, and I'm going to go, and I'm going to do this, because it is written, that I do this, and where is it written, it's written in the Bible, not Jesus keeps referring to, it says it in the Bible, I know it says it in the Bible, because I've read it, and thought about it, and I've thought about it a lot, and that is going to determine, for me, says Jesus, how I'm going to behave, in this crisis, I will do, what it says, in the Bible, and I put there as a summary, Jesus assumed, he didn't stop and prove it, he says, well everybody knows, the Bible is the word of God, and Jesus modelled a life, nourished on scripture, and lived in faith, and obedience, the son of man will do, what the Bible says, he's going to do, and I don't know, whether we can catch a glimpse, of this wonderfully beautiful picture, of our saviour's relationship, to scripture, to the word of his father, that he imbibes it, he drinks it in, he meditates on it, he thinks about it, he must have spent hours, and hours thinking, perhaps like you and I do, sometimes particularly, finding somewhere quiet,

I dare say Jesus memorised, probably might have memorised, the whole of scripture, thinking about it, calling it to mind, bringing it to bear, perhaps even thinking it through, is this, what does the Bible say, about the Messiah, and the way his life ends, and richly working that all through, is the

Bible in our minds, as richly as that?

[33 : 44] Reading the Bible every day, would be a good step towards it, wouldn't it? Be a good step towards it, and, I'm sort of, not, doing so much on, prayer, as I might have done, but I, could point out, that Jesus willingly, and naturally, spent time alone, with his father, in prayer, just going back, to the beginning, of Mark's gospel, Mark, 1, 35, 35, the beginning of Mark's gospel, when things are beginning, to kick off, when popularity, is beginning to grow, it says, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, went off to a solitary place, where he prayed, I find that a very, wonderful sentence, as the Lord Jesus, things are getting really busy, you'd think, that the first thing, that he would do, be, turn on his computer, get his email, sorted out, but what he actually does, is says, what I need to do,

I need to get alone, I need to, free myself, from these, other important, and pressing things, and just, speak to my father, about all that's happening, I need to be with my father, in prayer, that's what it says, isn't it?

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, went off to a solitary place, where he prayed, Simon and his companions, went to look for him, and when they found him, they said, everybody's looking for you, there's loads of things, you should be doing, and Jesus said, well no, I've deliberately, left those things, to go and pray, and my thought is, if that was true, of the Lord Jesus, how much more, it ought to be true, for us, if the Lord Jesus, who was somebody, so strong, and so clear, and so holy, and he had no sin, of course, if the Lord Jesus, says, well I need to pray, then how much more, for us, who are weak, and muddled, and sinful, we need to pray, it's a beautiful picture, isn't it, of the Lord Jesus, spending time in prayer, so would Jesus have said, read your Bible, pray every day, well he wouldn't necessarily, have put it quite like that, but the things he did say, reading our Bibles, and praying every day, would be a pretty good way, of fulfilling, what he did say, do you say, does that make sense, that's rather a complicated sentence, shall I try it again, yeah,

I don't know whether I dare actually, Jesus, spoke about, and modelled, being filled with the word of God, and living a life of prayer, let us, take that on board, let us, seek to be filled with the word of God, and live lives of prayer, and if we were to say, I'm going to read my Bible, and pray every day, that would be a pretty good way, of fulfilling it, that's what I'm trying to say, so that was the Lord Jesus, I want to, I've got two more slides, so we've asked Jesus, whether he would have said, read your Bible, pray every day, and I want to say, would Paul, have ever told, his young congregations, read your Bible, pray every day, so that's my question, so if we could, in imagination, go and find the Apostle Paul, as he's traipsing, from Ephesus, to Corinth, or somewhere, say, hey by the way Paul, just come across this great song, read your Bible, pray every day, how about doing that, with your next congregation, would he have said, great, wish I'd thought of that myself, or would he have said, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, well,

I think, he wouldn't have automatically, said yes, for the same reason, of the Lord Jesus, the Bible still wasn't complete, actually, Paul was still writing it, so he couldn't tell people, to read stuff, that he hadn't yet written, do you see what I mean, but he's in process, of writing the Bible, and, the idea of every Christian, having their own Bible, was still a long way off, they would have had to do it, some other way, but, reading our Bibles, and pray, a pretty good way, to do the sort of things, that Paul would have said, let me give you some examples, what did he say, to the Ephesians, well, Ephesians chapter 6, this is what he did say to them, he said, put on the whole armour of God, he says, you're in a battle situation, you need to, be battle ready, and put on the whole armour of God, and there's various components, in his idea of armour, he talks about the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with the readiness, that comes from the gospel of peace, talks about the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish, all the flaming arrows of the evil one, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, and pray in the spirit, on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers, and requests, with this in mind, he says, be alert, keep on praying, for all the saints, well, that's quite a lot, isn't it, but you notice, that he, he does say, he doesn't say pray every day, he doesn't use those exact words, but he does say, jolly well pray, doesn't he, keep on praying, pray, you know, not just once a day, but twice a day, or pray, while you're walking around, pray while you're doing the housework, pray while you're, um, changing the baby's nappy, um, just be a person of prayer, keep on praying, pray in the spirit, on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers, he definitely said that, and do you see what he said about the word, he didn't say, read your bible every day, but he did say, have the belt of truth, buckled round your waist, and he did say, you need

faith, and faith comes from the word of God, and he did say, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, do you see, so he's saying,

[40 : 26] Christian, you need to be a word person, you need to, have all sorts of things, but part of that, is a strong equipping, in God's word, and a strong life, of prayer, do you see what he's saying there, uh, what did he say to the Colossians, uh, what did he say to the Colossians, what did he say to the Colossians, Colossians chapter 2, now, the very fact that we have the letter to the Colossians, is that he, he, clearly believed, that the good thing for them, was for him, to write down, what to believe, how to act, and how to react, so, in writing it, he's saying, you need, the Bible, because I'm writing it to you now, it's the best thing I can do, the most helpful thing, is give it, and read it, think about it, see, so just the very act of writing it, but, in chapter 2, verses 4 to 7, he talks about, as we saw last week, being rooted and built up in Christ, strengthened in the faith, as you were taught, he says, hang on to the things you were taught, you need, to be thinking about those things, you don't need to be pushing aside, you don't need less teaching, that won't help you at all, you need as much as you can, take in, and digest,

Christ, and then he says, in chapter 3, verse 16, on the matter of, what they do, when they gather together, Colossians 3, 16, let the word of Christ, dwell in you richly, as you teach, and admonish one another, with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude, in your hearts, to God, he says, that's what's supposed to, characterize your music, when you get together, and when you sing, what's that all about, well he says, it's all about the word of Christ, dwelling in you richly, and he is certainly, would say to them, in chapter 4, verse 7, he would certainly say, do I mean chapter 4, verse 7, I'm looking for devote yourselves, to prayer, which is chapter 4, verse 2, it's the same, it's the same thing, over and over again, isn't it, how are we to live, and grow in Christ, we're to be filled, with his word, taking it in, thinking about it, meditating on it, obeying it, trusting in God, through it, we're to be living lives, of prayer, this is how we live, and grow, and there's much, much more, where that came from, so how might we live, and grow as Christians, in regard to the word, of God, and prayer, here's some, pieces of advice, with this, we close, how can we live, and grow as Christians, number one, by hearing, the gospel, and the message, of Christ, that's the way, we come to faith, by, the gospel message, which is, what the apostles, wrote, and taught, and preached, and, is the old testament, on which Jesus, nourished his own soul, it's the Bible, that's, where we get it from, we don't get it, anywhere else, if you haven't got, the Bible, you're left with zilch, that's where we, we need to go, to the Bible, and, by, absorbing, memorizing, learning, meditating, on scripture, personally, and I want to put, obeying, because, it's, ridiculous, just, to know, scripture, without, obeying it, it's there, to be obeyed, now, I, I, think, we need help, with this, and, I think, we, take, any help, that we can get, and, different things, help different people, and, something that was helpful, at one time, you might find, maybe I need some help, from something else, so, I say, take all the help, that we can get, if you, Chris has got, some good, Bible reading notes, and, I can point you, in that direction, so, there's a little booklet, with a date on it, and a passage, and then some helpful comments, and, it will take you, 10 or 15 minutes, to read that, and then perhaps, a helpful prayer, to pray at the bottom, that, that, that's good help, if, have a go, if you need help, there's, there's a place to turn, or maybe, you, think, well, I've done that, and I got a bit tired of it, well, try another, a different one, or maybe, you think, I can never keep up the dates, everything seems to go, haywire in my life, okay, well, try a different way, just, try something, say to the Lord,

I am keen, I want to do this, I want to have your word, richly in me, now, show me some way, that will, you know, that I can, that is really workable, maybe it be, reading through, you know, in your own speed, with a helpful book, but make sure, that the helpful book, doesn't become the main thing, that you read, and you miss out reading the Bible, just get help, and, get some guidance, reading the Bible, with somebody else, is something very helpful, very helpful, somebody offers to read the Bible, with you, for an hour, a week, or something like that, that's not an offer, to turn down really, use technology, I mean, this is technology, isn't it, this is print, never used to be like this, this is modern technology, you might get, you might get the Bible, on your iPhone, or your iPad, or, whatever other, I think, you've got, don't be ashamed of that, if it's helpful, do it, prayer, we, what should we do, well, praying alone, like Jesus did, sometimes it's not that easy, sometimes our minds, are wandering, prayer, a list, a not too long prayer list, is a helpful thing, there's one that, is available to all church members, of all the people's names on it, in the church, and all the things that we pray for,

I actually find that quite helpful, that to, help with prayer, praying with others, and for others, when Jesus, when they said, Jesus, when they asked Jesus, how shall we pray, and he said, you pray, our father, do you notice the, our, it's to do with, being with, other Christians, and praying for, other Christians, it's helpful, to get with other Christians, to pray, somebody offers to pray, with you, that's a good offer, to take up, that is the reason, why we have, a prayer meeting, in the church, we have a prayer time, on Wednesdays, and most of the time, is prayer, you might find it, a bit daunting, you might think, I don't want, I'm too shy, to pray out loud, it's actually not, as difficult, as you might think, but it's very helpful, to pray, with other people, just to sit, and listen to, other people's prayers, and be able to say, amen at the end, is a helpful thing, so praying, alone, praying with others, and praying for others, being part, of a Christ centred community, although I've talked about, reading the Bible, praying, as an individual, it all fits together, with, the community, of people, the group of people, that, that we're with, and, finding a way, to do this, not just, when we have a rush, of enthusiasm, enthusiasm, but to sustain, feeding, feeding on the word, and to sustain, prayer, and I have to say, that routine, is often, a great help, if you say,

[48 : 58] I, pray at such, and such a time, every day, then, it's a helpful thing, to do, I know, that sometimes, days, don't, fit the right, sort of pattern, it is said, of, Charles Wesley's, mother, and you correct me, if I'm wrong on this, that, when, she had loads of children, goodness knows, how many, and, at certain time, in the day, there she is, baking, washing, et cetera, et cetera, at certain times, during the day, she would take her apron, put it up over her head, and tell the children, to leave her alone, for a bit, and she would, that was her time of prayer, I'm going to pray, I don't know whether, you could make that work, actually, but it's an interesting, insight, isn't it, as to how people, in the past, have done that, read your Bible, pray every day, said Andy Christofides, and he wasn't, too far wrong, was he?

Let's close, by singing together.