

FOURTH LAY TALK

TALK #6

GROW THROUGH STUDY

Overview of All Talks

The Walk to Emmaus 72-hour experience delivers one message that is communicated through the music, meals, clergy meditations, attitudes and actions of the team members, and the talks. You will deliver one of the fifteen talks. In reality, you will deliver one-fifteenth of the Emmaus talk—one message with fifteen presenters.

Prepare your talk using the outlines provided. As a good general rule, two-thirds of the talk will come from the outline and one-third would be the speaker's original insights and illustrations.

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 twenty to twenty-five 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.

Videos and recorded songs should not be part of the talk. Any projection during the talk should be kept simple.

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

EXPANDED OUTLINE

GROW THROUGH STUDY

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit

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

Introduction (1–2 minutes)

Choose a brief, personal story or experience that relates to the main point of this talk. If you cannot think of an appropriate introduction, consult the Lay Director or 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.

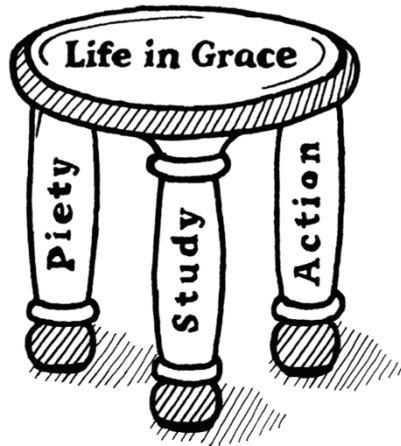
My name is _____, and the title of this talk is GROW THROUGH STUDY.

I. Insights

- A. Study can be an energizing and liberating human activity; it provides the doorway to discovery.
- B. Study is not simply to gather 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. The apostle Paul said we are transformed through the renewal of our minds. (See Romans 12:2.) We renew our minds by applying them to worthy topics and activities. (See Philippians 4:8.) Jesus noted that knowledge of truth will set us free. (See 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.
- D. Simple ignorance of the truth impedes many in their spiritual walk. Those with closed minds who stop seeking truth do much evil in the name of religion.

- E. Each of us needs a unique plan for study to enable growth toward Christian maturity. Because we are in different places along the Christian journey, we have differing study needs.
- F. In the LIFE OF PIETY talk, we learned how to give God our hearts. This talk helps us understand 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.]



III. Christian study in perspective

- A. Study is a constant part of our life. Babies and children constantly study to discover the world around them. We follow the news to learn about world events. 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. 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? Christianity involves much more 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. In what ways do we still operate with an immature understanding of Christianity?
- C. Study is a spiritual discipline—the discipline of continual discovery, 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 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, interpretation, evaluation) 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 our lives will be conformed to Christ.

- E. Study is especially crucial today. Ignorance abounds about Christianity. One false notion: Christianity is passive, makes no demands, and 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 critical today because the world constantly changes (technology, art, human needs). Life in all its complexity requires a spiritual perspective—a Christ-centered outlook to guide decision making. Christians who study find themselves equipped to share that outlook and call to others to a realistic faith.

IV. 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 an authentic way.
- 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 Timothy 3:16-17.)
- C. *Yourself*—Know yourself, acknowledge 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 through their experience, wisdom, and courage.
- F. *The church*—Study church history, the church’s role in society, and the ever-recurring controversies and challenges. Leaders need this perspective. 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 of our commonalities with others, helps us see God’s activity over time, and prevents our making the same mistakes again.
- 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. We love and seek to understand our world because God calls us to minister in the midst of it.

We keep study in perspective. Though a means to holiness, study is not holiness itself. We study to grow and mature in faith not acquire knowledge for its own merit.

V. Excuses for not studying

- A. *"I don't have time."*
 - 1. We find time for what we most value.
 - 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 a religious bookstore and browse.
 - 3. Check into religious book clubs.
- C. *"I don't like to read books."*
 - 1. A short book may contain valuable truths.
 - 2. Accountability groups can provide mutual support for study and discussion and make reading 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 the following:
 - 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, such as the following:
 - a. Commentaries such as *The Interpreter's Bible*, Bible dictionaries, Barclay's commentaries.
 - b. Curriculum material such as Disciple Bible Study, Bible Study Fellowship, etc.
 - 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 about; this is our theology.
 - 3. In response to theology, ask the following:
 - a. How is this true to the way I experience it?
 - b. In what ways is the thought process logical and biblical?

- c. Every Christian who reflects on faith in this fashion is a theologian. How would I say it in my own words?

VI. 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. The Emmaus Ministries Office will provide you a complimentary copy like this. [*Hold up a copy of The Upper Room.*]
- C. Find the right place: comfortable but not too comfortable; quiet and well lit; a location where you keep all your study tools (Bible, books, journal, paper, pencils or pens, 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 the pilgrims will receive at the end of the weekend. Provide copies of The Upper Room daily devotional guide on the book table or in the packets. Have this resource available for those who are inspired to begin a daily time with God today.]

VII. 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, our maturity in Christian thought and action does not stop with confirmation class or Sunday school as a youth.
- C. Life brings change, but we do not let the world determine how we will change.
- D. Growing with grace in the image of God and mind of Christ requires intentional study.

De Colores!

ABBREVIATED OUTLINE

GROW THROUGH STUDY

Lead the Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

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

Introduction (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 shifted your practice of study and how this has changed your life. Feel free to name the fears or obstacles that you had to overcome.

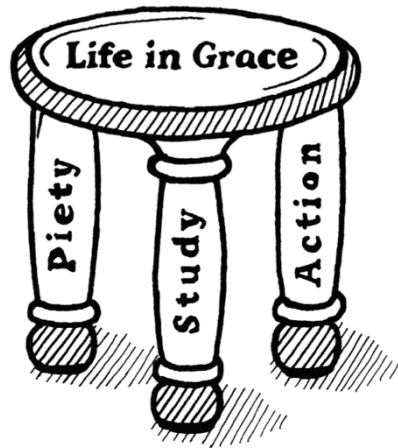
Option 2: Share the life story of someone else that illustrates the main theme of the talk.

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

I. Insights

- A. Despite less-than-exciting associations with the word *study* in some minds, study can be an energizing and liberating human activity.
- B. *Study* provides the doorway to discovery.
- C. Study can transform every aspect of our lives.
- D. The purpose of study goes beyond the desire for information to the transformation of every aspect of our lives. We grow in spiritual wisdom and the mind of Christ.
- E. Closed minds do much evil in the name of religion.
- F. Each person needs a unique study plan.
- G. Christian study involves giving God our minds.

[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 in Perspective

- A. Study is a constant part of our life; we study what we think will help us live more effectively.
- B. Christianity becomes the spiritual core from which all our desires, motivations, and decisions arise.
- C. Through study, our patterns of thinking and living change and expand to accommodate greater truth, the mind and way of Christ in us.
- D. Christian study involves two parts: our being *informed* of the truth and our being *formed in* the truth.
- E. Christianity calls for growth and change.
- F. Christian study involves giving God our minds.

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 to holiness not holiness itself.

IV. Excuses for Not Studying

- A. *“I don’t have time.”* (Make time.)
- B. *“I don’t know what to study.”* (Seek guidance.)
- C. *“I don’t like to read books.”* (Try other modes of study: listening to audiobooks, 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.)

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. 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. We do not stop studying when we finish school.
- B. Likewise, our maturity in Christian thought and action does not stop with confirmation class or Sunday school as a youth.
- C. Life brings change; we do not let the world determine how we will change.
- D. Growing with grace in the image of God and mind of Christ requires intentional study.

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