

You Asked! (Part 1)

DAVE BAST

In every *Groundwork* program we invite response and questions from our listeners, and in today's program we are going to respond to some of those questions that you have asked us. Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast, and with me today are Courtney Schutt and Adam Navis. If you are a careful *Groundwork* listener, you might recognize those names because they are two names that I share at the end of each broadcast. They are on our production staff, and it is wonderful to welcome you on the other side of the microphone today, Adam and Courtney.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

It is interesting to be here on the other side of the microphone.

ADAM NAVIS

Yes, having our words recorded.

DAVE BAST

We said at the top of the program that this is a special kind of effort. We are going to respond to questions that have come in to us, mostly via the website.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Yes; every week I make sure to post questions on the Facebook page. Sometimes listeners respond to our program by going to the "about us" section and sending us e-mails through the website. So these questions have all been either in reply to programs we have done, or what people have told us they are wondering about scripture. So they are asking us to help understand, which is what we are here for.

DAVE BAST

Yes; we really are trying to have a dialog and using the new means of communication, especially the Internet. We don't really send out a mailing address any longer, so we have kind of moved away from the old, traditional Christian radio program getting letters coming in, but it is slowly catching on, I think.

ADAM NAVIS

Yes, it is exciting to see people responding to the program, and it is exciting to be able to have a venue, then, to take those questions and address some of the concerns weighing on the hearts of people who are listening to our program.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

The questions on today's program all kind of have to do with the Christian life – what people are wondering with how we live as Christians. So the first question: I have posted the nine fruits of the Spirit on a small card in my car and sometimes try to examine how I am operating in the Spirit. I find that gentleness and kindness are lacking too often in my walk. I am 61 years old and I have been a follower of our Lord for over 35 years, and I should be much further along with these attributes than I am. Is there a progression in the Christian life?

Are we supposed to look, act, or feel different after a lifetime of following Christ?

DAVE BAST

Well, my first response would be: I certainly hope so. I hope so for myself. Surely there ought to be some kind of progression and growth after a lifetime.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

But I often wonder if we don't expect more of ourselves than we ought. We certainly should progress, but what does the Bible say about this Christian walk? Should we be perfect by the time we are 60 – 80?

DAVE BAST

Actually, Jesus did say something along those lines: You must be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect; but that is a little bit misleading – what we think of as perfection. Certainly he is talking there in language that suggests that there is a goal that we are progressing toward and we ought to be able to make progress. I mean, it is true of anything, isn't it? If you work out faithfully and consistently you ought to be getting in somewhat better shape? If you watch your diet and are very careful, your health ought to show some improvement; so with the Christian life. You know, maybe we should just check in with those nine characteristics. He mentions the fruit of the Spirit. That might not come immediately to mind, but they are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Nicely done.

DAVE BAST

Yes, I just did that off the top of my... Now, the reason I can recite those is because of a little practice that I have. I like this guy, he has them on a little note card; but most mornings in my own devotions I try to repeat those in prayer: May the fruit of the Spirit grow in my life today; and then you mention them – you pray through them; so that is another means, I guess, of trying to make progress.

ADAM NAVIS

Well, and I think that is an example of the kind of thing – the kind of spiritual discipline that leads to growth; and I think a lot of times we kind of separate our spiritual life into kind of, oh, it should just happen; but in fact, it takes a lot of work. I was reading a book about memory, where the author talks about the “okay plateau,” that with things in our life we reach a phase where we are kind of okay with it; and the example he gives is typing. There are millions of people who are typing many hours a day and they are not getting any better because they have reached a point where they are okay. They are happy. They are good enough at it. And I wonder if there is the same kind of okay plateau when it comes to the fruits of the Spirit? Are we self-controlled enough?

DAVE BAST

Yes; that is the one I always have trouble with. I get to the end and the last one is self control. Our questioner talks about the problem he has with gentleness and kindness; with me, it is... You know, I don't seem to gain much self discipline after years and years and years, so...

COURTNEY SCHUTT

But you may not be perfect at it, but would you say you have made progress?

DAVE BAST

You know, I hope so. I think we all need to be dissatisfied with anything less than continual... The goal according to the New Testament is to be conformed to the likeness of Christ; so that is perfection, to be Christ-like in every way; to be little Christs ourselves; and obviously we are not going to get there in this life. Anybody who says they are has got a real problem with reality.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

True. I want to bring us to our next question because I actually think it will help continue answering the first question. Somebody wrote in about 2 Peter 3:18. The Bible says there:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. So he wants to know, what does it mean to “grow in grace?”

DAVE BAST

Well, in one sense, I don't think it means to get more grace because grace is grace. Grace is God's free, unmerited favor given to us; so we receive grace – we enter grace through faith. There is a wonderful image that Paul uses in Romans 5 that through faith in Christ we have access to grace – the grace in which we stand – the grace in which we live; but it is possible, I think... I mean, my response to that question is we can grow in our experience of it – in our appreciation for it; and we can grow in our demonstration of it. We can become more gracious people ourselves; and Peter links grace and knowledge. Certainly, you can get to know a person better over time and we are meant to get to know Christ better. What it means to grow in grace is to experience more and more of him – of our relationship with him; and not to put too fine a point on it, it means that our behavior changes and we become more holy – we become more righteous as time goes on. That is growing in grace.

ADAM NAVIS

Right; that is exactly along the lines of the analogy that I was thinking as far as growing in a marriage relationship. You don't get more married as you put more years under your belt, but in a sense you do because you are conformed to the relationship and you form each other and you demonstrate your love in new ways, and you start to find your thinking changes, and that your attitudes change. It takes work, but it is definitely a... I am almost against the word *progress* because it feels like a deepening rather than progress toward a goal. If the goal of marriage is only to stay married, that is not enough for me. I want the goal of marriage or the goal of grace not to be more grace or just to get into heaven, but I want a deepening, and I think that is something behind this question, too.

DAVE BAST

Well, yes; it is a journey that we never reach the end of in this life, but in the next. I love a line from John Newton who said near the end of his long life after a life of growth, and yes, frustration because we fall short: I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I am going to be; but thank God I am not what I used to be. To me that sums it up.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

That is a good quote; but on that note, let's take a short break and come back with our next listener question after this.

Segment 2

DAVE BAST

Hi. Welcome back to *Groundwork*. I am Dave Bast, and today I am joined by two of our producers, Courtney Schutt and Adam Navis.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Yes, and on today's program we are engaging your questions. Through Facebook and letters and our website, you have sent us your questions about the Bible and about Christian life.

ADAM NAVIS

And I have the next one if you are ready: When I drive in my car, I often find myself among drivers who are fast, aggressive, and reckless – and that was the phrase that really jumped out at me: Fast, aggressive, and reckless – I often find myself mumbling very unclean phrases at these drivers using the same mouth I use to praise God. When I mention this to other Christians, usually they just chuckle and admit they do the same.

Everyone seems to be angry, but no one seems to think it is a big deal. I may have all my theological ducks in a row, but without love I am nothing. What can we do about all the anger in our lives, our society, and public discourse?

DAVE BAST

Public discourse especially, yes; I mean, it is not just on the road – all that road rage. Look at our political arena. It is just awful; and look at the Internet for that matter. Here we are using the Internet to share *Groundwork* and invite questions about the Bible, but people are using it to slam each other, and just everybody seems to be mad all the time.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Well, and even as people comment on Facebook – you know, respond to each other; it is easy to just type something and hit enter, and there it is. We don't necessarily think it all the way through, and I think our gut response is often that anger.

ADAM NAVIS

Yes; well my reaction to this was... My wife is a therapist – a Christian counselor – and she always says anger is a surface emotion; that there is always some hurt down there; that there is always something, maybe not even associated with what you are dealing with in the moment, but maybe driving along, road rage is a safe outlet. This is why I think people get angry at their kids or at their wives when they are really hurt by something that happened in the workplace, and it is very easy to be angry. It has bravado; it is an easy emotion to feel.

DAVE BAST

Well, my response tends to be more theological than psychological. Anger or wrath is one of the seven deadly sins and it is a clear symptom of pride often. We become enraged when we feel that others are impinging on our privileges or our rights or our space or whatever; and we just sort of let loose at them; but whatever the source, the Bible has some very instructive things to say about how to deal with our own anger.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Well, I find it interesting, the writer himself brought out 1 Corinthians 13, and he references the verse: I could be like a – what is it – a clanging gong or a clashing cymbal; but without love I am nothing. So we can have all that rage impinging on space, but without love we are definitely not communicating the Gospel.

ADAM NAVIS

Right; and I think when we start to bring in love, I think we have to start to maybe separate what kind of anger we are talking about. Are we talking about the righteous anger of injustice in society, and then taking loving action that might be difficult? I think that is a little different than reacting if somebody...

DAVE BAST

Somebody cut me off on the highway and I am going to curse them out and then step on the gas and try to run them into the median or something like that.

Paul says in Ephesians 4: Don't let the sun go down on your anger. In other words, you have to deal with it. Sure, it is going to happen. It is like fire, and fire can burst out quickly almost without our being able to control it; but we can, in a more calm and rational moment, lay it aside, confess it, and sort of empty ourselves of it.

ADAM NAVIS

Right; well, and not to throw another wrench in this, I think expressions of anger are also culturally bound. I have a person in our family who has married someone from a different culture – a different country – and it is very much – you know, you say what you are thinking – you express it and you throw it out there, and that is how you deal with it.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

That is interesting; I had never really considered that cultural fact that we even interpret anger differently.

DAVE BAST

Well, there is one other thing we can do; again, New Testament prescription. Jesus said turn the other cheek; so how do you respond to another person's anger? And if you read that verse closely in context from the Sermon on the Mount, he is really thinking about an insult – not an *assault* but an *insult*. What do you do when someone insults you? His answer is: You just kind of put up with it; you turn the other cheek; you respond, not in kind, but with gentleness; and again, Proverbs: A soft answer turns away wrath. So, without being too proof-texty here, there are a number of careful and consistent principles that the Bible gives us for dealing with either our own anger or someone else's.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Yes; I also want to put in a quick plug here because in January we are working on a series about faith, hope, and love; but you are talking with Scott Hoezee about actually these aspects of culture: Anger and discontent that are kind of opposite; so I think it will be interesting there to see how these Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love can also inform what we can do about what we see in our lives in society and public discourse.

ADAM NAVIS

Well, I know I am looking forward to hearing those programs, and I am sure our listeners will enjoy them as well. We will be right back with a couple more questions.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

We are back. This is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives; and along with Adam Navis and Courtney Schutt, I am Dave Bast.

ADAM NAVIS

Our next question is a question that has recurred again and again throughout history, and we are just going to dedicate a few minutes to answering this question because you asked it.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Yes. What is speaking in tongues? Is it biblical, and how do we understand the Holy Spirit to be active in the world today?

DAVE BAST

Well, that is actually three questions.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

It is, yes.

DAVE BAST

Speaking in tongues is biblical in the sense that it occurs in the New Testament. It is described in a couple of places – actually two different things; in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul mentions tongues in worship as a kind of a personal language of praise and prayer that is not intelligible or understandable to others; but then in Acts Chapter 2 on the Day of Pentecost, that seems very clearly to have been the languages of peoples throughout the world; in other words, the special supernatural ability given to the disciples on that day to speak other languages.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

To communicate to the people that were there in the square or wherever they kind of came out from the upper room to.

DAVE BAST

In the city of Jerusalem, right; yes, and I have always said that is the kind of Pentecostal I would like to be. I want to be able to speak Farsi and Arabic, first of all; but a miracle that, as far as we know, only happened on that day; and the significance of it according to Acts 2 is not so much the languages as the message itself, because the peoples who had gathered from all over the world said: We hear them proclaiming the mighty acts of God in our own language; so that was the great impact of that.

ADAM NAVIS

So why do people hang onto it? Why do people ask questions about it? Is there something that drives them in that this question remains?

COURTNEY SCHUTT

I think people encounter different denominations – people from different denominations; and we have a different... every Christian tends to interpret this differently and some place more emphasis on it than others; but what I think Dave was saying in that first experience of speaking in tongues was the evangelism aspect – the spreading of the Gospel; and I think that brings us out to our next question, which is: What is God's desire and command for Christians to go out and proclaim him to non-Christians? Are there biblical references for evangelism?

DAVE BAST

Well, and we can even pick up a little bit of the first question because that person also asked: How do we understand the Holy Spirit to be active in the world today? And we do understand that the Holy Spirit is active, and the number one thing that the Spirit is doing is building the Church of Jesus Christ. He points people to Christ, and in a sense, the whole, worldwide missionary movement is Pentecost going on because we are proclaiming, in the languages of the world's peoples, the Good News about God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ; and in fact, our two parent organizations, ReFrame Media and Back to God Ministries, and Words of Hope do that very thing; we pull together Christians from various places and cultures, and they are using their own language.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Yes; we always talk about heart language...

DAVE BAST

Yes, exactly.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

We are preaching the Gospel in people's heart language – their first language.

DAVE BAST

So, that is what the Spirit is doing today.

ADAM NAVIS

Well, and I think that... Starting with that as your starting point to say the Spirit is doing it, and it is our job to join along with the Spirit. The Spirit is in these places. The Spirit is moving and we are joining in the Spirit's work. I think when we talk about what the Holy Spirit is doing, it guides what we should be doing.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Yes; the question asked about biblical references for evangelism, so let's get down to that.

DAVE BAST

I talk about this a lot. It is interesting, most people have heard maybe... or at least Christians, if they have been around the Church, they have heard of the great commission, and we usually think of Matthew 28, the last four verses, where Jesus says:

^{18b}All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore, go, make disciples of all nations – or peoples – *ethn?* is the word that he uses – ethnic groups – teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, baptizing them... ^{20b}and behold, I am with you even to the end of the world. But actually, each of the four Gospels ends with a kind of great commissioning statement by Jesus; and the book of Acts begins with another one. Acts 1:8: Jesus, just before he ascends to heaven says: Wait in the city until the Holy Spirit has come – there is our tie-in again – and then you will be my witnesses; you will receive power from on high and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth – that wonderful progression that starts where we are and goes as far as we can go as Christ's witnesses, by the power of the Spirit.

ADAM NAVIS

What excites me about what you are saying, and what I think our listeners could get excited about is being a witness; in the same way that the Holy Spirit and tongues and the movement of the Holy Spirit is a witness to Jesus Christ, we too are called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ throughout the world.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

So what you are saying is, I do not necessarily have to go stand out on a street corner and read scriptures and yell loudly or anything. My words, my actions should witness... should witness what? What does it mean to be a witness?

DAVE BAST

Well, to proclaim him. The listener is saying: What is God's desire and command to go out and proclaim Christ to non-Christians? So, no; we are not commanded to be jerks or idiots, but to be a witness ultimately to Christ, you do have to use words at some point. I mean, I know we all like that saying: Go out into all the world and proclaim the Gospel; if necessary, use words.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Oh, yes; I remember that one.

DAVE BAST

And I get what that is saying. It is our whole life that is a statement, ultimately; and I think we need to earn the right to be heard by people. You cannot just come in and artificially sort of hijack a conversation: Oh, let me tell you about Jesus now; but at some point we have to be able to tell the story. What is the significance? Why is it important to know what Christ did? To know about these mighty acts of God; you know, his death and his resurrection, and what that means. Really, in the New Testament sense, a witness is someone who can testify to their own experience. It is like a policeman saying to somebody: Okay, you witnessed that accident; tell me what happened. If necessary, use words.

COURTNEY SCHUTT

Oh, that would be hard.

DAVE BAST

Yes; you have to use words!

COURTNEY SCHUTT

That is all we have time for today, and we thank you for listening. We hope you have enjoyed our conversation about the questions you have sent us; and don't forget that it is listeners like you asking these questions and participating that keep our topics relevant to your life. So tell us what you think about what

you are hearing and suggest topics or passages that you would like to hear about on future *Groundwork* programs. Visit us at groundworkonline.com and join the conversation.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/you-asked-part-1>

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