

# THE SEVEN FUNDAMENTALS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

by Robert Wurtz II

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*A teaching on the essential principles of Christian spiritual development, using biblical imagery such as the Holy Spirit compared to water as the sustaining substance of spiritual life.*

6 Chapters

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## **THE SEVEN FUNDAMENTALS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

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## Requirement 1

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### The Seven Fundamentals of Spiritual Growth

(The First Requirement)

By Robert Wurtz II

When it comes to spiritual growth there are seven fundamentals that are required for success. The need for spiritual growth arises from the biblical mandate to love the LORD your God with all your heart, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourselves. You will grow into His divine will as we follow these seven fundamentals. You will learn in this series that there are things that can stunt your spiritual growth the same as there are things that can stunt your physical growth.

Spiritual Growth according to the Scriptures.

Throughout the New Testament there is a pattern that can be seen and followed if we put forth the effort. Just as our physical man have needs, so does the spiritual man. When you think about John 3:3, you see a mental picture of a new born baby who is in desperate need of help when it comes to the basic necessities of life. A baby cannot fend for itself, and if left alone without help will perish. So it is with a new born Believer. They are in need of great care, the same way that a newborn baby is. For starters, the baby needs food and water. They are born with a great appetite. If there is no appetite for the things of God in the life a new believer- there is likely no true conversion. Jesus said that His 'MEAT' was to do the WILL of Him that sent Him. Newborn believers can only accomplish simple things in the early stages. Simple acts of obedience such as baptism in water turn a commandment into MEAT for the believer. It is not meat or sustenance spiritually until we move past 'hearing' the word and begin DOING the word. The problem for all newborns is that they are not able to properly digest solid foods, they can only digest MILK. Milk is a combination of food and water designed to provide an infant with all of it's needed nutrition. This milk is the simple things easily to be understood and acted on to become sustenance for growth. For the newborn believers we read these words from the Scriptures... Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (I Peter 1:22-2:3).

Growing in the Spirit Means Growing OUT of Carnality.

After repenting and being born again, there is a definite plan that God has for us to follow. We are told at the end of verse 2 to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby. This

milk often comes to us in the form of preaching and teaching. It is the job of pastors and teachers to feed the newborn children of God with milk. The pastor must take the meat of the word, mix it with his own personal prayer time, and feed it to the congregation. As it is written..... I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal (I Corinthians 3:2-3). Until a newborn believer grows out of his or her carnality and begins to grow spiritually they will not be able to eat anything other than milk. Scripture is clear on one thing, if you are carnal you will only be able to digest (understand) the milk of the word and will never eat the meat. Babies do not eat meat and potatoes; neither do their metaphorical counterparts, baby believers. Hebrews said it like this...For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:12-14). Due to a lack in spiritual growth caused by their refusal to be a 'DOER' of the word, the recipients of this letter could not understand the most basic elements of Scripture (such as the Priesthood of Melchizedek) in so much that the writer could not advance on the thought he wanted to pursue because he knew they did not have the spiritual growth to understand it. We will look later at exactly what their problem was and why it was hindering and even reversing their spiritual growth. Today the very subjects that the writer to the Hebrews considered as "Milk" are what we would consider as "Meat", which is more than anything a testament to the desperate need for spiritual growth that is widespread in the Body of Christ.

#### Growing in the knowledge of God

Far too often today there are questions that arise in the minds of believers about spiritual issues that are answered not by personal study, but by a pastor or teacher. This may be the case in situations or questions that are difficult, but it should never be the result of lack of study or prayer on the part of an adult believer. It is necessary for every believer to grow in the knowledge of Christ. As it is written... Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things (doctrinal errors, deceptions, etc.) before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever (II Peter 3:17-18) and again....Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Matthew 11:29). Rest to our souls comes when we LEARN OF CHRIST. Failure to study is an invitation to deception and the hall mark of confusion.

#### NO FOOD NO GROWTH

The first requirement of spiritual growth is EATING. If you do not eat, you will not grow spiritually. Eating is progressive. You start out consuming the MILK of the word, but advance as you grow- to the meat of the word. The milk of the word we have already addressed, but the meat of the word is found in PERSONAL devotions. The progression in spiritual growth is to advance from being, as it were, 'bottle-fed', 'to spoon-fed', 'to self-fed'. The writer to the Hebrews in chapter five was upset because he was having to re-teach something that the people should have already known and was having to "spoon feed" them again. At least it was not as bad as Paul when he wrote to

Corinthians having to "bottle feed" the people milk all over again. Are YOU a hearer and DOER of the word? Are you eating the meat of God's word? How long have you been saved? Does your spiritual age and spiritual growth correspond? Have you allowed sin to dumb down your understanding until you can only process the simplest of commands? What do you need to change in order to get the process of growth started again?

### The MEAT of God's Word

Biblically, meat is not a term for beef or pork; it simply means "strong food." Spiritual food comes in the form of hearing and acting in faith (obedience) towards God's Word. Jesus told the people of Israel.....Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst (John 6:31-35). And again... It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life... and again... Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Corinthians 5:7-8).

### Christ our Passover

When Paul told the Corinthian Church that Christ is our Passover it brings into play all of the before mentioned Scriptures. Passover is a feast the consists of primarily unleavened bread and lamb. It is a celebration of God's mercy in Egypt and at Calvary. There was to be for each household a lamb that was slain and the blood of it placed on the door posts. The people were then instructed to cook and TOTALLY consume the Passover Lamb...And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover (Exodus 12:7-11). God did not ask the people if they liked what they were to eat, they were told to eat it all whether they liked it or not. So it is with the meat of God's word. We are to consume it, all of it, and are not to pick and choose. We are to prepare it God's way and not our way, just as we interpret the scriptures rightly and rightly divide them.

### The Sacred Message Does Not Have a Sacred Method

However you prefer you should get the Word of God into your heart. Whether it be reading, bible tapes, bible CD's, word for word VCR or DVD programs, or having a person simply read the bible to you; get the word into your heart and begin to act on it! There are few people who can actually find excuse for not having received the word of God in the 21st Century. Cultivate an appetite for the word by abstaining from things that suppress the appetite such as worldliness and sin. The

more you hear it and ACT on it- the more you need and want it. Soon you are on your way to spiritual growth and are eating meat as opposed to drinking milk.

## Requirement 2

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### The Seven Fundamentals of Spiritual Growth

#### (The Second Requirement)

By Robert Wurtz II

Of all of the substances on the earth, none are more essential for sustaining life than water. Water is irreplaceable. For us as believers, the Holy Spirit is that water. Many times in Scripture the Holy Spirit is referred to metaphorically with water. The reason for this is because God wanted His people to know how IMPORTANT the Holy Spirit is in the life of a believer. You will not live long without water- and your relationship with God cannot survive without continual infillings of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is essential for sustaining the Spiritual life of ALL believers, and cannot be replaced with anything else. All living things are composed primarily of water, and without it- life ceases.

Drinking of His waters..

In lesson one we discussed the importance of eating (spiritually). We said that if we do not eat, we will not grow (spiritually). The difference then between eating and drinking is that if you do not eat you will not grow; if you do not drink you will die (spiritually). Spiritual death occurs when the Holy Spirit no longer exercises control over of a person through conviction, nor empowers them for holy living. When a person reaches a certain point in their rebellion against God's Holy Spirit- they are considered REPROBATE. This word is used in the New Testament several times. Romans 1:28-32 reads; And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. The people had decided that they did not want to partake of God's Holy Spirit through His natural process of conviction. If you will notice it is said that they were "filled" with unrighteousness, fornication, etc. in direct opposition to God who said be "Filled with the Spirit." The Spirit of God was striving with the people as God said He would do in Genesis 6, but the time came when the Spirit gave them over to a reprobate mind. Paul referred to this process when he wrote "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Corinthians 9:27). The word "castaway" could have easily been translated as reprobate as it is in several other New Testament passages. On the other hand, it could have had a meaning similar but slightly different than what Jesus said in Luke 9:25-26; "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man

be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." When it comes to spiritual survival the believer needs to 'drink' of the Holy Spirit. Not just drink, but drink and drink and drink.

#### Getting a Drink of Spiritual Water.

Contrary to popular belief, getting a spiritual drink does not mean getting a glass of Holy Water. Spiritual Water is the Holy Spirit being poured into or onto a believer. Jesus said it like this "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14). The Spirit of God is to your Spirit, as H2O is to your natural body. The "waters of God" bring everlasting life, just as earthly water brings physical life (see John 3:5-7).

The question then becomes "where can I get a drink of this water?" The answer is simple; from Christ Himself. Christ is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit. We come to Christ and we say "Lord, FILL me with your Spirit."

The woman at the well asked Jesus, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." Jesus then replied, "woman call your husband." He no doubt used that statement to remind the woman of her fornication. He did not condemn her, but rather made a statement that opened the door for the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and godly sorrow (II Corinthians 7:9-10). She repented and told the whole town of what had happened. Only a few verses later Jesus made the memorable statement "look on the fields for they are white unto harvest." With one command (go call thy husband) Jesus was able to touch the woman's heart with the need for repentance- in the context of a field that was ready to be harvested.

Whether people like to hear it or not, the number one job of the Holy Spirit is to bring holiness to this world. As it is written.... Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:7-8). If the Holy Spirit is TRULY present there will be great Holy Ghost conviction for sin. That is the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit- that we might conform to genuine holiness by emulating the personality of Jesus Christ.

#### The Washing of Water by the Word.

It is next to impossible to wash without water. If perchance a person were able to wash well with soap, they will still need to rinse with water. The two go hand in hand. This is also true in the Spirit, as it is written....Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27). There is a washing effect that takes place when the Holy Spirit applies the truth of God's word.

I wonder if God views the Church as if it had the "Beaver Cleaver" syndrome? You know, go in the bathroom, close the door, turn on the water, and stand in front of the mirror to fool your mother. Oh' he made a lot of noise in there, but he had a phobia about taking a real bath. He avoided that

bathtub like the plague. Is that not what many people do in church? Come to the house of God, close the door, turn on the water, and make a lot of noise in our attempt to fool God? Do you stand beholding our natural face in a glass (James 1:23-24) and leave straitway to forget what manor of man and woman that you are? Imagine a service where the Spirit of God was being poured out like water, while the word was being preached without fear or favor to loosen up the sin; but you are not washing, scrubbing, and rinsing. Do you leave the working of God unchanged?

The word of God is like the Holy Spirit's soap. It has a certain 'acidic' level when preached in balance like regular soap. Some people will never get clean with regular soap. They need a **STRONG** dose of hellfire and brimstone passages to be 'mined out' and preached 'strait'- just to cut through the layers of sin. Others need a gentler word that leans heavily on love and mercy because of their brokenness. This is why a preacher **MUST** be led of the Spirit of God. When the word has to be preached with such strength and power, God will use it to expose your sin for what it is. He will then cleanse you of it by "destroying the yoke" (because of the Anointing) by the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember the Spirit's name is Holy. The **TRUTH** sets the person free from the stains of sin- to be washed away by the tears produced by great **HOLY GHOST CONVICTION**.

#### The Many Avenues of Water

Water comes to us in many ways. There are oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, wells, ice, rain, and steam. Amazingly, God uses most of these as metaphors to explain the working of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that "out of our bellies would flow rivers of living waters," while Revelation said that there is a Crystal Sea around the throne of God (Revelation 4:6). John 4:14 said that the water that Christ gives is as a well springing up into everlasting life, while we are told that God will send the early and latter rain.

To simplify the matter, we come into contact with the Spirit of God when we are born. When we get saved (genuinely born again) He enters us to dwell there after binding the strong man that used to reside there (Matthew 12:29). We then have the option of being baptized with the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance. Have you sought for the baptism in the Holy Spirit? Offer your body to Christ, as a living sacrifice and the great Baptizer in the Holy Ghost will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with **FIRE**. Are you right now **FULL** of the Holy Ghost? Ask the **LORD** to fill you to overflowing!

#### Evidence of fullness

You do not have to ask if a person is Full of the Holy Ghost. Their actions are self-announcing. Not to be confused with simply being **ZEALOUS**, the person who is truly zealous for God in accordance with His Spirit seeks to do the will of God and not their own. They do not turn God off and on like a switch, and they live a life of holiness. Conviction is the number one most influential force in the life of a person sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of God uses it like a steering wheel to guide them. They are convicted when they do not love, when they hold bitterness, or treat others in a rude fashion. Love thy Neighbor as thyself is their cardinal rule. Above all things they love God, with a true love, that demonstrates itself verifiably. Their tongue is a bridled member of their body, while the rest of them are being brought into subjection as well- lest as Paul said "having preached to others they themselves might become disqualified." They are full of godly wisdom that begins with the Fear of the Lord. When they ask for wisdom they are not surprised

when their fear of God simply grows a little more. For them, GOD IS AS REAL as you are-as I am.

Get to the Filling Station!

The first thing that happens when a car gets low on water is that it overheats. Tragically, it could burn up. Bad things happen when a car overheats and often it is expensive. So it is with the Christian life. If we do not check our “water level” we could simply burn up under the pressure of life. Especially the pressure of a Spirit Filled life at “half full.” We need that drink of water that the woman at the well spoke of daily in our lives. Not a metaphorical Pepsi, or Coke, but a drink of WATER. God has equipped us with the ability to know when we are thirsty physically, AND spiritually. It is imperative that we keep ourselves as full of the Spirit as we possibly can, and at all times.

## Requirement 4

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### The Seven Fundamentals of Spiritual Growth

(The Fourth Requirement)

By Robert Wurtz II

It could be argued that one of the most healthy things that a person can do is to run. Under most circumstances that is correct, however, under the wrong conditions running can be one of the most dangerous things that a person can do. In this lesson we will look at the fourth faze of our spiritual growth and it is that of running; not in the physical sense, but in the Spiritual. There are two ways that we 'run' Spiritually: one is with Sin as the opposition, the other is our fulfillment of the perfect will of God for our lives (i.e. ministry).

Running with Patience the Race That is Set Before Us.

The bible has a lot to say about running both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Paul often used sports as metaphors in describing spiritual truths. He talked about running, wrestling, boxing, and many other aspects of Olympic type games in his day. The people could understand his use of these analogies quite well, because they were familiar with those things that were so much a part of the culture of that day. With this in mind let us look at what Paul the Apostle had to say about running.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Hebrews 12:1-4).

According to Hebrews 12:1 we are in a race against Sin in the which-Sin is trying to beset us. Sin is literally trying to knock us out of the race. We are told we MUST "lay aside" the WEIGHTS that are slowing us down allowing Sin to easily beset us. So we see then that the weights are in a sense companions of the Sin; they compliment each other like cause and effect. In order to thwart Sin's attempt to beset us we must separate ourselves from the WEIGHTS that are slowing us down allowing a particular type of sin to catch us (as it were) that we are generally vulnerable to. The tragedy in allowing sin to catch us- is that we are almost guaranteed to stumble, and possibly even fall. Children frequently fall and skin there knees when they run; however, falling for adults is much more serious.

What is a Weight?

Weights come to us in many forms, but essentially they are ANYTHING THAT IS SLOWING YOU DOWN IN YOUR FLIGHT FROM SIN. For example, the bible says to flee fornication; obviously you will have difficulty 'fleeing' if you do not lay aside the weights that hinder you from running from it. Remember, sin is a relentless pursuer of you and I in our "race" against it. You cannot simply stop on the shoulder of the road for a break, you must run and keep running. You cannot afford to be weighted down with things that serve to keep sin in front of you. You need to get rid of some things that are making it easy for the enemy to trip you up! What is that thing in your life that you could rid yourself of and be better off?

James teaches us that there are going to be temptations that we "fall into." In other words-they are unexpected and unsolicited. That is a bit different from adding and adding weights to yourself until you have a problem in an 'area' maintaining the victory over sin. If your 'vice' is alcohol you should not weigh your self down by eating lunch every day at the corner bar and grill. You would not frequent liquor stores, convenience stores, or any other place that is going to hinder you from keeping a SAFE DISTANCE from alcohol. You would probably go as far as to avoid passing any type of business that made you think about drinking. Otherwise, it would only be a matter of time before the weight of having yourself bombarded by thoughts of drinking, led to your falling into it AGAIN.

#### Identifying Your Personal Weights.

We must start this section from the premise that there is nothing worth losing your soul over! Jesus said it like this "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). No matter how petty, how seemingly stupid, or how unpopular you become, you must identify your weights and discard them. You do not have a choice. You can go on telling yourself that your vice is going to somehow get better on it's own, but that is a lie hatched out of Hell! YOU CAN'T HANDLE IT! How many years are you going to keep telling yourself you can handle it? If you keep doing what you have been doing you are going to get the same results. Change does not come until you decide to make some changes. What would you be a lot better of without? What would you be a lot better off for having stopped doing? Would you be better off if you quit going to thus and such a place? Would you be better off not talking to so and so? Who, What, or where are your weights? Say to yourself "I probably wouldn't have half the trouble with this STRONGHOLD in my life if I would simply get rid of or stop (???What???)".

#### Discarding Your Weights.

I must take this time to announce the seriousness of refusing to discard the weights that lead to the vices in your life. God has a very unique way of commenting on this very thing, in the which He refers to Israel's 'Vice Sin's' as LOVERS, as it is written... They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed (Jeremiah 3:1-4). What is the lover in your life that stirs the anger of God? WHERE

is the Image of Jealousy (Ezekiel 8)? Get rid of it!

### Getting Along Without Your Vices

Moving along in life without a vice begins with knowing that God is enough; not God + this or that. Satan does not seem to mind allowing a Christian to gloat of their full time holiness and ignore their part time vice. Getting rid of a weight to keep you away from sin can be a painful ordeal for some people. But you need to look at it from God's vantage point! Just like the illustration of the lovers, so are some weights and vices to deal with for some people. Would a spouse tolerate that? Why should God? You need to reach a place where you HATE sin! At first you cannot imagine life without them, but after a while you will wonder what MADNESS you were thinking and will cry out to God for mercy over your heartlessness and disregard for His feelings towards His Bride. The true definition of whoredom is to take the love that belongs to the one and give it to the other. Are you committing whoredoms against God? Are you in sorrow because you have to leave those whoredom ways? Then you need repentance. A repentance that utterly forsakes sin and all its stepping stones. Do you not think God is tired of all the little black books? Know ye not that the Spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

### Running in Your Ministry

The second way in which we will look at running is as it relates to our ministries. Satan is working overtime to thwart us in our lives so that he can hinder our ministries. Paul said it like this: To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (I Corinthians 9:21-27). Paul showed the importance of NOT allowing two things to happen 1) Bring a reproach against the Gospel 2) Become a reprobate himself. He brought his body into subjection and laid aside every weight so that he might win the race AND receive the prize; and that prize is Christ (Philippians 3:8). Paul literally wanted to win Christ. Do you want to win Christ? LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT and the besetting sins once and for all!

## Requirement 5

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### The Seven Fundamentals of Spiritual Growth

(The Fifth Requirement)

By Robert Wurtz II

We have reached the final faze of preparation in our study of spiritual growth that will accomplish the “Having done all” portion of Ephesians Chapter 6. Up to this point we have looked at the first four things that allow us to grow and mature Spiritually. They are EATING, DRINKING, WALKING, and RUNNING (Spiritually). As a final point of preparation we will look at what the Bible calls EXERCISING. This is not the physical exercise that profits us little (I Timothy 4:8), but is a spiritual exercise that will strengthen us spiritually and allow us to progress in our spiritual diet. With out this exercising, there will never be any eating of the meat of God’s Word; there can only be milk. But for those who are willing to properly use that milk to begin exercising their senses to discern good from evil, they will grow and mature in the more deep things of God.

Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:11-14)

#### Exercising Your Senses

When the Bible uses the word “exercise” it carries a different meaning that what the word is normally used for. The sense of the word is that we are to take authority or take control of our senses. We are to literally exercise authority over our senses by using them to discern good from evil-rather than using them as a means of ungodly pleasure. God has given human beings senses that reveal the nature of things that they encounter, both physically and spiritually. It is a God given line of defense that should be used to distinguish what God accepts from what He rejects, and from what is harmful from what is good. If you do not exercise control of your senses... your senses will exercise control over you! This is most dangerous in that we are taught from Scripture that our senses are never satisfied. As it is written... The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8). That is why we must rebuke things that are vying for our attention. The word rebuke is simply to say STOP IT! THAT’S ENOUGH! So often people rebuke the Devil... when they really need to be rebuking themselves. We need to take our God given control of our own senses.

Taking control of our senses is difficult when you are spiritually weak- so it is important to gain strength by exercising them as much as possible-while we feast on God's word to gain strength. The pattern works in a cycle like this Eat/Exercise/Eat/Exercise... and so on-until we gain enough strength to take more control. The message of Hebrews 5 is that God wants to teach us many things about Himself and Christ, but He can't because the people of God refuse to take control of their senses so that they can begin to understand the more deep things of God. This is a vicious cycle, because if a person never begins to utilize the word that is able to save our souls, they will be locked in a Repent-Backslide-Repent-Backslide 'state' until the day they die. We are commanded in the following verses of Hebrews 5 and Hebrews 6 not to lay this foundation over and over. We are to lay it once, begin hearing and doing the milk of the word, walking in the word, running with every weight laid aside, and EXERCISING CONTROL of our senses. Those senses are Sight, Hearing, Smell, Taste, and Touch. Additionally we will add the 2 other senses found in Scripture- the Conscience and the Tongue.

The light of the Body is the Eye....

Your first and greatest sense is your Eye sight. All of a man's senses would he trade for his eyes. However, Job, being the oldest book in the bible and the first human being ever mentioned by God as a God fearing man, made this statement; I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid? For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity? Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hasted to deceit; Let me be weighed in an even balance that God may know mine integrity. If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands; Then let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out. If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door; Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her. For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase (Job 31:1-12). Jesus added to Job's remarks when He said; The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:22-24).

Between these two passages lie man kinds two greatest vices: LUST and MONEY. Your eyes will never be satisfied on either count. If you do not exercise authority over your eyes your entire heart will be filled with darkness..., and as Jesus said it "a great darkness." The primary passage into your heart is through the portal of your eyes. It is by exercising this and the other senses that you will "GUARD YOUR HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE FOR OUT OF IT ARE THE ISSUES OF LIFE."

The Ears are Never Full

The second great sense that you must take authority over is the ear. If a person can distinguish the foulness of a resounding brass or tinkling cymbal there is no reason that we cannot identify a destructive message in our ears. These foul messages affect us spiritually by weakening us. If you

let filth into your ears, filth will fill your heart. Think of your heart as a tape recorder. Your tongue will then become the “sound system” that replays every thing that you filled your heart with...for out of the ABUNDANCE of the heart the mouth speaketh.

### Sorcery

Few people know that the Greek word for Sorcery is Pharmakeia, the same root word for our English word pharmacy. The word simply means a spell binding substance. A ‘drug’ that alters the mind is in the category of sorcery. Keep in mind that God gave us a nose to distinguish the difference between foul and harmful odors, and pleasant -harmless odors. If it has an foul smell it is likely poisonous..., either to your body or to your Spirit. So if it smells like Marijuana it probably is, and God commands His people to forsake Sorcery. By the time your brain goes dead from drugs, your Spirit man will have long since metaphorically turned to ashes. Keep yourself clean from all these things that feed in through your sense of smell.

### Poison of the Soul

If you have to “acquire” a taste for it, it’s not the will of God. Your taste buds are designed to alert you when a bitter and poisonous substance enters your mouth so that you don’t swallow it. You could never drink gasoline, because you could not stand the taste of it. So it is with anything you put in your mouth; God gave you the ability to discern if it is bitter or sweet. If you override your sense of taste- rather than being filled with the Spirit, your spirit man will soon perish! God gave us our sense of taste to warn us what we have in our mouth- if it is sin the taste buds will know it.

### Our Sense of Touch

Sensuality is a serious sin in our time. Some are sensual and have not the Spirit. Of all the things to exercise control of this is perhaps the easiest. God has given us the opportunity to exercise the sense of touch by alerting us when we are being treated in an ungodly fashion. That may seem funny at first, but it was no laughing matter for the man who once laid his head in the lap of a woman named Delilah and later went out into eternity physically blind and young in years. A simple “keep your hands to yourself” would have saved that man’s life and ministry.

Exercising the first five senses will allow you to better control the next two senses, the conscience and the tongue. There is nothing quite like a guilty conscience; and there are certainly few things worse than a tongue that is wildly out of control. The things that enter the heart through the senses are the things that will be revealed in the conscience (to us) and through the tongue (to others). Our conscience tells us where we are with God. It is that unaffiliated member that speaks on God’s behalf. Is your conscience pure and undefiled? Then the tongue reveals your heart through your words. When you open your mouth and start speaking- everyone gets a printout of your heart condition. What is your talk like? Do your talk a lot of foolishness and idleness? Do you openly speak of sin?

Our previous lesson was to lay aside the weights in our lives, this lesson was to take advantage of fewer things besetting us by exercising our senses. We must keep sin out of our heart and out of our physical body. Getting rid of the primary sources (weights) and then exercising your senses will make it easier to resist temptations as they come less frequently.

## Requirement 7

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### The Seven Fundamentals of Spiritual Growth

(The Seventh Requirement)

By Robert Wurtz II

As we bring to a close this series on spiritual growth, it is imperative that we practice the first 5 fundamentals that we have learned thus far. Not for merely a week..., a month..., or a year..., but for the rest of our lives. They are not optional, they are mandatory. Failure to follow the teachings of God's word that are required to bring spiritual growth and spiritual victory over sin, will leave us believing that the blood of Christ can only free us from the penalty of sin, and not it's effect on our lives. As you follow the despair to it's final end, you will find yourself convinced that your- very will- is in bondage to sin, and that your Born Again spirit man (the new man) is as depraved as was the old man which was bound to sin and corrupt.

Obviously to believe that we cannot be free from the power of Sin, "fly's in the face" of all that was accomplished at Calvary, and contained in the Gospel. It is a perverse concept of Grace, that teaches that God merely seeks to forgive and does not seek to liberate from sin. As it is written: See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:25-29) and again...For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (II Peter 2:4-9). God has promised us a way to escape in times of temptation, and that way of escape begins with us making the preparation to fulfill -His Will -rather than making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof (Romans 13:14).

Having done all....Stand!

When we began looking at the Book of Ephesians in the first few lessons, we said that those lessons contained the "having done all" of Ephesians Chapter 6. For if you have not done all, you

are not prepared for what awaits you in your Spiritual life. Because the ultimate end of our need to grow in strength and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is wrapped up in the fierce spiritual warfare that every born again believer is engaged in. That warfare is described by Paul in Ephesians 6:12 saying: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places....and again... The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy (I John 10:10).

Satan and the powers of darkness are literally out to convince us that we should join him in eternity in hell. He would not waste his time merely harassing us for the fun of it; he has a definite plan of destruction. He is strategic and tactical- literally plotting our demise like a veteran chess player on the board of life and death. Knowing that he cannot pluck us out of the mighty hand of God, he engages us in a battle of the mind that is designed to allure us by a seducing Spirit or a doctrine of the Devil, hoping that we will give heed. As it is written: Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron (I Timothy 4:1-2).

They hear lies from seducing spirits and repeat them as hypocrites. They have a conscience that is seared with a hot iron and propagate the lies that they have believed, by teaching them to others. This thing is happening mostly in areas of extreme teachings that make unattainable promises. They are easily recognized, because they hinge on a mere hand full of Scriptures and require the blatant reinterpretation of other scriptures that are easily taken literally. "That's not what that really means" is the hallmark statement of a person who revises the meaning of a Scripture that is easily understood literally, so that they can subvert their audience. The First principal of true hermeneutics is that - Scripture's that are easily understood literally- should be taken so.

Whether it be a seducing spirit, in whispering lies into your mind, or "a devil in men's clothing" their teachings are to be cast down as vain imaginations..., as it is written..., For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (II Corinthians 10:3-5). When a devil tries to convince you that God did not mean what he said, he is revealing himself as the serpent that he really is. The tactic is as old as the Garden of Eden. We must take a stand for God's Word as it is written in plain English (Hebrew or Greek). That is the premise from which you will conduct your warfare with Satan if you have any intention of being successful. You must STAND on God's word!

Utilizing the Whole Armor of God for all it's worth

If you have bought into the lie that your spirit man (the new man) is immortal, this side of eternity, you will never feel the need to take the "Whole Armor of God." After all, if you cannot be spiritually separated from God no matter what happens, there is really no reason to talk about an armor that metaphorically protects a persons vital spiritual organs from destruction (heart, mind, etc.).

Love for God (as a Father) will not always be enough reason to cause a person to consistently wear the whole armor, because foolishness is bound in the heart of a child (and we are God's children). Children often are not motivated to do the right thing by love, it is frequently by the rod of correction. So it is with us, and we are chastised by God as His children. Nor is our born again nature enough to compel us to put it on by nature, for if it were, everyone would be wearing it at all times no matter what. No, these things will not compel a person to put it on. However, what will do it, is an awareness of impending danger that "if I don't wear that armor.....(?????)". Some have forgotten that God even told them to put it on, so they are being slaughtered in battle and are either backsliding and miserable, or backsliding and adjusting their beliefs and theologies to account for their condition. To negate the whole armor of God, will result in a person not believing that a Christian can possibly live a victorious life. And without the whole armor...you can't.

The purpose of God giving us the whole armor of God is so that we can take our STAND, and fight the good fight of faith, laying hold on eternal life. It is up to us to take that armor and fight in PREVAILING PRAYER; God will not do it for us. He will never leave us or forsake us, but it will be up to us to make the conscious decision to FIGHT a good fight against the powers and rulers of the darkness of this world. Jesus already carried His cross, met with Satan to be tempted in the Wilderness, saw Satan's influence in his friends and family; and even watched as one of His closest followers believed the lie's of hell and became possessed of Satan himself. Will you persevere and prevail in this battle for your soul? Will YOU fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life?

#### The Sword and the Shield

The prerequisite for fighting the good fight of faith, is that we must exercise a verifiable faith in every Jot and Tittle of God's Word. For it is "faith in every word" that makes up the very fabric of our shield. Likewise, it is the rightly interpreted (divided) word that will make up our sword. We must start today living not by mere bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. Any compromise hereafter will present you with a weakness and a vulnerability to sin and Satan. Never again will you be able to succumb to a falsely interpreted or compromised meaning of what God said. If it is plainly understood, you will look for no other meaning, whether you like what God said or not!

Imagine a shield that is comprised of scripture verses; each one taking up it's own place in the hedge. These scripture verses make up nearly all of the faith that we can possibly have. Each one that we exercise a verifiable faith in, will protect us in that particular area. God literally gave us the word of God as a shield against sin. That word stands between us and a sin. For each verse that we negate to exercise a verifiable faith in, there is a hole in our shield. That is why it is called the SHIELD OF FAITH. It is not "faith in our own faith," it is faith to LIVE by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. Literally, it is a shield of faith in God and His word.

We leave holes in our faith all the time and don't realize it. Every time we make the word of God of no effect by explaining a commandment or a exhortation away, we unknowingly become inconsistent in our beliefs. We pray for the sick and believe the promise of God as if He spoke them with an audible voice, but when we see a principal or function that we are told to do by the very same God, we suddenly become hard of hearing. No longer will a believer be able to be selective in what Scriptures that desire to place on their "Faith" list, but rather must take them all

as God spoke them. How could a person ask God to see their faith (as Jesus saw so many peoples faith) in the promises, but turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to their unbelief in an exhortation or commandment?.

### Quenching all of the Fiery Darts

The darts that the enemy shoots at you are temptations to sin. Each temptation is shot with an accompanying "LIE" with which to sedate the conscience. This tactic is as old as the Garden of Eden. The word of God will rise in the conscience- so the devil shoots temptations with a lie to counter the conscience. This is exactly what happened to Eve. The enemy drew the attention to the forbidden thing and then began a series of lies that induced a temptation to partake of the forbidden thing. He still uses this same tactic.

On the battleground of our minds we are bombarded with evil thoughts and imaginations that oppose and exalt themselves against God (I Corinthians 10:3-5). Those thoughts come into our minds as fiery darts. James told us that there is a fire that came from God, and a fire of hell (James 3:6-10). The fire of hell in this case is the power(s) of darkness that demons and Satan use to give FORCE and POWER to their darts. The darts are demonically empowered and they must be extinguished or quenched according to Ephesians 6. Now, Satan will fire a demonic thought into your mind that opposes God and His word; you must respond by exercising unwavering faith in that word. In other words, you must throw up your shield of FAITH.

Jesus (as the Captain of the Host) showed us how to defend ourselves against Satan's lies and twisted scripture, and put Him to flight by the sword of His mouth. Satan's tactic is to suggest we do something sinful; we must exercise faith in what God REALLY said and then we must counter with a rightly divided scripture. When the devil gives a twisted compromise to the scripture that we well know the true meaning of, we must raise our shield of faith. If you do not throw up the shield, that dart will lodge in your heart and attempt to take root in your life. If you are drawn away in your own lust to believe the lie of the tempter, that lust will conceive and eventually bring forth sin. If it goes unchecked it will bring forth death. In the day that ye eat of the Tree thou wilt surely die is as true today in our lives, as it was in Adam and Eves'. The tactics (wiles) that Satan uses are the same as well. If he cannot get you to doubt the meaning of what God said, he will work on undermining the penalty and punishment for the sin. If He cannot do either of these he will lie and tell you that judgment may be coming, but it's a long way off! NAY! God will avenge speedily! BE STRONG in the LORD and in the power of His might! This will ensure that your will and resolve be to stand and FIGHT and not easily give in and succumb to sin. Are you doing all the things needed to stand? Are you ready to use your shield of faith and FIGHT! If not you need to be about it- because the thief is coming! He is coming to steal and kill and destroy you. Stand to you feet and quit ye like men!

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