

THE heartbeat



*I will give you a new heart and
put a new spirit in you; I will
remove from you your heart of
stone and give you a heart of flesh.*

– Ezekiel 36:26

BRINGING HOPE TO WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD & ACROSS THE GENERATIONS • VOL 23 NO 1

a changed life

“**I listen to this program every week.**
I have a radio in my room, and I do
not change the station. ... Every day
I'm tuned in.

I've been an inmate in the penitentiary
for six years. ... But here in this place,
I met the Lord, and now I live happily
because Jesus changed my history. ...

Inside the penitentiary we have
a congregation of 300 gathered
inmates. At first, we had nowhere
to meet, but after much prayer with
my companions, the Lord provided
us with a place, and now we have a
room where we gather to praise God
and study his Word. I play the guitar,
and now I'm in the praise group.

Today I have light behind bars.”

– A Paraguayan listener of
Women of Hope in Guarani



Cultivating your spiritual growth

Becoming spiritually mature and holy happens by small steps that add up over time.

When he describes what it means to grow up spiritually, Paul lists several habits we must develop. He urges believers to speak the truth to each other; reconcile quickly; labor honestly at their jobs; give thought to their words; cultivate kindness and a tender heart; honor Christ as they fulfill their duties as wives, husbands, children, fathers, servants and masters. (Eph. 4 – 6). These are the ordinary opportunities we have every day.

Paul tells the Colossians, “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17). Scott Hubbard, an editor for the Desiring God web ministry, says, “Our spiritual maturity rests in those words *whatever* and *everything*: obey God not only in the seen, but in the unseen; not only in the exceptional, but in the mundane; not only in the crisis moments of life, but in the seemingly casual moments strewn throughout our days.”

Becoming holy begins wherever you are within the ordinary events of a day. One of our *Women of Hope* programs discusses this in a program about spiritual growth and fruit of the spirit. In the first part of the program, the presenters discuss some issues concerning women’s health. It is a very practical “lesson for your heart.” Then the program moves on to talk about the fruit of the Spirit, the desire to grow spiritually, and how this is accomplished in familiar events of the day.

We'd like to share a portion of this episode, called "Spiritual Fruit," with you. Please enjoy the excerpt at right from the "lesson for your soul" segment of the episode, and listen to more of *Women of Hope* at twr.org/WOH360.

Women of Hope excerpt: "Spiritual Fruit"

Season after season, I've watched my dad care for his grapevines. He always cuts the branches back during the winter. My dad knows it must be pruned to bear good fruit. But to look at the grapevine after it is pruned is a scary sight indeed! You wonder if it will grow again! But to my amazement, the small leaves begin to sprout in the spring.

Do you know what's so special about my dad's grapevines? They remind me of the way my heavenly Father works in my life as a child of God, and in the lives of all his children. In the Bible, one of the ways God describes his relationship to his own people, is as a gardener.

Jesus, God's Son, explained the importance of God's work in our lives so we can be healthy and produce good things. He said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ... Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:1-5).

What is the "fruit" God wants to produce in our lives? There is a list in the Bible that is called "the fruit of the Spirit." It shows the kind of fruit God wants to produce in our lives through his Holy Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). It's this fruit that lets others see that we belong to God. God wants to develop in us as his children the qualities that describe him.

How does God care for his children so they will produce good fruit? First of all, he lovingly draws us closer to himself. Then when we need it, God "prunes" us. Just like my dad cuts his grapevines in the winter, God removes the broken and unhealthy branches. These might be relationships that are bad for us or things that we trust instead of relying on God. It might be old habits that get us into trouble.

*When God prunes us, it feels painful because we don't want to change or give things up. But what he begins to take away are those unhealthy qualities and bad habits that are harmful to us and hurt our relationships with others. In the same way as insects and moss are harmful to a grapevine, he wants to **remove jealousy, lust, hatred, unforgiveness, bitterness, and complaining from our lives**. He usually uses his Word, the Bible, to help us see the bad parts of our lives. Sometimes he brings other people and circumstances into our lives to help us see behavior that needs to change.*

We must be connected to the true vine, who is God's Son, Jesus Christ to produce fruit. Jesus says, "Apart from me you can do nothing." We get connected to the vine by trusting in our Lord Jesus to save us and make us right with God.

How do you stay close to the vine once you're connected? Learn more about God and his ways through the Bible. Talk to him through prayer. Tell him you love him. Ask him to grow sweet fruit in your life.



Grow up

By Dr. Peggy Banks // Global Ministry Director, TWR Women of Hope

What does spiritual growth look like in our lives? Is it something that is easy to accomplish? How many years do we need to know Jesus before we can say that we are spiritually mature? What does it take to grow up spiritually? In the early years of my walk with Jesus, these were some of the questions that I would ask myself.

I came to know Jesus as an adult. I was a successful business owner and known in my community through appearances on TV and my work as a professional fitness trainer. However, I felt very immature in my faith. It wasn't until my commitment to the Lord was tested for the first time, through physical suffering, that I really started to understand what it means to grow up in faith.

Shortly after my salvation, I sold my fitness business and went back to school to study the Bible and become a biblical counselor. I met my husband while in school, and God opened a door for us to be the coordinators of a biblical counseling ministry in a church. As we were working in the ministry, I finished my master's degree

and was considering pursuing a doctoral degree to further prepare me to help distressed women to find hope and healing in Jesus.

Only a few months before I was to start the doctoral program, I checked into the hospital for routine surgery on my abdomen. During the procedure, an incision was made and a dark spot was cut off my stomach and sent to the pathologist. There was no concern that bad news would be coming back from the pathology report. As I was recovering from the surgery, however, the pathologist called and told me they had found Level IV melanoma cancer and needed to go back for more surgery on my abdomen.

My heart stopped! Hearing the news was devastating, and it only got worse as they wanted to examine some lymph nodes to see if it had spread to my internal organs. If it had spread there, I would have only a few months to get my affairs in order before the Lord called me home to heaven.

I couldn't believe it! I was on track to start a doctoral program so I could be

"What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things."

– PHILIPPIANS 3:8

more equipped to minister to women – the very thing that God had called me to do. How could it all be over so quickly? I was not ready to let go of this life and the opportunity I had been anticipating to one day help women come to know Jesus. I fought with God, I fought with my husband, I fought with my own emotions. Then God stepped in!

I was reading through Philippians when I came upon Philippians 3:7-12. I can't tell you how the passages just flowed over my heart and mind and brought me to a place of complete brokenness with God. I was fighting, I was weeping, I was resisting everything! Yet what I

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Prayers for spiritual growth and changed lives from one generation to the next

Through you I learn the important way of communication, especially with my girls. Now I enjoy raising my girls, because I learned that communication is more important than shouting at them.

– A listener in South Africa of Women of Hope in Zulu



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

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needed to do was repent of my desire to be in this world more than I wanted to be with Jesus.

I only remember the deep pit I was in when Jesus came and touched my heart so deeply. His love overwhelmed me and caused me to realize that this world has nothing to offer me compared with the surpassing knowledge of knowing my Jesus more deeply. I realized I wanted to know the power of his death and resurrection. I found that my heart had been more interested in what I could “do” for Jesus than it had wanted to “be” with Jesus. Jesus wanted me to long to be with him more than anything else in this world.

I was putting my work “for” Jesus ahead of being “with” Jesus. I had to let go of my desire to be known on earth as a biblical counselor and

instead to grasp the desire to be with the Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace. I confessed that I feared giving up all this world has to offer, and then I repented of that fear and surrendered my life to God’s will for me. Peace came rushing over my life and my heart. I was ready for whatever the Lord revealed in the results of the tests and surgery to come.

Soon after, it was revealed that the cancer had not spread to my other organs, and the medical team was able to remove all the melanoma in the second surgery. Miraculously, I was able to start my doctoral program only one month after the surgeries. It was a tremendous lesson and opportunity for spiritual growth in my life.

When God brings us to places where he tests our faith, these are the greatest opportunities for spiritual growth. What

tests have you gone through with the Lord? How have you grown spiritually?

That lesson has given me a deeper trust in God’s will for my life even when the process or journey doesn’t seem to make sense. I also have a deeper desire to be with Jesus and a readiness to let go of this world when it is God’s time for me to be with him. And now it’s much more important to me for the women I counsel to come to know the Lord’s words and love than it is for them to acknowledge my role in their healing.

Today, I pray that you are willing to let go of anything that is keeping you from growing in your love for Jesus and to surrender to him. I pray that you are willing to open your heart and follow wherever he is calling you and that as you follow, you find the greatest opportunities for spiritual growth.



Connecting women’s hearts to each other and to God, TWR Women of Hope has built a global prayer movement and media outreach that address unique physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

VISION

To bring hope in Jesus to women around the world and across generations.

MISSION

To educate, encourage and equip women to pray, listen, learn, grow and give through media, small-group interaction and leadership development.

TWR

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