

- What type of sins should we forgive? (Colossians 3:13)
- How many times should we forgive? (Luke 17: 3 - 4)

### 3. Ask Practical Application Questions

- What is the Lord expecting of me?
- Am I grateful for God's forgiveness?
- Do I practice false forgiveness?
- Do I hide hurts and hold grudges?
- Have I forgiven someone lately?

To grow spiritually, means I must be able to honestly see my life being conformed to the mind of Christ as presented in the Word of God.

Let's go back to the tree imagery. We can measure the growth of a tree by how tall and fast it grows. Its leaves are green and grow larger. Its branches are longer and stronger and it bears healthy fruit.

But a tree that is not growing shows signs of being sick, evidenced by stunted or slow growth. The leaves wither and fall off. The tree can bear no fruit.

Similarly, the Christian who is not growing spiritually is unable to handle things maturely as God intends and lives an ineffective life.

When we are wronged and hurt and do not genuinely forgive those who cause the hurt, then we hold on to the hurt, push it down deep inside and it gives us acid burn and stomach ulcers. We are grumpy, angry, depressed and unhappy.

But the Christian who admits that he's hurt, asks God to help him genuinely forgive the offending person, frees himself from ongoing pain. By this process we grow spiritually and

experience God's peace and joy in living, which is a sign of spiritual growth.

True, we never forget the wrongs or hurts done to us, but in the act of saying, "I forgive you", we release the inner conflict, feel at peace and grow spiritually. We can move ahead and love in ways we could not before.

### 3. Practice Time - Do we Forgive Others?

Now, let's talk about **Forgiveness and Us**. Think on God's words in the Bible verses above and how we grow spiritually.

What is the spiritually mature way to handle:

- a person who says hurtful things to you
- a person who lies and cheats on you
- a person who blatantly defies your advice
- a person who angrily screams at you

Will we forgive them? (Eph. 4:32). The key is in the words "*just as*" or "*in like manner*". God through Christ's death has 'forgiven' us. Now, we are to forgive others, because Jesus has suffered for their sins too. If He has forgiven them, then we should forgive them too!

*"Happy are they whose sins are forgiven, whose wrongs are pardoned"* (Romans 4:7).

# Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth



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# Forgiveness and Spiritual Growth

When you place a small tree in the ground you water it, fertilize it, and expect it to grow. Growth is a normal experience of life.

Psalm 1, teaches us the parallel between a growing tree and spiritual growth. It says: *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers”* (Psalm 1:1-3)

Similarly, God reminds us in the Bible that when we become Christians and followers of Christ, we must grow. The purpose of this is to become Christ-like in every way. To become mature, adult like, in our Christian life. *“Brothers, do not think like children. But in your thinking you should be like full-grown men”* (1Corinthians 14:20).

Growing spiritually, develops out of having an intimate, growing relationship with Jesus. In order for this to happen, we must become familiar with and knowledgeable of His word. The Bible encourages us to *“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (2Peter 3:18).

The Bible gives us many guidelines to help us grow spiritually. *“As newborn babies want milk, you should want the pure and simple teaching. By it you can grow up in your salvation”* (1Peter 2:2). (ICB)

As we take in the Word of God, from the Bible, the Holy Spirit is able to make it real in our lives, both mentally in our understanding and experientially in our daily living. This will make us like the strong, healthy tree in Psalm 1:3, our lives bearing ‘fruit’ as we grow closer to God.

The subject of this study is to learn **‘How to Grow Spiritually’** using **‘Forgiveness’** as an example. It has in mind primarily the application of God’s Word in our every day life.

## **Step 1 – Start with Prayer**

Probably one of the most common reasons why Christians don't get anything out of the Bible is expressed in this complaint, "I just don't understand it!" Before you start each study session, begin by praying and asking God to open your spiritual understanding. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:16, *“All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”*

So, as you pray, realise that the words you are studying are inspired by God. Psalm 119:130 tells us, *“The unfolding of your words gives light; even the unlearned can understand them.”*

## **Step 2 – Read your Bible.**

Find a modern Bible like the NIV and establish a daily (if possible) reading plan that’s right for you. A plan will keep you from missing anything God has written in His Word.

The easiest way to truly “grow up” in the faith is to make Bible reading a priority. Begin with the New Testament books since they were written to Christians who live in the New Testament Church age.

## **Step 3 – Believe and Practice the Bible**

If we are to grow spiritually, we must make every effort to ‘apply’ the Scripture. It is not enough just to learn what the Bible says. We must allow the Holy Spirit to take that Bible truth and change our lives. This is spiritual growth - becoming more like Him.

We don't just read or study God's Word for the sake of studying. We must be sure to put the Word into practice. Jesus said in Luke 11:28, *“Blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.”* (NLT)

## **How do we apply Bible truth so that we can grow spiritually?**

Here is an example of applying God’s Word.

Let us briefly examine **Forgiveness**.

**Forgiveness** has been defined as the process of choosing to pardon, remit, or overlook the mistake, fault, offense, hurt or injury of the offender, without demanding a penalty, punishment, restitution or retribution.

### **1. Pray.**

*Lord I am going to read your Word in the Bible and see what you say about Forgiveness. Please guide me by your Holy Spirit and help me to honestly and sincerely be willing to accept your forgiveness and then to forgive others.*

### **2. Read the Bible Verses on Forgiveness**

- What is Forgiveness? (Psalm 103: 8 -14, Hebrews 10:17)
- Why should we forgive others? (Matthew 6:12, Ephesians 4:32)