

GROWTHguide

Starting October 5, 2014
"The Bread of Life"



Day 1: Read John 6:35, 49-56

When Jesus said we must drink his blood, he meant that we must take his life into the very core of our hearts. What does that mean? Think of it this way. Here in a bookcase is a book which you never read. It may be the glory and the wonder of the tragedies of Shakespeare; but as long as it remains unread upon your bookshelves, it is external to you. One day, you take it down and read it. You are thrilled and fascinated and moved. The story sticks to you; the great lines remain in your memory; now when you want to, you can take that wonder out from inside yourself and remember it and think about it and feed your mind and your heart upon it. . . . It is so with Jesus. As long as he remains a figure in a book, he is external to us; but when he enters into our hearts, we can feed upon the life and the strength and the dynamic vitality that he gives to us. . . . [Jesus] is saying: 'You must stop thinking of me as a subject for theological debate; you must take me into you, and you must come into me; and then you will have real life.' . . . [H]e was telling us to feed our hearts and souls and minds on his humanity, and to revitalize our lives with his life until we are filled with the life of God.

--William Barclay, *The Gospel of John: Volume One*

- **Consider:** Do you desire Christ above all else? Do you want to be more like Him and to take on His godly character? Have you fed your heart, soul, and mind on Christ's humanity? Pray today for God to help you "take his life into the very core" of your heart! Spend time in the Word today and allow God to begin permeating your heart.

Day 2: Read Colossians 2:2-4, 6-7

As the source of power for godliness is Christ, so the means of experiencing that power is through our relationship with Him. . . . It is only by abiding in Him that we can bring forth the fruit of godly character. . . . [A]ll the wisdom and power for living the Christian life are to be found in Christ rather than in manmade philosophies and moralisms. . . . We have to set aside any dependence upon our own wisdom and strength of character and draw all that we need from Christ through faith in Him. This faith, of course, is expressed concretely by prayer to Him. . . . Beholding the Lord's glory in His word is more than observing His humanity in the gospels. It is observing His character, His attributes, and His will in every page of Scripture. And as we observe Him, as we maintain this relationship with Him through His word, we are transformed more and more into His likeness we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to progressively manifest the graces of godly character. So it is this relationship with Christ, expressed by beholding Him in His word and depending upon Him in prayer, that enables us to draw from Him the power essential for a godly life.

--Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*

- **Consider:** Are you "rooted and built up" in Christ? Do you live your life in Him? Do you depend on your "own wisdom and strength of character" to be godly, or by the inner working of Christ—through faith in Him? Delve into the Bible and behold the Lord's glory; challenge yourself to take on His character, His attributes, and His will. Pray that God would transform you into His likeness.

Day 3: Read John 15:1-4

We must remain in Christ in order to bear fruit, for no branch can bear fruit by itself. In his book, *So, You Want to be Like Christ*, Charles R. Swindoll references an old Puritan prayer titled, "Man a Nothing," which highlights our deep need for the Bread of Life to live and work within our hearts:

When thou wouldst guide me I control myself, when thou wouldst be sovereign I rule myself. When thou wouldst take care of me I suffice myself. When I should depend on thy providings I supply myself, when I should submit to thy providence I follow my will, when I should study, love, honour, trust thee, I serve myself; I fault and correct thy laws to suit myself, instead of thee I look to man's approbation, and am by nature an idolater. Lord, it is my chief design to bring my heart back to thee. Convince me that I cannot be my own god, or make myself happy, nor my own Christ to restore my joy, nor my own Spirit to teach, guide, rule me. Help me to see that grace does this by providential affliction, for when my credit is good thou dost cast me lower, when riches are my idol thou dost wing them away, when pleasure is my all thou dost turn it into bitterness. Take away my roving eye, curious ear, greedy appetite, lustful heart; Show me that none of these things can heal a wounded conscience, or support a tottering frame, or uphold a departing spirit. Then take me to the cross and leave me there.

- **Consider:** Have you allowed God to prune you and make your spiritual fruit multiply? Do you ask Christ, the Bread of Life, to fill you each day? Do you try to rule your life without Christ? Do you remake God's laws to suit yourself? Pray and ask God to prune you, that you may become more like Him.

Day 4: Read John 15:5-11

As we concentrate on growing in our reverence and awe for God and in our understanding of His love for us, we will find that our desire for Him will grow. As we gaze upon His beauty we will desire to seek Him even more. And as we become progressively more aware of His redeeming love, we will want to know Him in a progressively deeper way. But we can also pray that God will deepen our desire for Him. . . .One of the wonderful things about God is that He is infinite in all of His glorious attributes, so never in our desire for Him will we exhaust the revelation of His person to us. The more we come to know Him, the more we will desire Him. And the more we desire Him, the more we will want to fellowship with Him and experience His presence. And the more we desire Him and His fellowship, the more we will desire to be like Him.

--Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*

- **Consider:** Do you show yourself to be Christ's disciple? Do His words remain in you? If we do not allow the Bread of Life to remain in us, "we are like a branch that is thrown away and withers." Take a little more time each day getting to know Christ. Pray and ask God to continue revealing Himself to you, so that your desire for Him and to be like Him, will grow.

Day 5: Read Ephesians 4:22-24 and Romans 6:1-14

In Jesus Christ is perfect holiness, perfect patience, perfect love, perfect power over all the power of the Enemy, perfect power over everything that is not of God, and sanctification means that all that is ours in Him. The writer to the Hebrews does not tell us to imitate Jesus when we are tempted; he says, Come to Jesus, and He will succor you in the nick of time. That is, all His perfect overcoming of temptation is ours in Him. We have heard it put in this way so often: When faced with difficulties, we do not try to brace ourselves up by prayer to meet them, but by the power of the grace of God we let the perfections of Jesus Christ be manifested in us. Jesus Christ does not give us power to work up a patience like His own. His patience is manifested if we will let His life dwell within us. So many have the idea that in sanctification we draw from Jesus the power to be holy. We draw from Jesus the holiness that was manifested in Him, and He manifests it in us.

--Oswald Chambers, *Our Brilliant Heritage: If You Will Be Perfect*

- **Consider:** When we allow the Bread of Life to come and live within our hearts, Christ is manifested in us! We are not the same as we once were. That which controlled us no longer has mastery over us; Christ has set us free! Are you allowing Christ's life to dwell within you? By the "power of the grace of God" do you let the "perfections of Jesus Christ be manifested" in you? Pray to the Lord and allow Him to speak to your heart. Let the Bread of Life fully manifest Himself through you.

Day 6: Read Colossians 3:1-17

What if, for one day, Jesus were to become you? What if, for twenty-four hours, Jesus wakes up in your bed, walks in your shoes, lives in your house, assumes your schedule? Your boss becomes his boss, your mother becomes his mother, your pains become his pains? With one exception, nothing about your life changes. Your health doesn't change. Your circumstances don't change. Your schedule isn't altered. Your problems aren't solved. Only one change occurs. What if, for one day and one night, Jesus lives your life with his heart? Your heart gets the day off, and your life is led by the heart of Christ. His priorities govern your actions. His passions drive your decisions His love directs your behavior. What would you be like? Would people notice a change? . . . And you? How would you feel? What alterations would this transplant have on your stress level? Your mood swings? Your temper? Would you sleep better? Would you see sunsets differently? Death differently? . . . Would you still do what you had planned to do for the next twenty-four hours? . . . With Jesus taking over your heart, would anything change? . . . God's plan for you is nothing short of a new heart. . . . God wants you to be just like Jesus. He wants you to have a heart like his.

--Max Lucado, *Just Like Jesus*

- **Consider:** Does Jesus pervade your heart? Is He apparent in your words and actions? How do you handle the day-to-day stresses and problems? Do you see things through the lens of Christ? By spending time in the Word and praying, you become more like Christ and see people, situations, and yourself through His lens. Take time today to pray and ask God to take over your heart.

Day 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.