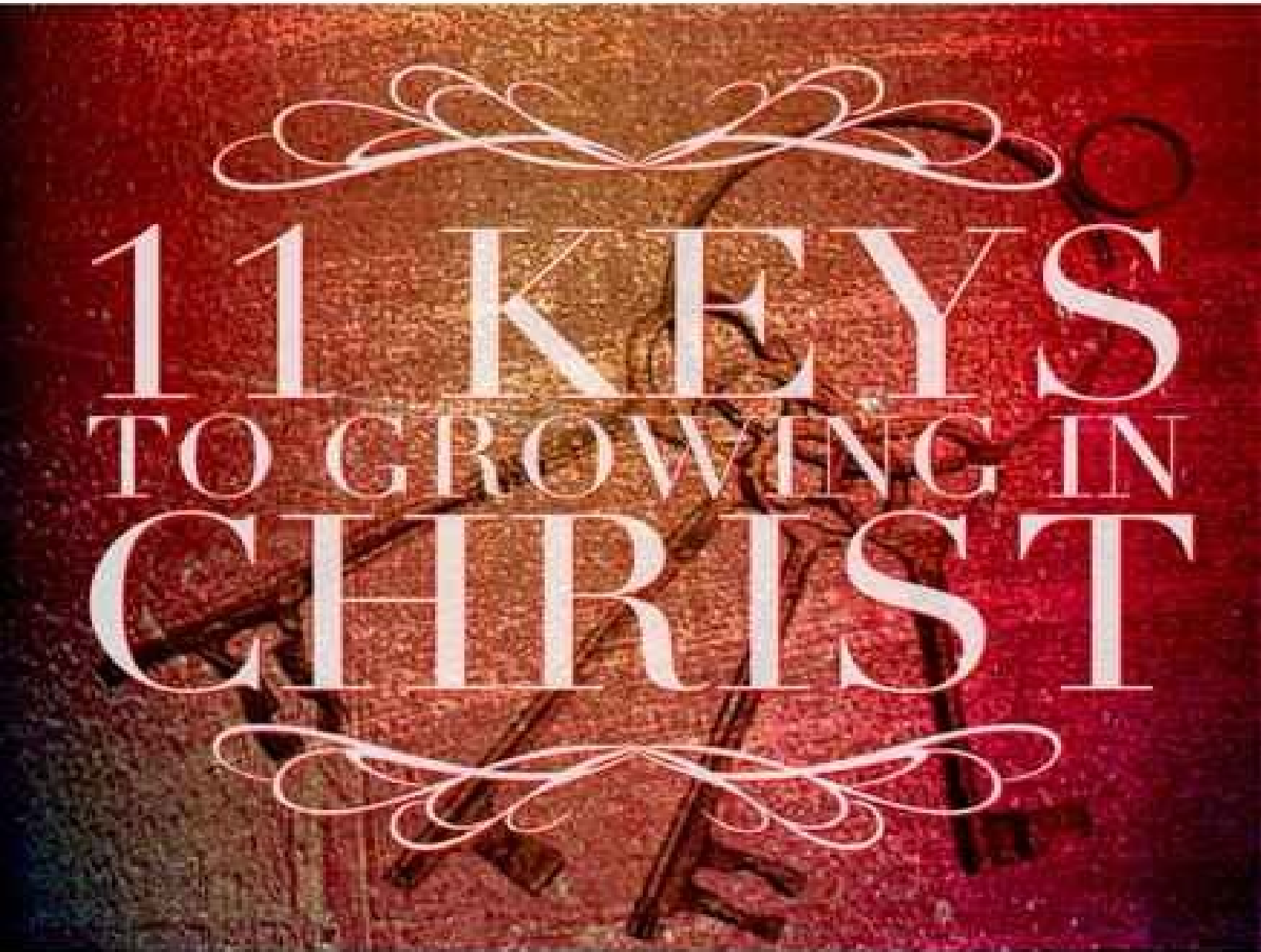


RUBEN
BARRRETO



11 KEYS
TO GROWING IN
CHRIST

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This Bible study is dedicated to those who are looking to grow in Christ. You are why this book is available.

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INTRODUCTION

For the one who has professed genuine faith in Jesus Christ, spiritual growth is an essential element of the daily Christian walk. Throughout the Bible, God has clearly addressed the Church about the importance of spiritual growth. He has issued a call to every believer to embrace a quality of life that is daily committed to growing in Christ. Examine carefully these two foundational New Testament Scriptures that invite the believer into this journey of growth in Christ, and that remind us of our destiny in Him:

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen."

- 2 Peter 3:18

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ."

- Ephesians 4:11-15

This very issue is central to Jesus' teaching. Using fruit trees and the corn plant as illustrations, He masterfully taught His disciples about the work of God within a life that is yielded and submitted to His will:

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain--first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

- Mark 4:26-29

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit--fruit that will last--and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."

- John 15:16 NIV

Given the vital importance that God has placed on the growth unto full maturity of every believer in Jesus Christ, it is very important that we understand some keys to walking with God, and cooperating with the inner work of grace that He is doing in our lives to produce growth in Christ. The following list highlights some of the important keys to facilitating such spiritual growth in your own personal life:

KEYS TO GROWING IN CHRIST

Faith in His Word: It is very important to keep in mind that the Christian life is not a mere natural earthly existence; it is a supernatural life lived by the power of the Holy Spirit whom God has sent to dwell in the lives of His people. Faith is trust in God's precious Word. It is to cling to Him, adhere to Him, and rely on Him with the realization that it is God working in you by the power of the Holy Spirit that is producing the desire in you to become more like Jesus in your everyday life experience. However, *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God* (Romans 10:17). We must hold fast to His Word and never let go. We must study the scriptures if we are to grow in Christ. Jesus is also known as The Word of God (John 1:1). How do we hope to draw near to Him, if we do not draw near to His Word? Nevertheless, reading the Bible is not enough. We must trust and believe His Word as the undeniable truth. We must have faith in His Word to grow in Him.

Abiding in Him: Jesus said, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). Cultivating a lifestyle of drawing upon the strength of Christ for our daily strength is a moment-by-moment process, but it is this very process that produces the life transforming work within us, allowing us to increasingly reflect His loving nature in our daily lives.

Forget The Past: In comparing the life in Christ to a race, the Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:13-14, “...*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*” It is vital for each of us to recognize that we are no longer the old sinful person that we once were, and we no longer identify with that person. The mercy and grace of God has been extended to us through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The full weight of our sin was laid upon Him at the cross, making it possible for us to live free from guilt and shame. We must live daily in the realization of this glorious Truth, lest we be held back from growing in Christ by chains of the past.

Recognize That You Are a New Creation: We need to walk in the reality that the old, sinful man is dead. *Now it is Christ who lives in us* (Galatians 2:20). *We are a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come* (2 Corinthians 5:17). You are free to grow into your full destiny in Him, based on what He has accomplished for you at the cross, and by His power at work within you!

Cultivate a Life of Personal Devotion: There is simply no substitute for spending time alone with God, getting closely acquainted with Him, learning to hear His voice through His Word and obtaining wisdom and guidance from His heart. A common element in the life of every man or woman who has grown spiritually to become all that God intended for them to be is that they maintained a vibrant life of personal devotion by spending time alone with God daily. Make this same commitment for your own life, and you will grow strong in Him.

Unceasing Prayer: The Scripture calls the believer to *pray continually* or to *pray without ceasing* (I Thessalonians 5:17). While this doesn't mean that we are to be on our knees every moment of the day, it does mean that we are to maintain a prayerful posture of the heart at all times. Learning to cultivate continual unbroken communion with God is a major key to ongoing spiritual growth.

Fellowship with other believers: We are told in the book of Acts that the lifestyle embraced by the early Church was one of *continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer* (Acts 2:42). A major key to the growth of the individual Christian is to live with the understanding that we cannot do this alone. We are part of a community of believers known as the Church and we need fellowship with one another in order to grow in Christ.

Accountability: The importance of not isolating oneself, and having close heart to heart friendships within the Church cannot be underestimated. We all need people who we can seek out. People who will support us and pray with us when we need guidance, or are struggling with temptation. In the Bible, we read that David had a friend named Jonathan who helped him find strength in God during his time of adversity and vulnerability. We certainly need the same.

Humility: If we are going to continue our growth in Christ as we continue through the journey of life, it is important that we always remain humble and teachable, recognizing our constant need of God and the wisdom that He provides. Jesus issued a stern warning to His disciples when He said, *"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3). The heart of a child is trusting, open,

innocent, and willing to be taught. May our hearts reflect this as well.

Be Diligent In Developing Your Gifts and Abilities: In Jesus' well-known parable about the talents, we read that those who cultivated the talents given to them by their master were given even more talents and greater responsibility. In contrast, the one who hid his talent in the ground out of laziness and fear of failure had what was given to him taken away and given to one of the faithful and diligent servants. What is the lesson Jesus teaches us here? *"Whoever has will be given more, and they will have in abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them"* (Matthew 13:12). Let us be diligent in our work and continue to grow in service for Christ and His kingdom.

Be Strong and Courageous: A major obstacle to continuing our growth in Christ is the temptation to allow fear to dominate us. Why else would Jesus repeatedly tell His disciples on no uncertain terms: *"Fear not!"* The command of God to Joshua, the great leader of Israel who led them into the land of Canaan, holds as true to us today as it was to Joshua when he was raised up to lead Israel: *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go"* (Joshua 1:9).

CONCLUSION

I hope you were edified by this study. Continue to dig deeper into His Word and you will definitely find more on this topic. Please do your own study on this subject and feel free to use this material as needed. If you are able to, feel free to download my book *"Spiritual Growth & Evangelism"*. I am sure you will be

greatly blessed by this book as well.

As you prayerfully consider these keys to cultivating your growth in Christ, may you prosper and flourish as you embrace the journey, running with faith and patience the race that He has marked out for you!

Prayer:

Lord, I thank you for your Word. As I continue this wonderful journey of growing in Christ, help me through your Spirit grow in faith. Help me abide in you always. Help me to let go of the past and recognize that I am a new creation. Help me to spend time in your presence while I continue in fellowship. Help me to remain humble and diligent. I will be strong and courageous, as you have commanded in your Word.
In Jesus' name I pray.
Amen.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruben Barreto is a Singer, Songwriter, Speaker, Minister and International Best-selling Author. He has produced and released albums in Spanish and English, including: *Libre Soy*, *Manifestate*, and his most recent, *Rise Above* and *Worship Without Words*. He is also the founder of The Real Experience Ministries and Real Experience Records. He is also the author of *Rise Above*, *You Have What it Takes*, *Rejoice*, *Making The Effort* and the upcoming graphic novel *The Overcomers*. He is also currently writing several new books, which will be out this winter of 2015. He is married to Veronica Barreto and has one child, Rebecca L. Barreto.



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