



*Spiritual
Growth*

LESSON EIGHT: Maree Brown

Spiritual Growth

Personal development has become such a catch cry of our world that Christians may sometimes see it as a hedonistic or self-indulgent act. Personal development improves our awareness of self and personal identity. It helps us realise our talents and potential, consider our aims and set goals. Personal development contributes to the realisation of dreams and aspirations.

Q What does 'Personal development' mean to you?

When we take personal development and add in a Christ centred life, then we get a process that takes us from reliance on others to personal strength, from unawareness to understanding and from self-focussed to others focussed. Personal development is an integral part of our daily relationship with God.

Watch AV Clip and take notes



Spiritual growth does not happen without personal development and personal development is an ongoing, fundamental aspect of spiritual growth.

The personal development journey for everyone is different but there are clear stages that we all go through. These stages may have different names dependent on your development journey (ie personal, career, leadership) however the process within each stage remains similar.

Asleep/Unawareness: This is the stage when we allow our upbringing, our experiences and our fear to rule us. We play the victim and assume we don't have the power or ability to change our lives. We place blame, let fear rule us and live with a feeling of a lack of fulfilment. Although we know God's promises for our lives we don't believe they apply to us or that we are worthy of them. We have all been through this stage for some aspect of our lives or at some stage of our journey.

Awakening/Activation: The same things, experiences, feelings, hurts keep happening. The change that we had hoped for in our life doesn't come and we finally start to ask why. This is where we start to become brave enough to examine our experiences and start looking for answers. We begin to look at our experiences and responses from all angles and honestly examine how and why things have happened. This is both an exciting and scary time. We have to be honest with ourselves and seek truth through prayer and Godly counsel.

Q Why do you think we sometimes repeat the same thing (hurts, experiences, etc) over and over in our lives?

Q What are some practical steps we can take to stop this from happening?

Integration/Fusing: Moving from knowing God's plans for our lives and how to live it to walking in it! Taking what we know, what God has shown us and people we trust have taught us and making it part of our everyday life. When we know how our lives should be but we aren't yet seeing that in our daily walk, this is the time to start making it happen. This is when we change our belief systems and behaviour to reflect what God says about us. We examine and heal old issues, so they no longer define us or hold us back.

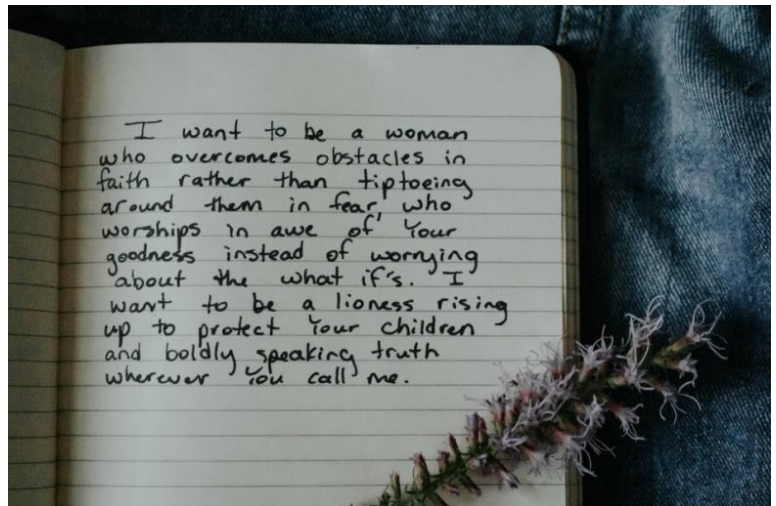


We take the tools and skills God has shown us and put them into action, applying God's principles and wisdom to every aspect of our life. During this time we need to speak and act according to what God has shown us. We may struggle at times to feel worthy or to believe these promises but we must continue to speak and act these into being. It is during this and the following stage that we must always be aware that everyone's journey is different; no two journeys are the same. Judgement of others and placing our expectations on others can have no place in our walk.

Philippians 4: 6-7 (Msg) - *"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life."*

Q This scripture tells us how we can take action concerning things that worry us. What are some other tools we can use in our daily lives to act according to what God has shown us?

Acceptance/Adoption: We begin to realise that what God has said about us, and His will for us, is true. We work towards a more authentic version of ourselves, the version that God sees! We believe and know God's promises for us. When we come across difficulties or things that in the past would have troubled us we have the wisdom, skills and mind-set to move past them. In this stage we become happy with who God has made us to be and we are no longer slaves to incorrect thinking. We have an assuredness that God's words are true and we trust in them.



Ephesians 1:4 (Msg) - *"Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love."*

Applications and Service: This stage is about changing the lives of others. This is where we are able to become spiritual leaders, supporting and caring for others in their journeys. We want to, and feel called to, share the love we feel and have been given. Our experiences allow us to both understand and walk beside others while they are on their journey. Persistence and patience become hallmarks of our walk. No longer are we kept awake at night with crippling doubt and insecurity because we place God's word and his promises at the centre of all our thoughts. In this stage we also develop the resilience, strength and grace through God to allow us to not be harmed or hurt by what others would say about us through jealousy or insecurity. Instead of feeling hurt we are able to discern the cause and offer love and support in return. In this stage we are comfortable in the knowledge that we don't have all the answers, we readily seek support when needed and stay teachable. We are able to give credit where it is due and accept credit when deserved.

"The ways of right-living people glow with light;
the longer they live, the brighter they shine."

Proverbs 4:18

Q In your own personal time think about where you are in the stages we have just looked at. What stage do you identify with and what is something positive you have learnt while in this stage?

Set an achievable goal for yourself that will help you to move forward to the next stage.

Proverbs 4:18 (Msg) - *"The ways of right-living people glow with light; the longer they live, the brighter they shine."*

Personal development is an ongoing process or journey that we go through our entire lives. Exciting - yes, scary - sometimes, hard - definitely, but with God beside us – PURPOSEFUL AND POWERFUL.



Extra Study –Rachael Lock



Proverbs 4:18 (Msg) - *“The ways of right-living people glow with light; the longer they live, the brighter they shine.”*

“The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.” (NIV)

“But the path of the just (righteous) is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until [it reaches its full strength and glory in] the perfect day. (Amp)

God always intended for us to have growth in our lives. I love how the amplified version puts it *“until it reaches its full strength and glory,”* God has placed potential in all of us. We need to be people who, the longer we live, the brighter we shine. We can do this by continually being open to learning, growing, listening to God’s voice, reading His Word and following His leading.

Hebrews 5:12-14 – *“You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God’s word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn’t know how to do what is right. **Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.**”* (emphasis added).

We need to be people who are progressing from milk to solid food. We need to grow through our trials and tribulations so we can be teaching others and not need to be retaught the basic things about God’s word.

How are we going to reach a ‘lost and dying world’ if we are still learning the basic things ourselves? We need to grow and mature so we can give out and reach our full strength and glory for God.

Recognise the importance of Spiritual Growth and build it into your everyday life. Remember to ask for help when needed, stay teachable and believe what God says about you and the potential He has placed inside you. Personal development leads to Spiritual Growth which leads to our lives being lived in a Purposeful and Powerful way for God.

www.strengthanddignity.co.nz for further reading and study.