



## **Introduction to**

### ***Climbing Higher***

## **THE ASCENDING LIFE**

### **God's Golden Stairway to Glory**

#### **PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

One of the most tragic sights in the world is the sight of a person whose physical body never developed. An even greater tragedy is to see large numbers of professing Christians who, years after having been saved, are still babes in Christ, having never grown up or matured in their faith. We feel very strongly that one of the reasons for the deep divisions within and among churches is spiritual immaturity -- church members who have been spoon-fed their religion for so long that all they can do is to speak the right language but without experiencing the depth of a close personal walk with Jesus.

Too many Sunday School/Bible classes are a joke; daily Bible reading is only practiced by a few and those who have a daily quiet time are even fewer. Unfortunately, those who have learned the joy of being crucified and risen with Christ are even fewer, and those who have sincerely followed the model and pattern of the life of Jesus seem to be almost non-existent.

In this series of Bible Studies, we will attempt to learn some of the great principles of spiritual growth taught by our Lord and by His followers. This will not necessarily be a "How to" seminar where everything is laid out for you step by step, but rather an attempt to give you the basic principles and then let you apply them in the way which best fits your needs and your own situation and personality.

The principles we will be studying are the following:

1. The principle of a recognized ideal -- Jesus
2. The principle of confession and repentance
3. The principle of faith
4. The principle of accepting forgiveness and of forgiving others
5. The principle of brokenness and dying with Christ
6. The principle of being filled continually (or repeatedly) with the Holy Spirit

7. The principle of abiding in Christ
8. The principle of praise
9. The principle of living in the light of God's glory!

Spiritual growth is like climbing a high mountain. This is our spiritual Everest. We must start at the base and begin with a solid foundation. Then, as we begin to grow in the Lord we begin to move up the mountain toward the ideal of our Christian faith -- likeness to Jesus. Romans 8:29 tells us that this is God's purpose for all believers: *For those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son . . .* This is the peak and the apex of the Christian life. It is not an easy climb and we cannot do it in our own strength; we need the oxygen of the Holy Spirit all along the way, but God's Word is our guide as we *grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ* (II Peter 3:18). Jesus Himself exhorts us, *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. 5:48). The word "perfect" means "full-grown, mature, ripe (when referring to fruit) which does not make it any less impossible for us because the perfection of our heavenly Father is held up as our ideal. Yes, it may be impossible in this earthly life, but that is our goal and we must always be moving toward it. Some day in heaven, we will reach that perfection.

May the Lord guide us as we begin this joyful journey, *climbing higher* into the likeness of Jesus!

### **Acknowledgements:**

This work is dedicated to our three grown children whom we have watched as they have matured in their faith from their acceptance of Jesus as Savior in childhood and then through their various stages of growth. Hopefully they, like all of us, will continue to mature into the likeness of Jesus throughout their lives.

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Likewise, I am indebted to many authors of many books on the development of the spiritual life, some of which are listed at the end of the seminar materials. In addition, I would like to thank those who have studied these principles with me in various classes and seminars over the years.

It is my hope that some, perhaps many, will find these materials useful in teaching others these principles of spiritual growth around the world.