



# Encouraging Ideas for Growing with God and Faith

By Dale Fiegland and Robbi Cary

God desires for each of us to know and experience Him personally. In fact, God's Word tells us that real life—life that truly counts and becomes abundant, eternal life—is about knowing Him and Jesus, whom He sent to us (John 17:3). This means that we are not simply to hear and acquire spiritual truth secondhand from others (reading spiritual books and listening to sermons). We must learn by doing: we are to read, ponder, and respond to the Bible and the Lord ourselves. We are to learn to pray and grow with Him.

A wild illustration of this truth is provided by a family of bald eagles that lives near our home (the Fiegland's). We love visiting the peaceful pasture with horses, oaks, and the tall pine tree that holds their nest. We're able to watch the majestic birds soar high and hunt for food. With the aid of a [tree-mounted camera](#), we are able to observe the eaglets hatch, learn, and grow.

When Mom and Dad Eagle obtain a nourishing meal, they bring it back, tear the meat in small pieces, and hold out the morsels for the young chicks. Though it's not very appetizing to think about, this is the way many people receive their spiritual food. Pastors and leaders scour the Bible, choose a meal, digest it, then spit it back out in bite-size chunks to spiritually hungry and malnourished Christians. Pre-digested food is fast and easy to receive.

However, God desires more for us. Inviting the Lord into our lives is the beginning of our relationship with God and the first step we take, while learning to grow in Him is another matter entirely. It is like a new relationship—it takes time to develop. Additionally, spiritual growth, like all forms of life, requires food and nourishment to flourish. God's Word teaches us that when we are born again spiritually, we are like babies and need easily digested spiritual milk from the Bible ([1 Peter 2:2](#)). Then as we grow in maturity, we are to learn to feed ourselves with heartier, more solid food ([Hebrews 5:11-14](#)). Growth is essential to life and something is wrong if we don't grow or we stop growing. We should not be the same child of God's that we were a year ago or, heaven forbid, five years ago. We are to know God and His Spirit more intimately and become more like Jesus (Romans 8:29).

Frequently, I share with people when they come for counseling, “Don’t trust what I say about the Bible, just because I am a pastor.” While it brings a laugh, I am serious and share further, “You should read it to determine for yourself what God says.” Many people are content to swallow whatever pastors, family, and friends say about the Bible without ever reading it for themselves. Each of us needs to read and consider what God says, then choose our response.

Because growing in our relationship with God takes time and active participation, there are valuable practices we need to employ in this endeavor. Following is a list to help you in this most important and lifelong process. We can’t implement them all at once, so don’t let the list overwhelm you. Simply choose one aspect to enjoy growing in for a season. (We’ll begin with the daily practice of reading the Bible and praying, but look at each one separately.)

- Seek to read God’s Word every day and grow in it. This takes time.
  - ◆ As you read the Bible, seek to grow in both of these aspects: 1) experiencing and knowing God’s grace and love for you personally, and 2) striving to grow in Him. Strive to know this God who loves you dearly and wants a relationship with you. Ask the Lord to help you know and love Him.
  - ◆ If you’re new to reading the Bible, you might want to read each of the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the next book, Acts (which is the account of the believers after Jesus returned to heaven). Choose your favorite gospel. Then consider reading Genesis chapters 1 through 3, followed by your favorite gospel again. A few encouraging Psalms include Psalms 34, 91, 103, 138, and 145.
- Seek to pray daily and grow in praying.
  - ◆ The Lord promises to never leave or forsake us. He is with us when we pray. It can be beneficial, as we come to Him, to acknowledge and thank the Lord for His presence.
  - ◆ We all pray quick, desperate requests and God often grants many of these. But there is deeper, more effectual prayer that God desires for us. It requires our thoughts, emotions, and being still with Him. We’ve run for years, so in the beginning it’s often difficult to sit still with our problems, feelings, and God. Don’t give up. Keep talking to God, seeking Him, and listening for Him. Keep praying and having a quiet time.
  - ◆ Our tendency is to ask God to just fix our problem or we keep trying harder to win our personal battles and accomplish what needs to be done. Most days what we really need is Jesus and His very real help and grace in our struggles. We need His wisdom, guidance, strength, and peace. In fact, in every circumstance, the Lord wants us to know, experience, and be filled with His character traits: His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). Many times, especially when it comes to problems with other people, God desires that we become a miraculous part of the solution. For this to transpire we need to bring all that we are to Him (our hurts, worries, and longings) and seek His help.
  - ◆ Learn to listen for, and hear, God. Sometimes He imparts comfort, truth, and guidance to us during our prayer time. Other times, He may speak to us later that day or during the week. He may speak to us through the words of others, in something we read, or in

a song we hear. Sometimes we have a thought that pops into our mind, or a feeling we can't shake, and it is God directing us. God desires that you and I know and experience Him. He wants to converse with us, encourage us, and guide us. Anticipate and watch for these times. Thank Him and rejoice when they happen! We just experienced God and His very real presence! [How to Listen to God by Chaplain John Batterson](#) is a wonderful article and practical aid to hearing God.

- Keep a journal of the times and ways God speaks to you and moves on your behalf. There are powerful benefits to writing these events down and reviewing them. The thought of God actively caring for us is such an astounding one that we tend to downplay it or dismiss it entirely. Writing and reviewing the Lord's provisions for us, not only prevents this, it brings added benefits. As we read our own words it helps us take in and believe the wonderful truth of God's active love for us. This enables our faith, joy, and intimacy with God to increase. When the Lord works in your life or imparts truth to you—record it! (You may use a journal, scraps of paper that you keep in a drawer, or on a computer document.) Write out the ways He protects you, directs you, and answers your prayers. Read your writings, reflect on them, and thank the Lord for His very real love and personal care.



- Find and participate in a Bible-based church. Grow in living life with your God-family. (If you need to find a church home—don't let the process overwhelm you. Ask the Lord to help you and take one small step at a time. Select one church, and visit it. Try another, if need be.)
- Find an encouraging, uplifting Christian radio station. There are many types of Christian music and you can find a station you love. Ask the Lord for assistance and to help you take the words into your spirit.
- Find and claim a verse from God's Word. Write one out, memorize it, speak it out loud, and meditate on it. Keep reviewing, reciting, and claiming it until your spirit receives the promise and is renewed by the truth. Then memorize another Scripture. Keep a list of these verses and occasionally review them. (Check out this article to learn more about [Accessing the Power and Blessings of God's Word and Promises](#)).
- Accept the unique way God made you and wants to work in your life. You are a unique child of God's, and He desires to do something special in your life. Ask Him to help you know what He wants to do in and through you.

- Learn to grow in the peace that God wants you to receive. Strive to grow in patience, waiting on the Lord, and contentment, even while asking for relief from your struggles and wisdom in dealing with them.
- The Bible tells us that the fullness of God dwells in Jesus. A beautiful passage on this is [Colossians 1:15-23](#). As you read about the Lord, ponder His mystery, glory, humility, and love. In the Scriptures, especially the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we are able to study the amazing and wonderful truths offered to us in Jesus: His words, work, purposes, identity, death, and resurrection.
  - ◆ For a powerful article on the diverse excellencies of Christ, see: <https://www.monergism.com/blog/jonathan-edwards-excellency-christ>.
  - ◆ For further study on Christ, an interesting online search can be made regarding: “Jesus revealed in every book of the Bible.”
- Recognize that rough patches, whether in your life or walk with God, are normal. Even famous Christians and those we consider saints experience these. Keep pursuing the Lord.
- If you need to find someone to help and encourage you, ask the Lord to guide you. If you would like to find someone with whom to talk and share your story and hurt, our website offers a list of resources. Ask God to lead you to the right person or to a small group. You may need to try several options. Don’t give up.
- Finally, remember God’s promises for the future and stay focused on Him, especially in light of the world’s increasing natural disasters. Jesus will one day return. We must seek His strength and guidance, watch for the Lord, and be at work serving Him. Those who stay devoted to God will be a part of His coming kingdom and will enjoy amazing continual blessings that He has in store for those who love Him.

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