

YOU HAVE TO EAT UP TO GROW UP

By Andy Manning

1 Peter 2:2

The title of this sermon is “You Have to Eat Up to Grow Up.”

When you become a Christian, God gives you a desire to grow. It’s a desire to change from who you are, to who God wants you to be. It’s a desire to overcome sinful habits, and attitudes. It’s a desire to become more loving, and joyful, kind, and patience, and gentle, and compassionate, and self-controlled, and courageous.

And so as a new Christian you start trying to change. You start trying to be who God wants you to be instead of the person you used to be. But as you get started, you notice a problem. This is not easy. You find that you keep doing the things that you don’t want to do; and you can’t seem to make yourself do the things that you want to do.

So how do you grow? Is it possible?

The first thing you need to know is that this is a universal experience. Growth is slow; and growth is not easy.

Even the apostle Paul, the man who wrote 13 books in the New Testament, had this problem. In Romans 7 he said that the good he wanted to do, he didn’t do, but evil instead.

Have you ever felt like that? You know what you’re supposed to. You know how God wants you to behave. And you want to behave the way God wants you to behave. But you keep behaving the wrong way.

I remember when I was in high school I was struggling with a particular habitual sin; a sinful habit; you might call it an addiction. It was a behavior that I knew was wrong, I wanted to stop, but I kept going back. I wanted to change, but I couldn’t. This phenomenon is a universal human experience.

And while it is frustrating, I want you to be encouraged, because I have good news for you. Growth is possible. Growth is inevitable, if you pay attention today. Today I'm going to show you one of the essential principles of personal spiritual growth.

1 Peter 2:2 (CSB).

Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow up into your salvation.

This passage is about the word, or the Bible. And it says three things about the Bible.

Three Facts About the Bible

1. The Bible should be our priority.

Notice it says that we should desire the word like newborn infants desire milk.

How much do newborn infants desire milk?

It is their priority in life. It is their goal in life.

An infant really only does two things – eats and sleeps. That's about it. It is what they live for. Getting more milk.

An infant does everything in its power to get more milk.

If it could kill for more milk it would; fortunately for us all it can do is cry, and cry it does.

When an infant is hungry, it cries like it's being eaten alive by a lion. It's a painful cry. An urgent cry. An emergency cry.

If an infant could talk instead of cry it would say, “If you don’t feed my now I will die.” Getting more milk is the infant’s priority.

And we’re supposed to treat the Bible like an infant treats milk.

Studying and learning the Bible should be our priority. It should be our first passion. Our first pursuit. As if our survival depended upon it. It should come first. Nothing should be more important.

We should desire it with urgency; with desperation.

The word “**desire**” here doesn’t mean to merely want something, but to long for something with all of your being (NKV Study Bible).

What do you want in life? What do you really want?

You might say happiness, or an early retirement, or to get out of debt, or a beach house, or a smart phone, or our own church building.

When I count to three, tell me what you want.

If you were to ask a newborn baby what it wants, it would say milk.

That’s supposed to be your attitude about the Bible. Learning the Bible is supposed to be the thing you want more than anything else.

When I talk about time management, I usually talk about priorities,

because time management begins with clarifying your priorities, and then keeping first things first.

And one of the things that I teach is that every Christian has four priorities.

Spiritual, your relationship with God. Spouse, your relationship with your husband or wife. Seed, your relationship with children. And self, your

relationship with yourself. Those are your top priorities, and in that order. God, marriage, children, self-care.

But what does it mean to prioritize God?

One of the things it means is prioritizing Bible study. Prioritize studying and learning the Bible so that you can know what God wants you to believe and obey.

Let me put it this way. **If you don't prioritize Bible study, then you can't prioritize God.** If Bible study is not your priority, then God is not your priority.

How can we tell what our true priorities are?

Look at how you spend your time and money.

How much time do you spend in Bible study?

Do you read the Bible daily, or just once a week at church?

Do you even read it once a week at church? The average church attendee in America only attends church once a month.

How much money do you spend on Bible study?

Have you invested in a good Bible, a good study Bible?

Have you invested in good Bible study tools?

Have you invested in good Christian books that teach the Bible?

Sometimes our intended priorities do not line up with our actual priorities.

For example, I'll go through seasons when my intended priority is health and fitness, but my actual priority is not.

But remember this: **Your destination is determined by your actions, not your intentions.**

If the destination you seek is spiritual growth, then you are not going to get there by good intentions. You will only get there by your actions.

You won't get there because you want the Bible to be your priority. You will only get there if the Bible is actually your priority in the way you spend your time and money.

2. The Bible is pure.

Go back to **1 Peter 2:2**. "Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow up into your salvation."

That word "pure" in Greek means un-deceitful. In other words, the Bible is true without any mixture of error.

This is what the Bible claims for itself. It claims to be inspired by God. And since God does not lie, then this book does not lie. It is truth.

In other words, you can trust the Bible.

It will not lead you astray.

It will not lead you to make bad decisions. It will only lead you to make good decisions.

It will not ruin your life. It will only improve your life.

Psalm 19:7 (CSB) says, “The instruction of the Lord is perfect, renewing one’s life; the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise.”

Many people say they don’t read the Bible because they don’t trust it. But my first response to that is who says you need to trust the Bible to read it? We read things all the time that we don’t trust.

Do you trust Facebook? But you read it.

Do you trust the newspaper, or news websites? No. But you read them all the time.

Do you completely trust your textbooks? No. But you study them, and if you’re a parent, you force your kids to study something you don’t trust.

Do you completely trust your car mechanic? No. But you keep giving him hundreds of dollars at a time to work on your car.

Do you completely trust your doctor or dentist? No. You know they are fallible. But you keep putting your health in their hands!

So not trusting the Bible is a lame excuse for not reading it. Even if you don’t completely trust the Bible, you can still get a lot of good from it.

But let me assure you that you can trust the Bible.

My daughter, Carter, wrote a guest-post on my blog not too long ago on this subject. It was something she learned in her homeschooling curriculum.

When archaeologists discover an ancient, historical document, they put it through **three tests to examine the document’s accuracy.** If the document fails even one of these tests, it can’t be trusted.

The first test is the **internal test**. The goal of this test is to see if the document contradicts itself. Through careful observation, archaeologists have found that the Bible passes this test as well, if not better than many other trusted documents. Oh sure, there are many people who claim the Bible is full of contradictions, but those are called “apparent” contradictions. At first glance, they appear to be contradictions, but upon further investigation, they are cleared up.

The second test is the **external text**. The goal of this test is to see if the documents contradicts any other historical documents from that time period. There are many ancient documents, such as the writings of the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, that confirm the accuracy of the Bible. Archaeologists have confirmed that the Bible passes the external test better than any other historical document!

And then the third test is **the bibliographical test**. The bibliographical test takes into account the number of ancient manuscripts of a certain document that exist today, and then it looks at how close those ancient manuscripts were copied to the date of the original autograph.

For example, and I don't have the exact numbers, but take the Gospel of John. To determine its accuracy, scholars look at the number of ancient manuscripts or copies we have today. If we have a 50 ancient manuscripts, then it is considered to be more reliable trustworthy than if we had only 2. As well, scholars would look at how close those manuscripts were written to the time of the original writing. If you have a bunch of ancient manuscripts that were copied just a few years after the original, then that makes the document very reliable.

So how does the Bible do? The Bible gets a better grade on the bibliographical test than any other ancient document in existence, such as the works of Homer and Plato.

The point is that if you trust that other ancient documents are accurate, that they haven't been altered over the years, then you should surely trust that the Bible has been accurately copied and passed down to us.

For example, everyone trusts that the copies of Plato that we have today were accurately copied over the years.

But let's compare it to the Bible.

We only have 7 ancient copies of the works of Plato, and the oldest one we have is 1200 years after it was originally written.

What about the New Testament of the Bible? We have 24,000 ancient copies of the New Testament, and several of them were made only 50-100 years after the autographs.

We have an entire New Testament manuscript that goes back to 300 years after the original was written.

I've preached entire sermons about the trustworthiness of the Bible. I can recommend some books that go into detail about the trustworthiness about the Bible.

But the best way to find out if the Bible is trustworthy is to **do two things.**

First, try it out for yourself.

See if you ruins your life or improves your life. See if it hurts you or helps you.

Second, seek out Bible-believing people and ask them if the Bible has hurt or helped them; if it has ruined or improved their life. Ask them if they regret obeying it, or disobeying it.

Let me tell you my personal story.

I've been really studying my Bible since I was about 11 years old.

I got saved at summer camp before the sixth grade, and that's when I became a serious student of the Bible.

I started reading and studying the Bible every day. And I've been studying it, and trying to live it out in my life ever since then.

When I look back over the years since that time, the only times I made bad decisions were when I disobeyed the Bible.

The Bible never led me to make a bad decision.

The only regrets I have were when I ignored and disregarded the Bible. I don't have any regrets about obeying the Bible.

The Bible has only improved my life. It has never steered me wrong.

3. The Bible is powerful.

This third thing is really the big idea of the verse, and the big idea of this sermon.

The Bible is powerful.

Let's look at the text again. "Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow up into your salvation."

It is by the word that we grow. In other words, the Bible is powerful; it is powerful to grow us in Christ.

I started the sermon by asking the question, "How do you grow? How do you change?" This verse gives the answer.

To grow up in Christ you must dig in the word.

Or as the sermon title goes, you have to eat up to grow up.

Just as a newborn has to feast eat milk to grow, you have to feast on the word of God if you want to grow in Christ.

A growing Christian is a Bible-studying Christian.

To grow in Christ you must know the word.

Let me put it this way. If you want all that God has for you, then you need to study all that God has written to you.

Don't misunderstand.

Simply learning the Bible will not grow you.

Simply reading a book about money won't make you any richer.

If you want to grow you need to study it so that you understand it, you need to believe it, and you need to put it into practice.

The important thing is not getting into the word, but getting the word into you and letting it change you.

It reminds me of the first English settlers in America.

When they met the Indians they taught them about Jesus. But the Indians were confused about the Bible. They thought the Bible itself was God, or magic, and so they grabbed it and rubbed it all over their bodies.

Rubbing the Bible all over your body is not going to help you grow. You need to study it, believe it, and obey it.

But there's a negative side to this truth as well.

If the key to spiritual growth is Bible study, if you have to eat up to grow up, then that means if you don't prioritize Bible study then you won't have a healthy relationship with God and you won't grow.

This explains why some people grow and others do not, or why some Christians seem to progress quickly while others seem to stay in the same place.

One person said, "This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book."

Dallas Seminary professor Howard Hendricks said, "Dusty Bibles always lead to dirty lives. You are either in the Word and the Word is conforming you to the image of Jesus Christ, or you are in the world and the world is squeezing you into its mold."

How Does the Bible Help us Grow?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (CSB) lays it out for us. "16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

There are four ways the Bible helps us grow.

- 1) Teaching: It teaches us what to believe.
- 2) Rebuking: It teaches us what not believe.
- 3) Correcting: It teaches us what not to do.
- 4) Training: It teaches us what to do.

The key to spiritual growth is Bible study.

How to Get Started With Bible Study

1. **Buy a Bible.** If you don't want to buy one, you can read it for free online. I recommend Biblegateway.com; many people like YouVersion.

Which translation is the best?

I recommend the Christian Standard Bible. There are many good versions, but this is my favorite. And this is the one I preach from, so it will be easier for you to follow along.

But really, **the best translation is the one that you read!**

Rick Warren once said, “The best translation is when you translate the word of God into your daily life.”

2. **Read your Bible daily.**

Jerry Bridges, author of the Christian classic *The Pursuit of Holiness* said, “We need a planned time each day for reading or studying the Bible. Every Christian who makes progress in holiness is a person who has disciplined his life so that he spends regular time in the Bible. There simply is no other way.”

To read your Bible daily you need a plan. Go to our church website and download a Bible Reading Plan. It will help you to read through the Bible systematically in one year. If that’s too much, then, then split it into two years. Read the Old Testament one year, and then do the New Testament the next year.

What do you do after you read it cover to cover?

You read it again. Read the Bible cover to cover every year, or every other year for the rest of your life.

The Bible is like eating and breathing. You never outgrow eating and breathing. You have to eat and breathe regularly all your life.

Some people claim they don’t have time to read the Bible.

Don't use that complaint with me. That lame. Do you know what LAME stands for?

Losers Always Make Excuses.

It would take you about fifteen minutes a day to read through the entire Bible in a year.

The average person watches four hours of TV a day. By the age of 18, you have already amassed about 18,000 hours of TV viewing. By the age of 65, you will have 9.5 year of your life of solid TV viewing. That's 15 percent of your life. Consider turning the TV off for a little while.

3. Attend church on Sunday.

I study the Bible all week long and prepare a sermon just for you;

I try to teach the most important Bible truths and principles.

If you come every Sunday and listen closely you will grow fast.

4. Connect with a Home Group.

Here's why. At Home Group we take the Sunday sermon deeper.

That's your opportunity to ask Bible questions about anything that you don't understand about the sermon.

That's also an opportunity to ask questions about things that you are reading; and to share with others what God is teaching you in your daily reading.

CONCLUSION

A few years ago I read a book on personal finance by Dave Ramsey called The Total Money Makeover. And that book changed my life. Our finances have improved 100% since reading that book. And I remember thinking as I was reading that book about how I wished I'd ready it ten years earlier. It would have saved me from making so many mistakes.

And that's the way it is with the Bible.

The Bible is the greatest book ever written, and it will radically transform your life for the better.

But you have to eat up if you want to grow up.

Every year that put off Bible study, you miss out on so many blessings.

If you want all that God has for you, then you need to study all that God has written to you.

And the longer you put learning the Bible, the more mistakes you'll make simply out of ignorance. And those mistakes will hurt you; and you'll do things that you'll regret.

I like what **President Ronald Raegan** said, "Within the covers of the Bible are all the answers to all the problems that face us today, if we'd only look."