

LESSON 7

Growing in the Word

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Colossians 3:16

Class Overview: In this lesson, we focus on the central role of God's Word in spiritual growth and maturity. Scripture teaches that knowing Christ personally is inseparable from knowing Him through His Word. The Word of God shapes belief, renews the mind, anchors faith, and equips believers for faithful living. Drawing from passages such as Colossians 3, 2 Timothy 3, and Psalm 119, this lesson emphasizes that spiritual development does not occur by accident, but through consistent, humble engagement with God's revealed truth. A mature church is built on believers who are rooted in the Word.

Class Objectives:

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Explain why spiritual development depends on regular engagement with God's Word.
2. Understand the relationship between Scripture and knowing Christ.
3. Recognize how the Word shapes thinking, character, and behavior.
4. Identify barriers that hinder formation in the Word.
5. Commit to habits that allow God's Word to dwell richly in their lives.

Introduction

SPIRITUAL GROWTH DOES NOT HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY WITH TIME. Years of church attendance, familiarity with Scripture, or long-standing habits do not guarantee maturity. Many Christians discover that while they have learned much *about* the Bible, their lives do not always reflect the depth, stability, or fruitfulness they desire. Scripture is clear that this requires nourishment. Just as the body cannot thrive without food, the soul cannot mature without regular engagement with God's Word. The Word of God is not an accessory to the Christian life: it is the primary means by which God shapes our thinking, forms our character, and deepens our relationship with Christ.

Yet for many members of the church, engagement with Scripture can slowly shift from hunger to routine. The Bible becomes familiar, predictable, or even neglected under the weight of busy schedules and constant distraction. Over time, this leads not to open rebellion but to quiet spiritual stagnation.

This lesson invites us to rethink our relationship with the Word of God. Not as a task to complete or a box to check, but as a living means through which Christ dwells in us and transforms us. Paul reminds us that progress in the Word is not merely personal; it shapes how we worship, how we speak to one another, and how the body of Christ is built up. The question before us is not whether we believe the Bible is important, but whether we are allowing the Word of Christ to dwell richly within us. It depends not on exposure alone, but on depth, receptivity, and obedience.

If we want to understand how God promotes genuine maturity in His people, we must focus on how Scripture describes the role of the Word in our lives. The instruction of the Holy Spirit is something meant to dwell within us and influence everything we do together. In Colossians 3:16, he shows us what it looks like when the Word of Christ lives deeply and actively among God's people. As we read this passage, pay attention to how the Word impacts not only personal faith but also the community life of the body.

The Word of Christ is Central to Spiritual Development (Colossians 3:16)

Paul's instruction in Colossians 3:16 emphasizes placing the Word of Christ at the heart of spiritual growth. He does not say the Word should be briefly consulted or kept at arm's length, but that it should *dwell richly* among us. This describes something that takes up residence, shapes the environment, and influences daily life. The Word is meant to live within us, not merely pass through our minds. See how this is intended for personal and congregational application. The Word is to dwell richly *among you* . How would you personally define what this means? What does it mean for your congregation?

Here, Paul also connects the Word directly to wisdom. True spiritual wisdom does not come solely from experience or cultural insight, but from God's revealed truth shaping the mind and heart. When the Word is central, we are equipped to discern what honors Christ and to navigate life with spiritual clarity. The results are practical and evident. Paul highlights teaching, admonishing, worship, and gratitude. Scripture guides how we instruct one another, correct with care, and worship God together. Growing in the Word leads to humility, thankfulness, and unity, rather than pride or division.

This challenges how we approach Scripture. Exposure alone is not the same as nourishment. *Familiarity does not guarantee formation* . The Word must be received, reflected upon, and obeyed if it is to shape a mature faith. All of this stalls when Scripture is treated as supplemental rather than central. It is not sustained by enthusiasm, personality, or programs, but by the Word of Christ dwelling deeply within God's people.

The Word Transforms the Mind and the Life (Romans 12:1–2)

Scripture does more than inform the mind; it transforms the entire person. In Romans 12:1–2, Paul explains that true transformation occurs through the renewal of the mind. The Christian life isn't about

conforming to the patterns of the world, but about allowing God's Word to reshape how we think, value, and choose. And this is ongoing. As we continually submit our thinking to God's truth, discernment grows. Decisions are no longer driven primarily by impulse, culture, or convenience, but by a desire to please God. The Word trains the mind to recognize what is good, pleasing, and perfect according to God's will.

We would be remiss if we didn't mention Psalm 119:9–11, where the Psalmist shows how the Word guards the heart and guides behavior. By treasuring God's Word internally, not merely reading it externally, we are shaped from the inside out. Scripture stored in the heart becomes a source of conviction, correction, and guidance in moments of temptation and uncertainty. When the Word is shaping the mind, attitudes begin to change. Patience replaces reactivity. Wisdom tempers emotion. Obedience becomes intentional rather than accidental. Familiarity with the Word produces consistency between belief and behavior.

This also explains why erratic engagement with Scripture often leads to spiritual instability. Without regular exposure to God's truth, the mind defaults to worldly patterns. But when Scripture is consistently received and applied, it builds a stable foundation for life and faith.

The Word Equips Us for Maturity and Service (2 Timothy 3:16–17)

God's Word has been given for preparation and usefulness. In 2 Timothy 3:16–17, we learn that Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. It's not just about conveying information but to stimulate *formation*, so that we may be complete and equipped for every good work. The Word does what nothing else can do. It shapes belief through teaching, corrects error through rebuke, realigns life through correction, and develops character through training. When we submit ourselves to Scripture, God uses His Word to make us spiritually capable, stable, and prepared to serve.

Hebrews 5:12–14 describes Christians who should have been mature but still depended on spiritual milk. Immaturity isn't about how long we've been believers but about our lack of progress. Those who don't dive deeply into the Word struggle with discernment and are easily unsettled by difficulties, temptation, or false teachings. On the other hand, maturity is shown through discernment gained from practice. The Word teaches us to tell good from evil, wisdom from foolishness, truth from falsehood. A church cannot operate effectively when its members are spiritually starved.

This also explains why service disconnected from Scripture often leads to burnout or confusion. When we try to serve without being shaped by the Word, effort replaces discernment and activity replaces wisdom. But when service flows from a life grounded in Scripture, it remains steady, humble, and fruitful.

For Application

None of this is accidental. Scripture makes clear that maturity in Christ results from God's Word shaping the Christian's mind, heart, and life. When the Word of Christ dwells richly within us, it transforms how we think, how we choose, and how we live together as the body of Christ.

We need to examine our relationship with Scripture. It is not enough to affirm the authority of God's Word or to be familiar with its content. It requires consistent, humble engagement, careful listening, honest reflection, and obedient response. When Scripture moves from the margins to the center of our lives, maturity follows.

The health of the church depends on this. A congregation cannot rise above the spiritual nourishment of its members. When we are grounded in the Word, we are equipped to serve faithfully, discern wisely, and persevere steadily. Unity deepens, service becomes fruitful, and faith becomes resilient.

The invitation is simple but demanding. Make space for the Word to dwell richly. Not occasionally. Not superficially. But deeply and consistently. As God's Word shapes us, Christ is formed in us, and the body is built up in love.

Memory Verse and Weekly Challenge

Memory Verse:

“Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another ...” — Colossians 3:16a (CSB)

Challenge:

This week, create space for God’s Word to shape your thinking and actions. Choose a short passage of Scripture and read it daily, slowly and thoughtfully. Ask three simple questions each time: *What does this teach me about God? What does it reveal about my heart? How should this shape the way I live today?* Then, look for one opportunity to let the Word overflow into your relationships by encouraging someone, sharing insight, or responding more patiently and wisely. Reflect at the end of the week on how consistent engagement with Scripture affected your faith and outlook.

For Reflection

1. What does it mean for the Word of Christ to “dwell richly” rather than simply be present in our lives?

2. Why is spiritual growth impossible without regular, meaningful engagement with Scripture?

3. How does God’s Word renew the mind and lead to real transformation rather than just information?

4. What are some common obstacles that keep us from growing deeply in the Word?

5. What is one practical step you can take this week to allow Scripture to shape your thinking and behavior?
