

FOURTH LAY TALK

TALK #6

GROW THROUGH STUDY

Overview of All Talks

One message is delivered during The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience; it is communicated throughout the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You have been selected to deliver one of the 15 talks. In reality, you will deliver 1/15 of the Emmaus talk—one message, fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. In general, 2/3 of your presentation will come from the outlines; the remaining 1/3 will come from your original insights and personal experience.

The talks are sequenced in a defined order; each builds on the next to provide pilgrims with the complete message of Emmaus. Do not try to cover more than your assigned topic. The expanded outline intends to provide a solid understanding of the material from which your talk will be developed. The abbreviated outline helps you see the progression of the main points. *Neither outline is a script*; you will need to add personal examples to give life to the content and make it real to the hearers. Use visual aids to help convey the main points.

The Holy Spirit, as well as feedback from the team after your talk preview, will provide additional guidance for your unique presentation of this talk. Once you incorporate the suggestions offered after your preview, your presentation no longer belongs just to you but to the team God is forming to deliver the Emmaus message.

This presentation is allotted a maximum of 20 to 25 minutes. Please honor the time limit out of a spirit of cooperation, charity, good stewardship of time, and consideration for the hearers.

Overview for Speaker

Pilgrims heard in the PRIORITY talk that humans have the freedom and intelligence necessary to rise above instinct alone and set priorities for our lives. It follows, then, that study is a primary means of growing toward our priority as Christians. Whereas in piety we give God our hearts, in study we give God our minds. When we come to a Christian commitment, we have a limited knowledge of what that commitment really means. Study helps us mature in the fullness of that commitment.

Growth suggests a willingness to change and mature. Study suggests a discipline and willingness to inform our desires, emotions, and intuitions about the Christian life. Growing

through study is an important part of the process by which we move closer to imitating Jesus, the model for our lives. Study is not just an intellectual exercise but the total experience of seeking, encountering, and appropriating the truth for a life fully lived.

This talk is scheduled for Saturday at 8:45 a.m.

Expanded Outline: GROW THROUGH STUDY

Begin by leading the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Please turn to page 48 in your Worshipbook and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Opening Story (1–2 minutes)

Choose a story or experience from your own life that is brief, personal, and directly related to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult with the Lay Director or a Spiritual Director for assistance. A good introduction will engage the hearts, minds, and attention of pilgrims and move them into the theme of this talk. For example, you might do the following:

Option 1: Share a specific way you have changed your practice of study and how this has changed your life. Feel free to name the fears or obstacles that had to be overcome.

Option 2: Share the life story of someone else that illustrates the main theme of the talk.

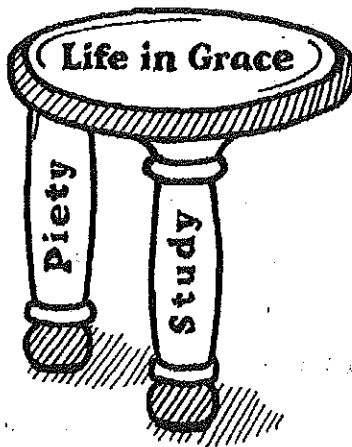
My name is _____, and the title of this talk is GROW THROUGH STUDY.

I. Initial Questions and Insights

- A. Despite less-than-exciting associations with the word *study* in some minds, study can be one of the most energizing, liberating, and deepening of human activities.
- B. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines *study* as "application of the mental faculties to the acquisition of knowledge." Interestingly, Webster's also defines *study* as "a state of contemplation" or "reverie." This is because study is an adventure; it is the doorway to discovery. Through study, we transcend narrow and superficial understandings and begin to see more deeply into reality.
- C. Study is not an intellectual game played by a few; its purpose is more than gathering or memorizing information. The purpose of study is transformation of every aspect of one's life. We are either growing or dying. We grow through study.
- D. The apostle Paul said we are transformed through the renewal of our minds (Rom. 12:2). We renew our minds by applying them to those things that are most worthy (Phil. 4:8). Jesus said that the knowledge of truth will set us free (John 8:32). The aim of study for a Christian goes beyond the human desire for information and knowledge to seek the deeper transformation of our hearts and lives—spiritual wisdom and the mind of Christ.

- E. Many are impeded in their spiritual walk by simple ignorance of the truth. In fact, much evil is done in the name of religion by zealots with closed minds who stop seeking truth.
- F. Each of us needs a unique plan for study to enable our growth toward Christian maturity. Because each of us is in a different place in the Christian journey, we have differing study needs.
- G. In the LIFE OF PIETY talk, we learned how to give God our hearts. This talk aims to help us learn how to give God our minds. In a future talk, we will learn how to give God our hands and feet.

[Display the following image of a three-legged stool that has only two legs. Explain that two legs alone do not make a stable or adequate foundation for a life in grace.]



II. Christian Study Put in Perspective

- A. Study is a constant part of our life. Babies and children constantly study to discover the world around them. We study the newspaper to discover what is happening in the world. We study our trade to discover and improve our skills on the job. We study to discover new and better ways to run our households. We study to understand new tax forms and to discover ways to survive them. The fact is, we study what we think will help us discover ways to live fuller, more effective lives.
- B. How much time do we spend studying our Christian ideal, the Christian way? There is more to Christianity than religious externals. Christianity must become the spiritual core from which all our desires, motivations, and decisions arise. This requires study—in other words, we will grow through study. Are we still operating with a thirteen-year-old's (immature) understanding of Christianity?
- C. Study is a spiritual discipline—the discipline of continual discovery. It is the exercise of faith seeking understanding. Through study our patterns of thinking and living

change and expand to accommodate greater truth, the mind and way of the Christ in us. Through study we exchange destructive habits for new, life-giving ways of thinking and living.

- D. Christian study involves two parts: our being *informed* of the truth (through information, interpreting, evaluating), and our being *formed in* the truth (through regular application, reflection, growing love for the subject being studied). Our minds will conform to the character of what we study. We study Christ so that our lives will be conformed to Christ.
- E. Study is especially important today. Ignorance abounds about Christianity. One false notion is that Christianity is passive, makes no demands, gives people a satisfied feeling. This notion confirms the critics of religion who say it only pacifies people. A truer understanding is that Christianity calls for growth and change, does not let us tolerate unmet human needs, and challenges us with revolutionary insights and possibilities for ourselves and the world.
- F. Study is also important today because the world is constantly changing (technology, art, human needs). People need a spiritual perspective on life in all of its complexity—a Christ-centered outlook to guide decision making. Christians who study will be equipped to share that outlook and call to people to a realistic faith.

III. Fields of Study for Growth

- A. *The good news*—Know the good news: God freely gives grace to everyone in Christ Jesus. Seek an ever-deepening understanding of this mystery. Learn to share your faith in a way that is authentic and true.
- B. *Scripture*—Study the scriptures to know the heart and will of God. The central purpose of scripture study is not religious information or doctrinal purity for its own sake, but inner transformation (see 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- C. *Yourself*—Know yourself, that you are a child of God equipped with special gifts for the purpose of sharing God's grace in your particular situation. Seek to know your gifts, your spiritual purpose in life, your motives, and your needs and weaknesses.
- D. *Others*—Get to know other people from a spiritual perspective; see them as Christ sees them. Seek to know people, their needs, and how the Christian message can reconcile and make their lives new.
- E. *Spiritual classics*—Study the lives and wisdom of the saints, the writings of masters of the spiritual life, and the experience of great people whose lives exemplify true humanity. Expand your perspective with their experience, wisdom, and courage.

- F. *The church*—Study church history, the church's role in society, and the ever-recurring controversies and challenges. This provides perspective that leaders need. Study the workings of your own denomination and the issues at hand. Become an informed member.
- G. *History*—The study of history gives us perspective on our times, keeps us humble by reminding us we are not so unique, helps us see God's activity over time, and helps us avoid making the same mistakes over and over.
- H. *World*—Study current events, human issues, and the state of humanity today. God loves the world so much that God's Son came and died for it. So we must love and seek to understand our world because God calls us to ministry in the midst of it.

We need to keep study in perspective. Though a means to holiness, study is not holiness itself. The reason for study is growth and maturing in faith, not acquiring knowledge for its own merit.

IV. Excuses for Not Studying

A. *"I just don't have time."*

1. The truth is that we find time for what is most important to us.
2. *[Share some of your own struggle with the time issue.]*

B. *"I don't know what to study."*

1. Ask for advice from pastors, church leaders, growing Christians you admire.
2. Visit your religious bookstore and browse.
3. Check into religious book clubs.

C. *"I don't like to read books."*

1. Remember that a book does not have to be long to contain valuable truths.
2. Accountability groups can provide mutual support for study and discussion, and make it fun.
3. Churches and community colleges offer extension courses and religious seminars that can provide support and guidance for serious study.
4. Alternatives to books include:
 - a) denominational magazines and newspapers;
 - b) audio and video recordings and films.

D. *"I don't understand parts of the Bible."*

1. Join the club! That is why we study the Bible.
2. Many aids to Bible study exist:
 - a) Commentaries such as *Interpreter's Bible*, Bible dictionaries, Barclay's commentaries.
 - b) Curriculum material such as Disciple Bible Study, Bible Study Fellowship, or Kerygma Bible Study.
 - c) Other group study opportunities like Companions in Christ.

E. *"Theology confuses me."*

1. If theology puts you off, don't worry about it at first.
2. Theology is nothing more than the study of God. Don't let it intimidate you. Approach it through your own experience. We all have some understanding of who God is and what the Christian life is all about; this is our theology.
3. In response to theology, ask:
 - a) Is this the way I experience it?
 - b) Is the thought process logical and biblical?
 - c) Every Christian who reflects on faith in this way is a theologian. How would I say it in my own words?

V. How do I develop a personal study style?

- A. Decide to make Christian study a priority.
- B. Carve out time for study. For some, the best time is early morning; for others, lunch breaks; and for some, before bedtime. *The Upper Room* daily devotional guide is an excellent resource for relating the Bible to daily life; it contains meditations from men and women around the world. A complimentary copy like this will be provided for you. [*Hold up a copy of The Upper Room.*]
- C. Find the right place. It needs to be comfortable but not too comfortable; quiet and well lit; a location where you can keep all your study tools (Bible, books, journal, paper, pencils or pens, tape recorder, etc.).
- D. Choose a balanced diet of study material over time: Bible, books, current issues. Don't read just any books; read the best.
- E. Keep a reading journal, jotting down quotes that strike home and responding with your own thoughts.

F. Find a way to share what you are studying through conversation, writing, or living. We learn most when we share it with others.

G. *[Describe your personal study plan, touching on how you work out the above needs—priority of study, time, place, study material, journal, sharing, etc.]*

Introduce the book table and tell how to obtain the books on the book list in the packets that will be given to pilgrims at the end of the weekend. Provide copies of The Upper Room daily devotional guide on the book table or in the packets. It is important to have this resource available to those who are inspired to begin a daily time with God today.]

VI. Conclusion

[Challenge pilgrims to grow through study.]

A. If we are to grow and be effective persons, we do not stop studying when we finish school.

B. Likewise, we cannot be mature Christians in our thoughts and actions if we stopped our Christian study with confirmation class or Sunday school as a youth.

C. All of life brings change, but we must not let the world determine how we will change.

D. We must be intentional if we are to grow with grace in the image of God and mind of Christ.

De Colores!

Abbreviated Outline: GROW THROUGH STUDY

Begin by leading the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

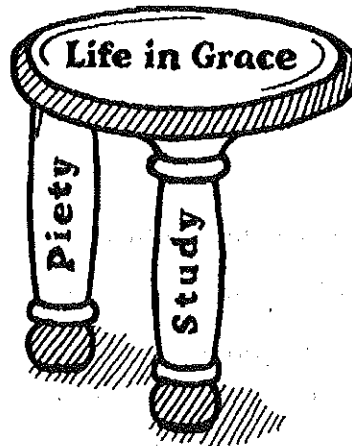
Please turn to page 48 in your Worshipbook and join me in the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

Opening Story (1-2 minutes)

My name is _____, and the title of this talk is **GROW THROUGH STUDY**.

I. Initial Questions and Insights

- A. Study can be one of the most energizing, liberating, and deepening human activities; it is the doorway to discovery.
- B. The purpose of study is not just to learn information but to transform every aspect of our lives. Study helps us grow. The aim of study for a Christian is growth in spiritual wisdom and the mind of Christ.
- C. Each person needs a unique study plan.
- D. Christian study involves giving God our minds. *[Show a visual of a three-legged stool that has only two legs. Explain that two legs alone do not make a stable or adequate foundation for a life in grace.]*



II. Christian Study Put in Perspective

- A. Study is a constant part of our lives; we study what we feel will help us live more effectively. How much time do we spend studying our Christian priority? Are we maturing in our understanding of Christian faith and life?
- B. Study is a spiritual discipline that involves seeking understanding for one's faith—exchanging old thought patterns for new, life-giving thought patterns.
- C. Christian study involves our being *informed of truth* and being *formed in the truth*. We study Christ so that we can be conformed to Christ.
- D. Christians must study so that they are equipped to share a Christ-centered outlook and realistic faith with a complex world.

III. Fields of Study for Growth

- A. The good news
- B. Scripture
- C. Yourself
- D. Others
- E. Spiritual classics
- F. The church
- G. History
- H. World

Keep perspective; study is a means toward holiness, not an end.

IV. Excuses for Not Studying

- A. "I just don't have time." (You can make time.)
- B. "I don't know what to study." (Then seek guidance.)
- C. "I don't like to read books." (Try other modes of study, such as listening to books on tape, reading journals on spirituality, or joining a discussion group.)
- D. "I don't understand parts of the Bible." (Use commentaries.)
- E. "Theology confuses me." (Approach theology from your own experience. We all are theologians because we have experienced God.)

V. How do I develop a personal study style?

- A. Decide to make Christian study a priority.
- B. Carve out time for study.
- C. Find the right place.
- D. Choose a balanced diet of study material.
- E. Keep a reading journal.
- F. Find a way to share what you are studying.
- G. *[Describe your personal study plan.]*

Introduce the book table. Provide copies of The Upper Room daily devotional guide on the book table or in pilgrims' packets.]

VI. Conclusion

[Challenge pilgrims to grow through study.]

- A. None of us stopped studying when we finished school.
- B. Likewise, maturing Christians do not end their studies with confirmation or Sunday school classes.
- C. Life naturally brings change; we must not let the world determine how we will change.
- D. We must be intentional if we are to grow with grace in the image of God and mind of Christ.

De Colores!