

# SOME RESOURCES FOR GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN

Jesus is Lord! That's the most basic declaration of the gospel, the Good News. A Christian is someone who lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ – not yet perfectly, but intentionally and persistently.

Yet Jesus is different from all other Lords, in that He did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life for others (Mk 10:45). Instead of oppressing us, He liberates us from our real oppressors (sin, self and Satan), and brings us into God's family as His adopted children.

That's why the Lordship of Jesus is Good News. And it's why following Him isn't a horrible burden or a dull duty. It's the way to life in all its fullness – the life with God we were created for. And that makes growing as a Christian highly desirable, for God's glory and our good.

Growth is always God's gift to us, because all life comes from Him. But God's action doesn't cancel ours; rather, it enables it (Php 2:12-13). We are called – privileged – to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Pe 3:18). This strengthens our faith, repairs our broken lives, and increases our joy.

Are you keen to grow? Here are a few suggestions to help you.

1. **PRAY!** We can't do anything worthwhile without God's help. But it's painfully insulting when we treat our Heavenly Father as though He's unwilling to hear us and help us when we ask. He is a generous Father, so let's act accordingly.
2. **STUDY!** We can't understand what God hasn't revealed, but surely we should try to understand what He has revealed in Scripture! It's pointless complaining that we're confused if we're not prepared to make the effort to learn. There's a list of helpful resources at the end of this article. Studying may sound like hard work – but what's wrong with that? Why should we not give our best efforts for the One who gave everything for us? Indeed, if we understand His goodness and love, we won't have to be forced into getting to know Him better – we'll want to do it! "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps 34:8) – do you begrudge the time and effort to eat your favourite food?
3. **COMMIT!** Jesus promised His blessing on those who hear His word and put it into practice. He also warned of God's judgement on those who hear His word and then ignore it. God has given His word not for *information* only, but for *life transformation*. So prayerfully commit yourself to obeying whatever God shows you, knowing that your Father's will is always good. He really does know better than we do. Indeed, why should God speak to us at all unless we're willing to listen and to follow?
4. **FIGHT!** Resolve to attack sin in your life wherever you find it. Why? Not to earn God's favour, but because He has given you His favour in Christ. You no longer belong to your old master (Satan), so don't live for him any more! You've been brought into a new family, and you don't have to follow those old, sordid ways any longer. So ask God to help you live in freedom from old sins – and then fight! Because God's help isn't given to save us the bother of having to fight; it's given to *enable* us to fight. BUT REALIZE THAT THE KEY BATTLE IS THE FIGHT TO SEE GOD AS HE IS – because when we see how kind, loving and good He is, we'll *want* Him more than we want our sins.
5. **SHARE!** The Christian life is not a solo journey. We cannot belong to Christ without simultaneously belonging to His Body, the Church. It's in company with others, serving and sharing together, that we really learn what it means to follow Christ. He loves His people, and we grow by loving them too. So commit to a local group of Christians, not as a spectator or a consumer, but as a devoted family member who seeks to build up others. And try to spend time in good company, with people who are God-saturated and who will encourage you in the fight.
6. **PREACH!** Learn to preach to yourself rather than listen to yourself. Preach the gospel to yourself daily. Remind yourself that you are indeed a great sinner, but that Christ is a greater Saviour, and that through Him you are a child of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and forever safe in your Father's hands.

# RESOURCES

## WEBSITES

There are some marvellous websites containing video, audio and written resources. Here are some that are thoroughly reliable and very helpful:

**The Bible Project** – brilliant short videos to help you understand the Bible and how it points to Jesus: <https://thebibleproject.com/>

**The Gospel Coalition** – solid biblical sermons, videos and articles addressing contemporary issues: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>

**bethinking.org** – Making sense of the big questions, aimed particularly at university students but helpful for others too: <https://www.bethinking.org/>

Some individual speakers:

**Tim Keller** is making sermons and videos available (I highly recommend them) at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/gospelinlife>

There are also many free resources from Tim Keller at Redeemer Church Manhattan: <https://www.redeemer.com/>

**Paul Tripp** – sermons, videos and articles packed with pastoral warmth and wisdom. Includes wonderful material on marriage and parenting: <https://www.paultripp.com/>

And two other gems: **Nancy Guthrie** and **Jen Wilkin**. Each has her own website, but you'll find many more of their resources on YouTube. Excellent teaching, warm and wise.

## BOOKS

There are so many good ones, but I'll try to keep this list brief and focused:

### Understanding the Bible

- Christopher Ash: Remaking a broken world (Making sense of the big story of the Bible)
- Kevin De Young: Taking God at His Word (Why the Bible is worth knowing, trusting and loving)
- Glen Scrivener: Long Story Short
- Matt Smethurst: Before you open your Bible
- John Stott: Understanding the Bible

### On why the gospel makes sense

- Timothy J Keller: The Reason for God
- Glen Scrivener: 3,2,1: The Story of God, the World, and You
- John Stott: Why I Am A Christian

### Basic Christian Beliefs

- Wayne Grudem: Christian Beliefs (20 basics every Christian should know)
- J I Packer: Knowing God
- Michael Reeves: The Good God (Enjoying Father, Son and Spirit: how God's triune being makes all His ways beautiful)
- John R W Stott: Basic Christianity
- Jen Wilkin: None Like Him

### Christian Living

- Jerry Bridges: The Discipline of Grace
- Jerry Bridges: Trusting God
- Tim Chester: You Can Change
- Tim Chester: The Ordinary Hero
- Timothy Keller: Counterfeit Gods
- David Mathis: Habits of Grace
- Paul Miller: A Praying Life
- Paul Tripp: Suffering
- Jen Wilkin: In His Image
- Jared Wilson: The Imperfect Disciple

*"Of making many books there is no end"* (Eccl 12:12). That's enough to keep you going!