

FTBC

GROWTH TRACKS


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Welcome to Growth Tracks which is FBC's program designed to set the disciple on the firm foundation spiritual maturity.


In 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) Paul writes "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

The key to growth in our spiritual lives is encountering the glory of God through the person of His Son who is His perfect image. The more our hearts are filled with the knowledge of Him the more our characters are moulded, the more our hearts are filled with His love and more our lives will be directed towards the purpose for which we were created....to glorify Him. Each chapter is designed to provide a progressive track to show the face of Christ through selected but key passages in the Bible laying down the bed rock foundations of faith that will form the basis for a life -long learning and growing in to the likeness of Christ. Prayerfully follow these chapters and His Spirit will propel you into a trajectory of robust growth and spiritual transformation. Learn how to read the bible by tackling whole passages of Scripture rather than piece meal verses. See how principles from the passages will be translated to everyday life. For those disciples going into the Gamma program these presentations will help bridge the gap between the Alpha Beta programs and the more in- depth Gamma discipleship program.

For those who prefer to listen and see the contents of this book you can go to our website at [www.fbc.com .my](http://www.fbc.com.my) and each chapter will be presented in a series of slides at the resources section of our site under the title "Growth Tracks"



MODULE 9



LEARNING TO PRAY - PART 2

In this chapter we come to the second part of the Lord's prayer perhaps a more familiar section dealing with petition.

Matthew 6:11 (ESV) Give us this day our daily bread,

When we come to petition, it is important to gain confidence by praying based on seeing His power. When we pray, 'our Father in heaven'. The fact that we will use our Father in heaven means we actually see the glorious majesty of His power and yet He is our Father. Fathers would bind their hearts to the successes of their children. We are not praying to some aloof deity upon whose whimsical mood we must throw ourselves before to secure some favorable outcome to our prayer. Instead we are praying to our Father in heaven who also binds his heart to our success hence our prayer is predicated on such a happy circumstance inspiring confidence.

James 1:5 (ESV) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Here is an invitation from God to ask of Him, who gives us generously. What a difference from beseeching some governmental official for a favor who might lash out at us if he is in a bad mood. We are coming before a generous God.

Secondly, we need to pray because it displays humility. It displays a daily dependence on the power of God. We do not presume that we can live each day on our own merits or our own works, we need to come to God with our daily needs in humility. Therefore, we pray for practical things, for the roof over our heads, protection for our loved ones, for our jobs, for our food because God is interested in every aspect of our daily life. He is asking us to pray for our daily bread, not daily our daily extravagances. The focus is on the things that are required to enable us to live and conduct our ministry.

So what is the difference between Aladdin rubbing the lamp and getting the genie to fulfil his wishes and us praying to God to fulfil our wishes in terms of petition?

Well, in the case of Aladdin, there is no interpretation required. The genie will do exactly what Aladdin wants. As far as God is concerned, God is going to interpret the need behind our request. Aladdin gets carte blanche because the genie is a slave to Aladdin. God can hardly be treated in a similar manner.

There are two almost identical instances where disciples encountered trials in the gospels, they were stuck in a huge storm in the middle of the lake. In both situations, Jesus handled differently. In both situations the disciples would have cried out to God, in one situation Jesus is in the boat and calms the storm and the other situation, Jesus walks to them on water and gets into the boat with them. Basically, we cry out to God in a petition, God interprets our needs and gives us the best thing for that particular situation.

There is a very famous passage on Paul's petition. He was probably ill with some sort of disease, described as a thorn in his side, we don't really know what it was, but he writes in 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 12:8-9 (ESV) Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me

Here is a situation where the apostle Paul who has probably healed other people through miracles, could not heal himself and three times he pleaded to God and God decided that God will sustain him through his illness and that will bring greater glory to God.

When we come to God in petition, we can come with one of two attitudes. We could come saying that we want our will and our petitions or we could come and say we got a petition but according to His will. On one hand, we want our will, we are like children, we don't perceive the dangers of our request. We don't want God to reinterpret our request, we want what we want. On the other hand, we come to God and we want His will in our petitions. It is only in the latter manner of prayer will the explosive power of God will actually be realized.

PART 5 – CONFESSION

Here we have confession

12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

We all need confession because right from the beginning we are in sin.

Psalms 51:5 (ESV) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Sin is like a seed which is buried in the ground formed by self-assertion and self-centeredness which is the very DNA of what sin is. Each of us will have different exposures to water, fertilizer and sunlight and depending on what proportion of those we are exposed to, the seeds of self centeredness that reside deep inside us will flower into to murder, robbery, lying and bullying. They are all manifestations of the same self-assertion, self-centeredness which is the DNA of sin.

In Genesis chapter 4, chronicles the saga of the first murder in which Cain killed Abel. God confronts Cain well before he commits his murder,

Genesis 4:7 (ESV) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."

Here sin is metaphorically cast as a wild animal crouching at door, waiting to pounce on Cain. Its desire to control him but he must rule over it.

In the nation of Rwanda hundreds and thousands of Tutsies were murdered. When they reviewed the data on who did all the killing, it turned out they were ordinary man like you and me who actually under the correct circumstances committed the very atrocities which we often attribute to monsters like Hitler or Saddam Hussein. Their motivations were very basic and common to us it was fear, greed, family, friends who have influences as well. We are all capable of the worst atrocities in life. We have all the seed of sin in us but we will always deny it.

1 John 1:8-10 (ESV) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

So we all have sin, we cannot say we have no sin because that would make God a liar. So the fact is, even though we

are saved by the love of Jesus Christ on the cross, we still have to grapple with sin every day.

So when we come to God in this part of the prayer we come in confession, we need to repent. There are two kinds of repentances:

Superficial repentance: where it is done out of self-pity because we got caught or we shift the blame to someone else.

Deeper heart felt renunciation, which is the correct kind of confession.

This is a full clean confession where David confesses his sin of adultery with Bathsheba

Psalms 51:3-4 (ESV) For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

It is full accountability and full confession. Superficial repentance is by far most common man- made confessions. Here are some examples

Jamie Dimon of JP Morgan Chase CEO, stated at the financial crisis a few years ago “ Obviously mistakes were made”, he never admitted that any of these mistakes were his even though he was the CEO of the bank. He just said, mistakes were made.

Some time ago Wynona Rhyder was caught for shoplifting even though she was a megastar who could easily afford to almost anything, said

'I'm sorry for what I did. My director directed me to shoplift"

Here she is shifting the blame, it is superficial repentance, not real repentance. Here is an example by president Bill Clinton,

“Mistakes were made here by people who either did it deliberately or inadvertently”,..

Again blame shifting indicative of superficial repentance, not true heart repentance and worse still stating the obvious just sounding the words that basically no meaning. Here is another example of not taking responsibility just making excuses as a result relationships won't heal. Here is Michael Palmer

I am sorry that what I said has said you a great deal of discomfort. “I am deeply sorry, I apologise unreservedly.”

Here is a refreshing example of a full confession and deep heart enunciation. The sin against God is the sin underneath all sins. When Joseph was tempted to sleep with Potiphar wife to sleep with her and he actually turns it down because..

Genesis 39 : 9b How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”.

He correctly interprets the sin of sleeping with his master's wife as actually a sin against God ultimately although even on the human dimension it would have a been a profound betrayal of his master Potiaphar.

Deep heart renunciation or repentance begins with us seeing sin in the right way. Somehow, we all have this nasty tendency to own our own sin and any attack on our sin is interpreted as an attack on us hence we defend our sin as vigorously as we defend ourselves. Like Adam and Eve when they had sinned they on the side of sin and tried to hide from God and run away from Him. The right way in which we should deal with sin is to cross the fence and join God side. We recognize that even though Christ died for the penalty of our sin, our selfish human nature is still alive and kicking and needs to be dealt with. We need to disown the sin simply we love God, and we are born again with a new nature as children of God. We begin to hate sin even though the sin actually happened in our own lives and we are responsible for it. Yet we need to mentally to cross that barrier and join God's side and because we love him and only when we are able to do this that we therefore free look at the sin in the same way as God looks at sin as something terrible which we hate. We then are able to hate the way we were still participating in the sin. We hate the fact that though He died for us there is still a part of us that is so entrenched in sin. It is because we love Him that we hate the fact that our sin grieves Him. Crossing over allows us to objectively see sin for what evil it really is and we can begin to confess it and ask for forgiveness in deep repentance because of the sufficiency of Christ's death on the cross. So to cross over means we have to admit our sin and turn from our sin repeatedly as confession is a daily affair and something we need His strength to appropriate in our lives.

We are not only to confess our sin but also to forgive others.

Matthew 6:14. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Just as we ask God in confession for forgiveness, we also need to have the same attitude and forgive others. The mechanism is the same it is letting go of a debt owed to us.

In Matthew 18, Jesus relates a parable that basically underscores this principle. There was a king who wish to settle his accounts with his servants and when he began to settle their accounts and during the course of this audit, one particular servant was brought to him. He owed him a huge amount of money which was 10,000 talents equivalent to millions of dollars in today's economy and far in excess of what a normal person could even dream of paying in those days. How did a lowly servant accrue such a debt, Jesus does not tell us. It was because he couldn't pay, the master ordered him to be sold with his wife and children and all that he had until payment was to be made which would have been never!. The servant fell on his knees and implored the Master, "you have patience with me and I will pay you everything" he cried. Out of pity, the master of the servant released him and forgave the debt entirely which was an amazing turn of events. However in the second part of the parable, it so happened this very same servant was owed by another one of his fellow servants a miniscule amount of money, 100 dinars in comparison. Instead of forgiving him he began to choke him mercilessly and insisted that he have to pay everything even though it was clearly beyond his means. The poor debtor servant pleaded piteously but this fell on deaf ears and he threw him in prison. When the other fellow servants found out, they actually told the master. The master was really upset and summoned him and said,

You wicked servant I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me, should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you.

The master threw him back into jail. So the principle makes with this parable is clear. As we have been forgiven we owe it to our fellow human beings to forgive them who sin against us.

The point of the parable is to show us that forgiveness secured by Jesus for us at such an exorbitant price on the cross should have transformed the way we feel and act if we have been truly saved. The sins of others against us pale in comparison to the debt we have owed God...eternal death. Forgiven people will freely forgive others that is the outward sign of a true inward spiritual transformation. The Lord's prayer is not implying that forgiving others is a necessary condition to earn our way into heaven but that a forgiving attitude is going to be part and parcel of the life style of a person transformed by the forgiveness of God in the gospel.

So as we move on in our Christian live we will come across many in church and outside who will have hurt us and treated us unjustly. These are debts owed to us and just as we have been forgiven we will freely forgive.

DELIVERANCE

This is the last part of the Lord's Prayer. It says,

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

This is a prayer for protection. Lead us not into temptation is a plea not to lead us in a situation so difficult that we would actually succumb to evil. The second part of the prayer is "but deliver us from evil" and refers to us when we are already in the midst a trial and we want deliverance from it. The central issue is the word temptation, which in Greek is 'Peirasmos'. It can mean a trial or a temptation, they both come from the same Greek word 'Peirasmos' and only the context will determine which interpretation it is.

So this is how it works, Peirasmos as interpreted as temptation is what the devil does. He actually causes something nasty to happen to us, perhaps someone will be afflicted with illness or someone injures us. God being in sovereign control permits the devil to do that and to some of us, it is a temptation because the devil intends by that evil event to cause us to sin. At the same time God allows that very trial to come upon us because He wants us to grow. The difference is intent, God intends the same negative event to cause growth, the devil intends to cause us to sin. One is a trap meant to destroy us and the other is a growth opportunity.

Our focus on the other hand is usually on the suffering, God's focus is always that we will grow to trust Him more. Hence it is either we grow or we sin, His focus is that we not sin but we grow, our focus is to get out of the trap or the unpleasantness.

So when we ask God to lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil we can react in one of three ways.

- We can be angry and blame God and therefore sin.
- We can feel guilty and blame ourselves.
- We could blame life itself and become hard and cynical and dejected.

The solution is to treat God as our Father, who will deliver us from evil.

This is a passage from Daniel chapter 3 which it brings us back to a time where the people of Israel were exiled into Babylon and they were confronted by the evil king Nebuchadnezzar. They were forced to worship him, the golden image that he set up but they refused. They were thrown into the furnace; they were thrown into great evil.

Daniel 3:16-18 (ESV) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will

deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

So what they are expressing is that, we have confidence that God will deliver us from this evil, but verse 18 says, but if not, they will still not serve Nebuchadnezzar. That’s what it means to pray that the Lord lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

As the story goes they were thrown into the fire and in this particular case God delivered them physically and spiritually because their faith was vindicated but they could have gone the other way around. They could have been burnt up, but the important thing, even in that situation God would have preserved their faith and the deliverance would have been eternal at that very time.

Lastly take the example of the Apostle Peter who was warned by Jesus that he would be tempted and fall and betray Jesus despite his self proclaimed bravado and declarations of loyalty.

Luke 22:31-32 (ESV) Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

However, Jesus said that notwithstanding, that betrayal which would have been three times before the night was over, Jesus had prayed for Peter.

Peter fell into temptation and failed but repented, he did not kill himself like Judas. The Lord’s prayer preserved him and he came back and was restored by Jesus stronger and more faithful than before

Jesus remains seated at the right hand of the Father as our advocate praying for us interceding for us like Peter to deliver us from all evil and it is on that basis we will pray each day for deliverance.

SUMMARY:

Worship and Thanksgiving: When we get together to pray, we start off first with worship and thanksgiving and adoration of God. Our father in heaven hallowed be thy name. We spend time praying over psalms, singing songs, thanking him for what he is, what he has done for us, worshiping him, acknowledging him that he is our father.

Seeking his Kingdom and Will: Thy kingdom come and thy will be done. Then we move on to seeking his kingdom and his will, we struggle with his will, aligning our will to his, praying for things of his kingdom first.

Our requests: Give us this day our daily bread: Then only comes our requests. The things that we need to sustain life, shelter, safety, faith, our loved ones, these are the requests for our daily bread.

Confession: Forgive our sins, as we forgive others: This is where we bring forward our sin and continue our attitude of repentance and dependence on him for forgiveness of our sins.

Deliverance: We ask for spiritual protection, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Questions

1. Alwin was a young man who had fallen in love with a beautiful young woman who was the daughter of a rich textile merchant. The discrepancy between their social status was too great to bridge under his present circumstance hence he started to pray daily that God allow him to get a very high paying job so that he could afford to buy the Porche he would require to woo this young lady. He claimed the promise in the Lord's prayer "give us this day our daily bread" and marriage is as daily as anything in life so he prayed. What do you think? Is this what the Lord promised
2. Martha used to pray quite a lot especially for her sick mother who had not yet come to know the Lord. She prayed fervently and shared the gospel with her but despite her best efforts her mother died without Christ. She was despondant and stopped praying all together. Can you discuss the case why did God let her mother die? Didn't God love her mother or Martha enough to answer the prayer? Why pray if such a simple request was denied?
3. Does our daily prayer to God for deliverance from evil guarantees that we will be kept safe and hence we will never succumb to temptation?
4. Why is the fact that God is our Father one of the most important understanding of God that must saturate our minds before we come to petitioning Him for things in our lives?
5. Molly runs a large mega company that retails clothes sourced from China. Many of these items comes from sweat shops that utilize child labour. The company has been losing money for 4 quarters already and Mary as the CEO is under pressure to turn it around or she will lose her job. As a CEO she is paid RM 500,000 / month as this is a company whose gross turnover is 20 billion/ year. Can she pray to the Lord for help to save her job and the company, is this her daily bread (RM 500,000 / month)?