

One on One

Discipleship

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November 2020

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Getting started

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

“What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?”

‘It means first of all that we want to learn from Him—and we will, as we study God’s Word, the Bible, and listen to others teach from it. Make the Bible part of your life every day.

The Psalmist said, “*The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple*” (Psalm 119:130).

But being a disciple also means we want to put God’s Word into action by seeking to live the way Christ wants us to live—with God’s help.

Thank God every day for His great love for you and ask Him to help you share His love with others.”¹

Billy Graham

You are about to begin the amazing journey of becoming a disciple of Jesus! A disciple is simply a *LIFELONG learner under discipline*. In other words, a constantly growing follower of Jesus Christ.

As we follow Jesus through the Bible, we will see how Jesus grew, handled the challenges of life, and how He interacted with all kinds of people.

This guide was designed to help you to become a disciple by growing spiritually. Spiritual growth is simply the process of becoming more and more like Jesus as you pursue an intimate personal relationship with Him, learning what He has done for you, and what He wants to do *in* you and through your life. Here are some of the ways Jesus is our role model for spiritual growth:

- ▶ A growing disciple obeys God’s will and says, “God, what do you want me to do?” (John 6:38).
- ▶ A growing disciple prays to God often and asks for His wisdom (Mark 1:35).
- ▶ A growing disciple knows the power of God’s Word and obeys it (Matthew 4:1-11).
- ▶ A growing disciple strives to please God (John 8:29).
- ▶ A growing disciple looks for ways to help others know Christ (Luke 19:10).
- ▶ A growing disciple focuses on serving God and other people (Matthew 28:18).

The content of each session will direct you to read sections of the Bible relating to that week’s topic, and prompt you to answer specific questions to help you put into practice what you are learning. You and your mentor will meet weekly to discuss each lesson, so you will need to study and complete the lessons prior to meeting. You can share your questions and comments at that time.

Our prayer is that as you become obedient and faithful to Jesus, you will become a servant to others, guiding them in their walk, motivated by His love.

Session 1

Who is God? The Gospel and Assurance of Salvation

Who is God?

The opening line of the Bible reads, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). In this first sentence, we learn that God existed before time began, that He is the author of history, and that He created everything by His power.

Followers of Jesus believe in one God, who exists in three persons. This concept is called ‘The Trinity.’ We do not worship three Gods, nor one who shapeshifts into three separate beings. We worship one God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. Each is fully God (Jesus is not one-third God, for example). They exist together in perfect unity.



We see an imperfect and incomplete example of this reality in marriage. When a husband and wife get married, they become ‘one flesh.’ Two individual people are united together. The Hebrew word for ‘one,’ *echad*, represents a complex unity. The same word for ‘one flesh’ is also used for ‘one God.’

This analogy falls short of the mystery of the Trinity, yet it can give us a small example of how two can be united as one.

We see the Trinity operating together at the baptism of Jesus. Read Mark 1:9-11. Write down what you see each member of the Trinity doing in this story:

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’” Mark 1:9-11

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

The Bible lists many attributes of God’s character. We are going to spend some time discovering just a few of His characteristics. Read the following passages and write down what you learned about God from these verses:

Exodus 34:6-7

Malachi 3:6

Psalms 8:9

Isaiah 55:9

John 3:16

Isaiah 6:3

Psalms 139:7-8

Psalms 9:8

Luke 11:2

What did you learn about God from the verses above that brought you hope and comfort?

What did you read about God from the verses above that was concerning or confusing? If you have any questions about what you read, make sure that you discuss them with your discipleship mentor.

The Gospel

In Genesis 1-2, we discover that God created a perfect world and made human beings in His image. He gave them a mission: to partner with Him to rule creation. There was only one rule. If they ate of the forbidden fruit, they would be separated from Him and die. Sadly, Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. Their sin brought devastation. Their relationship with God, each other, and creation came under the curse of sin (Genesis 3).

Although humans were created for relationship with God, we are separated from God because of our sin. We are born with a sin nature, and are in bondage to sin until salvation. There is nothing we can do to reach God on our own.

Read Romans 3:10-11. What percentage of people are righteous and seek God on their own?

Read Romans 6:23. What are the consequences of our sin?

Read Hebrews 9:27. What will happen after we die?

Read Ecclesiastes 2:11. This passage discusses a pursuit of a meaningful life apart from God. What can we conclude from this verse about life without God?

From these passages, we can conclude that a life apart from God is meaningless, and a death apart from God is hopeless. This is the worst possible news.

Thankfully, God is rich in mercy and has a plan to restore mankind. He sent His son, Jesus, to this earth. Jesus lived a perfect life, died on a cross for our sins, and rose again to bring us new life. This is the Gospel, the Good News. Jesus did this as our perfect sacrifice and our perfect Priest.

As our perfect sacrifice, Jesus took our place and received the punishment for our sin so that we could receive God's grace.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

As our perfect Priest, Jesus created a way for humans to walk in relationship with God. Because of Jesus, we can “approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

Through the Gospel, we discover that Jesus brings ultimate meaning to life, and hope to death.

Assurance of Salvation

Every follower of Jesus, at some time in their life, doubts that they are actually saved. Thankfully, Scripture tells us that we can be confident we are saved. In fact, this is the purpose of the book of 1 John. *“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13).

There are three reasons we can be confident we are saved:

We can be confident because of God’s promises – God is far more committed to us than we are to Him.

- ▶ God promised eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus (John 3:16).
- ▶ God promised that if we believe in Jesus, our past, present, and future sins are forgiven (Ephesians 1:7-8).
- ▶ God promised He is fully committed to our spiritual growth (Philippians 1:6).

We can be confident because of God’s actions.

- ▶ God wants everyone to be saved, so He is patiently withholding judgement (2 Peter 3:9).
- ▶ In Scripture, God repeatedly forgives the worst sinners. Paul was a murderer; David committed adultery, and Peter denied Jesus three times.
- ▶ In Scripture, God showed extravagant and repeated mercy to His people, the Israelites (Hosea 11:7-8).

The fruit in our lives can be evidence we are saved.

- ▶ When the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts, it is evidence we are God’s children (Romans 8:16).
- ▶ When we believe in the truth about Jesus, we can be confident we are saved (1 John 5:1-2).
- ▶ When we obey Jesus’ commands and our lives are becoming more like Him, we can be confident of our salvation (1 John 2:3-5).
- ▶ When we love one another, it is evidence of God’s work in our lives (1 John 4:7-9).

Why is it important for you to be confident of your salvation?

Which of these verses are the most encouraging to you? Why?

Summary Points:

- ▶ Followers of Jesus worship one God who exists in three persons, the Trinity.
- ▶ God is love, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, holy, good, and just.
- ▶ Without a relationship with God, life is meaningless, and death is hopeless.
- ▶ We can have a relationship with God when we put our trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.
- ▶ Followers of Jesus can have assurance of salvation based on God's promises, God's character, and the spiritual fruit in our lives.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Memorize Romans 8:1. This is a great verse to quote if you doubt your faith.
- ▶ Spend a few minutes each day this week studying the passages of Scripture listed in the 'Assurance of Salvation' section. Incorporate the Scripture into your prayer time, thanking God for His grace and ask Him for help.
- ▶ If you have not yet received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and receive His free gift of salvation. If you are not sure how to do this, talk with your discipleship mentor.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6

Session 2

Our Identity in Christ and Baptism

Our Identity in Christ

Once we become followers of Jesus Christ, we receive a new identity. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”* So, it is important to discover what God’s Word says about us as new creations in Christ.

Many people have a negative self-image based on what others have said about them, their past failures, or lies they have believed from the enemy. Others have a false identity based on their personal accomplishments and successes, not on what God says.

When we do not know who we are in Christ, or we believe the enemy’s lies about us, we can feel condemned, defeated, insecure, prideful, self-reliant, or fearful. Knowing our identity in Christ helps us feel secure in God’s love, and ready to discover and fulfill the purpose He has for us.

Read the following Bible passages to learn what God says about us as Christ Followers:

1 John 3:1-2. What does God call us?

2 Corinthians 5:21. What does this say we become?

Ephesians 2:10 says we are God’s _____ created to _____

Romans 8:15-16. This says we are _____ by God as His child.

1 Peter 2:9 says we are these four things, and called to declare His praise:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Ephesians 1:7. God’s grace provided for us _____ and _____

As a new creation in Christ:

- ▶ I am part of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).
- ▶ My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in me (1 Corinthians 6:19).
- ▶ I am called a friend of Jesus (John 15:15).
- ▶ My citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).
- ▶ God gives me every spiritual blessing I need (Ephesians 1:3).
- ▶ I am more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37).
- ▶ I no longer live in condemnation (Romans 8:1).
- ▶ God is for me and helps me through opposition (Romans 8:31).

It is important to see ourselves as God sees us. Satan, our enemy, wants us to believe lies about our identity, purpose, and value. Jesus is truth (John 14:6) and the truth will set us free (John 8:32).

Of all the things God says about us, what encourages you most right now?

Why is it important for us to know who we are as a new creation in Christ?

We all have a sinful past and have done things we regret. Many of us have had hurtful things done to us. However, God sent Jesus to set us free from sin, guilt, and shame. He adopted us as His children and gives us our new and true identity in Him. Knowing who we are in Christ helps us feel secure in God's love and gives us confidence to accomplish the purposes He has for each of us. He forgives us of all our sins (Ephesians 1:7) and puts His Holy Spirit in us to guide us (John 14:26) and empower us (Acts 1:8) to live for Him!

You are a whole new you! God invites you to know Him deeply, experience His life-changing love, and find great purpose in living for Him!

Baptism

Once a person commits his/her life to Christ, the next step in following Jesus is to be water baptized. However, for some this can be confusing. Many believe they were baptized because their parents had them sprinkled or dedicated in church as a baby. But there are no Bible verses supporting baptizing babies or for being baptized before making a personal decision to follow Jesus.

Others believe baptism saves them. In Luke 23:39-43, a thief on the cross put his faith in Jesus while hanging next to Him. In verse 43 Jesus told him, *"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."* Jesus said the man would with him in heaven even though he was never water baptized.

Baptism is sometimes compared to a wedding ring. Wearing a wedding ring does not make you married; it is an outward sign to others of your marriage covenant with your spouse. In the same way baptism does not save you but is an outward visible sign that you have chosen to follow Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17, *"I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶ (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."*

Romans 6:3-4

“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

Matthew 28:19

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,…”

Acts 8:12, 35-36, 38

“¹²But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

“³⁵Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.³⁶ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?’³⁸ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him.”

As Paul traveled throughout the world facing great opposition, he shared the Gospel so people would be saved by putting their faith in Christ. If baptism was necessary for salvation, then Paul would have made sure that the many he led to Christ were baptized. However, he tells us in the verse above, he only baptized a few. Paul wanted people to follow Jesus, not himself.

According to Romans 6:3-4, list three parts of Jesus’ life depicted by baptism:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In Matthew 28:19, how do we relate to God as the Trinity when we are baptized?

In Acts 8:12 and 35-36, 38 what was the first thing people did after believing in Jesus?

Why should we be water baptized?

- ▶ We want to begin our new life with Christ in obedience. It is the first command Jesus gives us as believers (Matthew 28:19).
- ▶ Jesus modeled it (Luke 3:21-22).
- ▶ We want to allow Jesus to circumcise our hearts (help cut away the power of sin in our lives) to give us greater intimacy with Him (Colossians 2:11-12).
- ▶ Baptism helps us grow in our new life in Christ (Romans 6:3-4).
- ▶ It is a public example to others. Jesus was baptized in water, not because He needed to repent of sin, but as an example to us (Matthew 3:13-17).

Water baptism was instituted by Jesus Christ to be practiced until He returns. It symbolizes our faith in Christ's life, death, burial, and resurrection. It is a public declaration that, "I have faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior." In Scripture people first made a confession of faith in Jesus Christ, then they were immersed in water. Some cannot be physically put completely under water for various reasons, but they can have water poured over them by church leaders, which serves as water baptism.

Summary Points:

- ▶ As a follower of Jesus Christ, I am given a new identity in Him.
- ▶ I am now a child of God.
- ▶ After becoming a follower of Jesus Christ (disciple), Jesus commands me to be water baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19).
- ▶ Water baptism identifies me with Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. In the first column list some of your characteristics before putting your faith in Jesus. In the second column, list what God says about you now.
- ▶ Choose to believe what God says about you more than your feelings.
- ▶ If you have not been water baptized (full immersion), commit to do it the next time your church offers it.

"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."
Acts 22:16

Session 3

The Body of Christ – The Church, Groups, and Fellowship

The Church

The word 'church' can mean different things to different people, so the first question we need to answer is this: "What exactly is the church?" Is it the building where we meet on a regular basis, or is it the physical location (property where the buildings are located), or is the 'church' really neither of these two things?

To answer our question, look at the Greek word for church, which is: *ekklesia*. It was originally used to refer to a group of people who were meeting together, but it was never used to describe the meeting place or a building!

So then by definition, the Church is 'us,' a gathering of Christ Followers! But some people believe that they really do not need to gather in a large group as long as they read their bibles at home. Do you think this a valid belief?

WE are
the Church!

Read Hebrews 10:24-25. Does this verse agree or disagree?

If the Church is us when we gather, what two things are we doing?

1. Studying and learning from God's Word.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Through studying God's Word, we are learning how to love God better. Read John 14:21. What does this verse tell us regarding HOW we demonstrate to God that we love Him?

2. Corporate worship (praising God together in a group setting).

"Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.² Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. ³ Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy." Psalm 33:1-3

Worship is always about praising and thanking God. Our focus should be upward, not inward. When we sing our praises, it is a great time for us to tell God out loud how much we appreciate and adore Him. But not the ONLY time! We should do that in private too.

Read Ephesians 4:11-16. Is God showing you there is more to being a Christ Follower than just attending church on the weekend? Going forward, what role do you see yourself in as part of the body of Christ?

Groups

Groups have one simple purpose: to bring people together. They are a place where we connect with others and learn to 'do life together.' They are also a way we can make a big church filled with people seem smaller and more intimate. We see this small group model being demonstrated for us by some of the first believers.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42

Groups bring like-minded people together by meeting in a private home, or in a class that meets at church. One of the reasons groups exist is to make it easy for you to get connected with other Christ followers! Whether you are new to the area, have a busy schedule, are a little shy, or have not been ready to get more involved, groups are an easy way to get connected. Groups are safe, comfortable places where you can meet new people, make friends, and grow spiritually as you learn about Jesus, and have fun in a social setting. When you are part of a group, the church begins to feel like a part of your family.

Once again, we see the early Church modeling this for us in Acts 2 and Matthew 18:

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Acts 2:46-47

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:20

Groups are a place where others do not just know your name; they care about what is happening in your life and want to support and encourage you.

In a group you will:

- ▶ Connect with other believers
- ▶ Grow in Christ together
- ▶ Support and encourage each other in times of need

Fellowship

We already learned that relationships are a very important part of our lives as Christ Followers. But there is another type of relationship we should have too. The type of relationship we are talking about is in a setting even smaller than a group. This would look more like a few close Christian friends, or even a 'best friend' at church.

Christ Followers grow by being disciplined, or learning 'hands on,' from spiritually mature believers. But really the first steps in discipleship are friendships and fellowship. Jesus himself demonstrated this fellowship concept for us.

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.” Matthew 17:1

If we are not connected with other believers in fellowship, here is something to consider: who will pray for us and with us when we have a need or a problem?

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5:16

When we do life together, our problems become smaller as God uses others to bring support and encouragement into our lives. Connecting with other Christ Followers through fellowship provides accountability, discipleship, and facilitates our spiritual growth.

Read Proverbs 27:17. What benefit do you find in that verse?

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11. What are the two things we are told to do? one another and

The purpose of gathering is for mutual encouragement and strengthening one another.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25

Summary Points:

- ▶ WE are the Church.
- ▶ Groups are safe, comfortable places where you can meet new people, make friends, and grow spiritually as you learn about Jesus, and have fun!
- ▶ Christ Followers grow by being discipled, or learning ‘hands on,’ from spiritually mature believers.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Commit to attending church on a regular weekly basis.
- ▶ Read Galatians 6:1-10 and think about how a group may help you to model this.
- ▶ PRAY about joining a group, either in a private home or a Bible study at your church.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another
on toward love and good deeds...”
Hebrews 10:24

Session 4

Devotional Life – The Word, Prayer, Worship, and Journaling

To have good communication, both parties must be engaged in both speaking and listening. Likewise, our devotional life is developing the daily practice of spending time talking to God and listening to Him.

So, how do we do this? First, we need to commit to a time each day to spend with God. Jesus set the example of spending time with God in the morning: Mark 1:35 says, *“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”* Not everyone is a morning person. If mornings do not work for you, that is OK. Just find a time that will work for you and stick to it. What starts as a discipline, turns into a habit, and eventually becomes a delight.

Next, we are going to look at four elements of developing an intimate and enjoyable relationship with God. Those elements are:

- ▶ God’s Word – The Bible
- ▶ Prayer
- ▶ Worship
- ▶ Journaling

God’s Word - The Bible

The Bible is the primary way that God speaks to us. While there are other ways that He speaks, they will always line up perfectly with God’s written Word (the Bible).

In the Bible, God gives us everything we need to know. He tells us how to be saved and how to live out a life of meaning and purpose that He has planned for us.

The Bible is a big book, with many different types of literature. So, how do we get started in hearing God speak through the Bible?

We recommend a ‘slow and steady’ approach to reading the Bible. Instead of trying to read large portions at a time, read smaller portions in a systematic way. You might want to read a paragraph, or just a few verses at a time. This will give you the opportunity to listen with your heart to what God is saying to you personally and then apply it to your life.

A good devotional or a reading plan can be a tremendous help here. The free ‘YouVersion’ Bible app has hundreds of online devotionals and reading plans for you to choose from.

When you read the Bible, read it with the expectation that God will speak to you personally.

How does Hebrews 4:12 describe the Word of God?

In 1 Peter 2:2, what should be our attitude toward the Word of God?

Why do you think Peter compares the Word to milk?

In 2 Timothy 3:15, what are the Scriptures (the Word of God) able to do for us?

Prayer

Prayer is something that can be easily misunderstood. We might think prayer requires us to use big impressive words that we do not understand. Actually, prayer is quite different. Prayer is simply us speaking to God about anything that is going on in our lives. When we pray, we just speak to God conversationally the way we would speak to anyone else. Prayer does not have to be long or elaborate. Real prayer simply has to be honest, genuine, and heartfelt. Prayer completes the cycle of having a two-way conversation with God.

It can be helpful to have a model or format to help us pray. A model that many Christ Followers use is the ACTS model. The ACTS model is simply this:

- ▶ **A** – Adoration - Telling God what we love and appreciate about Him.
- ▶ **C** – Confession - Acknowledging our sins and shortcomings to God.
- ▶ **T** – Thanksgiving - Thanking God for all He has done for us.
- ▶ **S** – Supplication - Bringing our requests to God.

You will see your prayer life flourish once you start including each area of the ACTS model into your daily prayer time.

When we pray, it is important to remember that we are not bringing new information to God. He already knows our needs. When we pray, we recognize our dependence on God, and we are reminded of His goodness and faithfulness.

When you pray, expect God to hear and answer you. His answers are Yes, No, or Wait.

Read the following verses.

Philippians 4:6-7. What is the benefit of presenting our requests to God?

1 John 5:14 says when we pray according to

He

James 4:8. What promise do we have when we draw near to God?

According to 1 Thessalonians 5:17, how should we pray? What does this mean?

Worship

Simply put, worship is the expression of our love and appreciation for God. When we worship, we acknowledge God's value and worth. Worship is vital to the spiritual life of the Christ Follower.

In worship, Christ Followers celebrate God. We may think this is only done through singing worship songs to God. But there are many other ways to worship; singing is simply a way that the Bible commands, and one that pleases God.

Some may say they do not like to sing, or that they are not really into worship music. We need to remember that worship is for God, not for us. If your favorite sports team won a championship title and a big celebration was held for the team, you would never think: "That celebration didn't do much for me." Instead you think: "I really enjoyed showing the team how much we appreciate them." That is what our attitude should be about worship. We should think: "I enjoy showing God how much I love and appreciate Him."

Worship is done in the church service with other Christ Followers, but it can also be done in private. You can take a song you heard in church, or on Christian radio, and sing it to the Lord anytime you like.

Psalm 95:1-2 says there are four things we should do when we worship:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Read the following verses.

John 4:24. How are true worshippers supposed to worship God? In _____ and in _____

Isaiah 12:5. Why should we worship the LORD?

Psalm 150. What strikes you most about how this passage describes worship?

Journaling

“This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.’”
Jeremiah 30:2

One of the best things about having a relationship with God is that we are on a journey of establishing a history with God. When we journal, we simply record that personal history with God on paper. Often, we will be encouraged as we look back and review that history. When we go through difficult times, we find comfort and encouragement as we review those previous times when God was faithful to us.

Journaling is simple. All you need to get started is a notebook and a pen.

So, what do you write in your journal? Some things that you can write are:

- ▶ Things God has shown you from His Word
- ▶ Bible promises to claim for your life
- ▶ Prayer requests
- ▶ Answers to prayer
- ▶ A review of the previous day

Make your journal personal. It is just between you and God. Once you get started, you will find a format that works well for you.

A good format to start with is this:

- ▶ Yesterday – Do a quick evaluation of the previous day.
- ▶ The Word – Write down what God shows you as you read His Word.
- ▶ Prayer – Jot down some of the requests you are bringing to God. You will be amazed when you see how God really does answer your prayers.

Feel free to experiment with your journal until you discover what works best for you.

Read the following verses.

Psalm 102:18. Besides us, who else may benefit from the things we write in our journal?

Psalm 119:11. How might journaling help to apply this to our lives?

In Philippians 4:8, list 8 things that we can write in our journals:

1. Whatever is
2. Whatever is
3. Whatever is

4. Whatever is
5. Whatever is
6. Whatever is
7. Whatever is
8. Or

Summary Points:

- ▶ Our devotional life is the way we pursue a growing and satisfying relationship with God.
- ▶ Communication with God is a two-way conversation. The Bible is the primary way God speaks to us, and prayer is the way we speak to God.
- ▶ Worship is the way we celebrate who God is and express our love and appreciation to Him. Worship is for God.
- ▶ When we keep a journal, we keep a written record of our history with God. This practice will help God's truth go deeper into our lives and encourage us when we go through difficult times.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Commit to a time each day to spend with God. Make a daily appointment with God and do your best to keep it. Incorporate the four elements of a devotional life into this time.
- ▶ Participate in worship at church this weekend. Celebrate God as you sing to Him. Let Him know how much you love and appreciate Him.
- ▶ Start a journal. Begin to record your personal history with God.

"The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth."
Psalm 145:18

Session 5

Relationships – Trust, Forgiveness, Communication, and
Conflict Resolution

Psalm 1:2-3

“...but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

³That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither - whatever they do prospers.”

Romans 8:28

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Luke 16:10

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.”

Proverbs 3:6

“...in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Psalm 28:7

“The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.”

Trust

Trust is an important part of any relationship; it draws you closer to God, your family, and your friends. Without trust we will never have the intimate relationships that God designed for us.

The most important form of trust we can have is our trust in God; not trust in ourselves or our plans, and not the world’s wisdom and devices.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6

Your trust in God is the first, most important step. Psalm 1:2-3 says that the man who delights in the law of the Lord is blessed. When we seek God and His ways first, we will draw closer to Him and our trust in Him will increase. This will help us become trustworthy people ourselves.

Being a person others can trust involves honesty and integrity. This involves keeping our word, not belittling others, admitting when we are wrong, seeking forgiveness, and being willing to forgive as we have been forgiven in Christ. As we do these things, we learn to trust others more freely. Ask God for discernment in whom to trust and then trust the results He reveals.

Putting our trust in God is the way forward. Read the following verses to learn what God tells us about trust.

Romans 8:28. Why is it important to have trust?

Luke 16:10. What does the Bible say about earning trust?

Proverbs 3:6. What does it mean to trust and acknowledge God in everything?

Psalm 28:7. Why should I put my trust in God?

Psalm 118:6 (ESV) says, *“The Lord is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do to me?”* When we understand that no matter what man does to us, God will always be there, faithful, true, and trustworthy, it is easier to handle disappointments. If we find ourselves reluctant to trust someone, we would be wise to do some introspection and, if necessary, ask God to heal our hearts.

There is no substitute for faithful friends and Christian community. When we live in trusting relationships with one another, we can build up and encourage each other.

Three Practical Steps to Trust God Completely:

- ▶ Saturate your heart and mind with the Word of God.
- ▶ Constantly monitor your thoughts and feelings.
- ▶ Decide not to worry.

Forgiveness

We ALL need forgiveness. We are all born with a sin nature, eternally separated from God; and we would be lost forever without His forgiveness.

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” Romans 3:23

Forgiveness can be one of the hardest things that God requires us to do. But the good news is He does not leave us to do it on our own. He gave us Jesus as an example.

“When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.” Luke 23:33-34

God stands ready and willing to forgive us, but He asks that we extend that same forgiveness to others. Matthew 6:14-15 says, *“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*

Each time we find ourselves having trouble forgiving someone, we need to stop and think about all the times we have messed up, yet each time God was there with open arms to offer His forgiveness. Considering the magnitude of that thought, every situation in our lives where we are hesitant to forgive seems trivial. Read the following verses to learn what God says about forgiveness.

Romans 3:23. Why is forgiveness needed?

Matthew 6:14-15. What does Jesus teach about forgiveness?

Ephesians 4:31-32. What does forgiveness look like for a Christ Follower?

Matthew 18:21-35. How long must one keep on forgiving?

Communication

We cannot go through life without communicating with others. What we say, how we say it, and how we listen is important to God. He warns us that "...death and life are in the power of the tongue..." (Proverbs 18:21 ESV).

When speaking to a family member or a stranger, our communication should always be delivered in a loving manner. When we speak softly, kindly, wisely, truthfully, and with love, we can promote positive relationships and defuse tense situations.

Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and modeling His actions allows us to improve our communication and relationships with others.

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." Ephesians 4:2

God's primary ways of communication with us are through His Word (Romans 10:17), and through the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). Read the following verses to learn what God says about communication.

James 1:19

Colossians 3:8

Colossians 4:6

Ephesians 4:29.

Here are some biblical ways that will help you truly strengthen your relationships:

- ▶ Love God with all your heart, mind, and soul
- ▶ Love your spouse
- ▶ Love your family
- ▶ Love your neighbors
- ▶ Love your enemies

Of course, our most important communication should be the fulfillment of Mark 16:15. Jesus tells us to communicate the Gospel to a world that desperately needs to hear it.

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’”

Mark 16:15

Conflict Resolution

We all know that conflict is inevitable in our lives. But if we manage it biblically, it can serve as an opportunity for change and spiritual growth. We should make every effort to resolve our conflicts in a loving manner to restore the relationship.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Proverbs 15:1

God calls us to be peacemakers and to allow His redemptive, transforming love to pour out on our relationships. It is clear that when conflict arises, God intends us to resolve it according to His Word. In Matthew 5:9 Jesus says, *“Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”*

One thing we need to be aware of is that Satan will take advantage of our unresolved issues, especially anger, bitterness, self-pity, and envy to create strife among us. We cannot let Satan rob us of the joy healthy relationships can bring. We must do all we can to resolve these issues so we can have peace.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”

Ephesians 4:31

Read the following verses to learn what God says about resolving conflict.

Proverbs 19:11. What does God's Word encourage us to do?

Matthew 7:1-5 (NLT). What is Jesus telling us about the beginning of this process of resolving conflict?

Philippians 2:3. What does this passage remind us to do as we resolve conflict?

Ephesians 4:15. What does the passage tell us will happen as we speak the truth in love?

A Christ Follower's maturity is marked by the ability to communicate and share difficult truths and resolve conflicts in a loving way.

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Summary Points:

- ▶ We ALL need forgiveness.
- ▶ Having a personal relationship with God helps us to have good relationships with others.
- ▶ God’s Word is clear on how to start the process of resolving conflict.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Spend time in prayer, asking God to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus and others.
- ▶ Read James 1-4 to learn how your actions mirror your faith.
- ▶ Memorize Philippians 2:4-5.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another,
forgiving each other, just as in
Christ God forgave you.”
Acts 22:16

Session 6

Giving – Spiritual Gifts, Serving, and Resources

Spiritual Gifts

It is important to realize that we have been created in the very image of God. Sometimes God intervenes directly in human history (parting the Red Sea) and sometimes God sends angels to speak to us directly (when angels rescued Lot from the destruction of Sodom). But most often, God uses people like you and me to accomplish His purposes on earth.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:7. Does God only gift special people, or have all believers been gifted by God?

Part of our sin nature is pride. We all tend to compare our gifts with the gifts of others. A pastor of a small church might envy the pastor of a large church. Someone working behind the scenes might want to be the pastor. Someone who works in the garden may wish to have the gift of healing. Someone in the kids' ministry may envy the people leading worship on stage. Look at how Scripture corrects these wrong attitudes in Romans 12.

“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” Romans 12:4-8

We all have _____ gifts, given according to _____.

This wonderful description points out how all believers are interconnected, and how we are to work together for the benefit of each other. When we do this, we glorify God. No gift stands alone. And no gift is more important than any other.

There are different lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible. The lists are not all-encompassing but simply express some of the ways God empowers us with different abilities. Here are a few of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible. Do you see yourself in any of them?

- ▶ **Service** is the ability to do small or great tasks in working for the overall good of the body of Christ. People with this gift often serve behind the scenes, without glory or attention.
- ▶ **Giving** is the ability to produce wealth and look for ways to donate above and beyond their tithe to their home church for the purpose of advancing the Kingdom of God (missionaries, mission trips, etc.).
- ▶ **Teaching** is the ability to study and learn from the scriptures primarily to bring understanding and growth to other believers.

- ▶ *Exhortation* is the ability to encourage others through the written or spoken Word and biblical truth.
- ▶ *Mercy* is the ability to feel empathy and care for those who are hurting.
- ▶ *Prophecy* is the ability to boldly speak and bring clarity to scriptural and doctrinal truth, in some cases foretelling God's plan.
- ▶ *Leadership* is the ability to organize multiple tasks and groups of people to accomplish these tasks.

For more examples of spiritual gifts and how they should be utilized, read 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 and Ephesians 4. If you are not sure what your spiritual gift is (remember, you have at least one), take a spiritual gift assessment online at <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>.

Serving

Even more important than which gift we have is our attitude of service, or how we use our gift. Our role model, Jesus, the very Son of God, tells us He came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45).

What is our motivation for serving? When we serve, are we trying to feel good about ourselves? Are we trying to impress others? Who should we really be trying to please?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31 and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Why should we be serving?

Christianity is a 'team sport.' Jesus said people will know us by the love we show for one another. Use an online Bible website, such as Blue Letter Bible or Bible Gateway, and search for "one another." How many times does this show up in the Bible?

Do the same thing with the word "together." Did the number of responses surprise you?

It is important to remember Christians are people just like everyone else. Yes, we are forgiven. Yes, we are striving to be more like Christ each day (or we should be), but we are still imperfect people.

When we serve, we must focus on unity. This takes effort! Satan always wants to divide; God wants us to work together in harmony.

Read Ephesians Chapter 4. Notice the repeated use of the word, "one." See how the passage is calling for unity. Look carefully at verses 11-16. Paul is expressing big thoughts.

Who is to do the work of ministry?

According to this passage, what is our personal goal?

How are we to speak the truth?

Remember these things as you serve in the church. The Church is not a building; we are the Church.

“...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:5

Peter calls us “living stones, a holy priesthood, a spiritual house.” Fulfill your purpose by serving in the church, loving God, and loving others.

Resources

Everything we have comes from God. We do not own anything. Our role is to be a good steward with all the blessings God has given us. God does not give us resources to hold onto, only using them for ourselves. In fact, He gives them to us to share with others and impact His Kingdom. When we have a proper perspective of our purpose on earth, it is easier to trust God with our time, gifts, and resources.

The Bible says in James 1:17 that every good gift and every perfect gift comes from God our Father.

Now that we understand where our resources come from, read what God says about giving:

- ▶ *“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;¹⁰ then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”* (Proverbs 3:9-11)
- ▶ *“One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.”* (Proverbs 11:24)
- ▶ *“And He said to them, ‘Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’”* (Luke 12:15 ESV)
- ▶ *“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”* (Hebrews 13:16)

Now read Malachi 3:6-12.

Who never changes?

What were the Israelites robbing God of? _____ and _____

God says, “_____ me in this.”

Who will be blessed?

How much of the tithe were they to bring?

Where were they to bring the tithe?

Today, the “storehouse” is the local church where you are fed the Word of God, “my house” is the church, and “tithe” simply means a tenth. For example, if you earn a \$100 this week, you are to give \$10 back to the Lord. Notice, you give ‘back’ to the Lord because he already owns it. God owns everything. He does not need our money. We are to be good managers of all He has given us.

Malachi 3:10 is the only place in the Bible that God says, “Test me in this...” This Scripture is telling us that tithing is a test, a two-way test between us and God, a test of our heart.

You see, He is asking us to have faith in Him and trust Him with our time, gifts, and resources.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5–6

In the New Testament we are no longer under the Old Testament covenant; we are New Testament believers under a new and better covenant (see Hebrews 8:1-13). So how are we to give?

Read what Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

What are the two principles in this passage?

In what spirit should we give?

How does God bless us?

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” 2 Corinthians 8:9

Notice that Christ did not give just ten percent of His resources to obtain these spiritual treasures for us! He did not even give fifty percent! He gave one hundred percent! A disciple should desire to be like his Master therefore, we should be sacrificial givers too.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

So, what has priority in your life? Is Christ first? Or do you put yourself and your own desires first? You see, if our hearts are set on earthly things, we may be reluctant to give, but if our hearts are to advance God’s Kingdom, we will be more inclined to give freely and joyfully to God.

**Giving is a heart issue
between you and God.**

The matter of your giving is between you and God. The important thing is that we see giving as a 'privilege' and not a burden. We should not give out of a sense of obligation, but rather out of our love for the Lord and a desire to see His Kingdom grow.

Summary Points:

- ▶ A spiritual gift is something God has chosen specifically for you to help advance His Kingdom by serving with your special ability.
- ▶ Jesus is our role model for serving – *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* (Mark 10:45)
- ▶ Everything we have comes from God. Giving reminds us that we do not own anything. We are to be good stewards of everything He gives us.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Take a Spiritual Gifts test.
- ▶ Once you have determined which gift(s) you have, start using them to glorify God. You will be amazed how God will bless you!
- ▶ Spend time in prayer asking God to show you how to use your time, gifts, and resources wisely.
- ▶ Strive to be a good manager of all God gives you.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16

Session 7

Holy Spirit – Who He is, Being Filled, and Led

The Holy Spirit - The Most Amazing Gift

In the life of every believer there is a most amazing gift that God has prepared for us. Sadly, many Christians fail to understand this gift. This wonderful gift is the person of the Holy Spirit.

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - ¹⁷the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:16-18

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples knowing in a few days He would be put to death on the cross. He wanted them to be encouraged and to know that they would not be alone when He went away.

Jesus tells us, *“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”* (John 16:7 ESV).

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus is in heaven now sitting at the right hand of God the Father interceding for us. Until He comes back, we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

In this session we will learn how the Holy Spirit equips us. But first we need to know ‘Who’ the Holy Spirit is.

As we learned earlier, God exists in three persons: The Father (God), the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. This is referred to as the Trinity. The word Trinity comes from the prefix “tri” meaning three and the suffix “unity” meaning one. The Bible clearly shows us that there is only one God, and yet three personal distinctions in His complex nature. Each is distinct from the others but never acts independently. They are one in nature and purpose. In Genesis (1:2, 26), we see that before the foundation of the world, the Trinity was in existence.

Read the following Bible verses to see if you can identify the Trinity - the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit and how they work together. Write down the key words in these verses.

Genesis 1:1-2

Genesis 1:26

Matthew 3:16-17

Matthew 28:19

It is important to understand that before salvation the Holy Spirit is alongside everyone (believers and unbelievers). He is the one who brings conviction of sin to us and draws us to the goodness of God.

At the moment of salvation (when we believe and repent), the Holy Spirit begins to live inside each of us, equipping us to do what we cannot do in our own power. He is our amazing gift, God's promised gift to all Christ Followers.

“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.” Ephesians 1:13-14

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit helps conform us to the image and character of Jesus. He leads us, guides us, and empowers us with spiritual gifts. He comforts us, teaches us, and He can help us pray. He is our helper. He leads us into all truth. He begins to chip away everything in us that does not look like Jesus. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:19 (NLT), *“Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself.”* The Holy Spirit causes us to think/act different from how we normally think/act. He changes us from the inside out. We as Christ Followers, need to learn how to hear and obey the Holy Spirit.

How the Holy Spirit Helps Us

Read John 16:13 and list three things the Holy Spirit does:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

There are hundreds of verses found in the Bible that demonstrate how the Holy Spirit helps us. In this next exercise, read the verses in their context. List how the Holy Spirit can specifically help you in your circumstances in your journal and share it with your One on One mentor.

- ▶ The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).
- ▶ The Holy Spirit reveals the deep things of God to us (1 Corinthians 2:10).
- ▶ The Holy Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- ▶ The Holy Spirit enables us to obey the truth (1 Peter 1:22).
- ▶ The Holy Spirit teaches us (John 14:26).
- ▶ The Holy Spirit comforts us (John 14:16 KJV).

Share which role of the Holy Spirit impacted you most in this exercise and why?

Which one do you find yourself needing to put into practice the most today?

Acts -1:7-8

“He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.’⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Romans 8:26

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”

Luke 4:14-15

“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.”

1 Corinthians 2:10

“...these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.”

The evidence of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). These are the fruit of the Spirit.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Now that we understand the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and how He equips us, let us look at another role of the Holy Spirit. When we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, we receive His supernatural empowerment. This supernatural empowerment equips us to do things that we could not do without His help.

Listen to what Jesus said to His disciples when He was leaving them.

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these.”

John 14:12

We see that the reason for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the imparting of spiritual gifts is to accomplish the work of Christ in this world.

Before going to the cross, Jesus told the disciples to wait until He sent the Holy Spirit to empower them. Like us, they needed the power of the Holy Spirit before taking the message of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Today we are equipped to operate with that same empowerment to expand God’s Kingdom.

In this next exercise, match the Scriptures in the left column with these statements:

Gives us the power and anointing to teach

What we receive when we wait

Shows us how to pray and intercedes to God on our behalf

Reveals deep secrets of God to us

(Answers: Luke 4:14-15, Acts 1:7-8, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 2:10)

Being Spirit filled (baptized in the Spirit), allows us to fully use the spiritual gifts that God has given us.

“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.” 1 Corinthians 12:11

In 1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT), the apostle Paul tells us that spiritual gifts are given to each of us so we can help each other. Unlike the natural abilities that everyone has from birth, spiritual gifts belong exclusively to Christ Followers.

Gifts of the Spirit

Being Spirit filled or baptized in the Spirit is nothing to be afraid of. It is not weird or unbiblical, nor is it for only certain people or for certain denominations.

All Christ Followers should desire to use their spiritual gifts. We encourage you to study the chapters on spiritual gifts and begin to pray and ask the Lord to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

Here are the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12. You can read more examples of spiritual gifts and how they should be utilized in Romans 12:6 and Ephesians 4.

Wisdom – This gift gives the recipient the ability to apply the principles of the Word of God in practical ways to specific situations and to recommend the best course of action at the best time (1 Corinthians 12:8).

Knowledge – The recipient of this gift can discover, analyze, and systematize truth for the benefit of others. With this gift, one speaks with understanding (1 Corinthians. 12:8).

Faith – This gift gives the recipient the ability to have a vision for what God wants to be done, and to confidently believe that it will be accomplished, despite circumstances and appearances to the contrary (1 Corinthians 12:9).

Healing – The gift of healing provides the recipient to serve as a human instrument through whom God supernaturally cures illnesses and restores health (1 Corinthians 12:9).

Prophecy – With this gift the recipient will be able to boldly speak and bring clarity to scriptural and doctrinal truth, in some cases foretelling God’s plan (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Miracles – The gift of miracles gives the ability to serve as an instrument through whom God accomplishes acts that manifest supernatural power (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Distinguishing of Spirits – With this gift, the recipient can clearly discern the spirit of truth versus the spirit of error, to distinguish reality versus counterfeits, the divine versus the demonic, true versus false teaching, and in some cases, spiritual versus carnal motives (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Tongues – The gift of speaking in tongues is the supernatural ability, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to speak to God in prayer and worship in a language not known to the person speaking. This gift is for private personal prayer. However, it can be used to communicate a message in a group *if* someone with the gift of interpretation of tongues is present. (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Interpretation of Tongues – The ability to interpret a message that has been spoken in tongues to a group for everyone’s understanding (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Ask God to show you the gifts He has chosen for you, so you can begin to experience the Spirit-filled life that God intended every believer to have. Ask your One on One mentor to pray with you in this area. Ask and keep on asking! God is faithful!

Summary Points:

- ▶ The Holy Spirit is one person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit is a gift to all people who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit lives in us and has several roles.
- ▶ The baptism of the Holy Spirit (different from water baptism) is an overflowing of the Spirit used to edify and serve the Church.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Take the time to study verses regarding the Holy Spirit and look to see how the Holy Spirit is working in and through you.
- ▶ Identify areas in your life where you need the Holy Spirit’s guidance and correction.
- ▶ Seek out one of your pastors and share with them your desire to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.
- ▶ Journal the times when you feel the Holy Spirit using you to serve others.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

Session 8

Temptation and Spiritual Warfare

Temptation

The lifestyle of a Christ Follower is very exciting! But after salvation, we may have some unrealistic expectations about what that life should and/or will look like.

One of the places this may happen is in the area of temptation. In other words, we may assume (or hope) that since we are now saved and growing spiritually, that temptation will be fairly easy to overcome, or maybe even disappear.

But the deceiver, Satan has other ideas. Temptation may actually increase because Satan is not happy that we have 'changed teams' and are now children of God.

He will use ANY means at his disposal to woo us back or cause us to stumble, and temptation is one of his MAIN tools!

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

This verse tells us that Satan is actively seeking us, trying to wreak havoc in our lives, and is willing and able to devour us, if we fall for his tricks. So if Satan is looking to devour us, what is his main goal when he tempts us?

- ▶ Satan's main goal is to tempt us to disobey.
- ▶ How does Satan tempt believers to disobey? Answer: He Lies!

Lies like:

- ▶ “No one will know if I sin in private, behind closed doors.”
- ▶ “It can't hurt anyone else if I'm the only one involved.”
- ▶ “It won't be too bad if I just do it (sin) once.”

Read 1 Peter 5:8 again, and look for an important warning, and a key way to resist Satan's attacks! It is found in the first two words: “ ”

But sometimes WE are the problem. We fail to resist temptation, then make bad decisions, and even exhibit bad behaviors (sin), usually after we let our guard down.

One way Satan likes to work is by telling us we are all alone. He tries to convince us no one understands, and that others really have no idea what we are going through.

1 Peter 5:9 gives us a great reminder that we are not all alone, and other Christ Followers are experiencing similar things (spiritual attacks, temptations, trials, etc.).

“Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” 1 Peter 5:9

This same thought is echoed in our next verse.

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13

What does this verse promise God will provide?

So, that leads us to this important question:

When facing temptation, HOW do we overcome it?

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4:15-16

What will we find when we approach God’s throne? and
to us!

So when we are tempted, how do we ask, and what do we even ask for?

A simple prayer would look something like this:

“God, I recognize I’m being tempted by... (describe it). Please help me resist it! Fill me with your Holy Spirit and help me change to be more like You.”

Paul has some great advice for us in Galatians 5:16: *“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”*

Spiritual Warfare

You are at war! When you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, chances are you did not think that decision would require your enlistment as a soldier who is at war, but it does. Today we are engaged in a different sort of battle, not a physical battle, but a spiritual one.

The Bible teaches us in Ephesians 6:12(NLT), *“For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.”* You, and countless other believers like you, are at war with the devil today.

The advantage that we have as believers in this war against the devil is that we can know what weapons he uses, how he uses them, and what he is trying to accomplish.

The Bible teaches us in 2 Corinthians 2:11(NLT) *“... for we are familiar with his evil schemes.”* Read the following verses to learn what God’s Word says about Satan’s evil schemes.

2 Corinthians 11:3

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”

John 8:44

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Ephesians 5:17

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”

1 John 2:17

“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

2 Corinthians 11:3. What is Satan after?

John 8:44. What is Satan’s native weapon?

Ephesians 5:17. What does God want us to understand?

Take what you have learned from the above Scriptures and write a clear statement about what Satan is after, why he is after it, and why he uses the weapon he uses.

What does 1 John 2:17 say about the person who does the will of God?

From your study of these Scriptures, you may have concluded that Satan is after your mind. Lies are his weapon of choice. Satan knows that if he can influence our minds enough to believe his lies, then we will no longer understand God’s will for our lives. Stated simply, we are in a spiritual battle, a war with eternal consequences.

The Bible says in Proverbs 23:7a NKJV, “*For as he thinks in his heart, so he is...*” What does this verse reveal about the power of your thoughts?

As you look back over the course of your life, describe how you have experienced the power of your thoughts, both positively and negatively, affecting your life?

Keeping in mind Proverbs 23:7a, it is important to understand that our thoughts influence us and persuade us to action.

Read Matthew 5:16.

Our mind is the control center of our will. If Satan can influence the thoughts of our mind enough to personally disengage us from the will of God, our 'light' (Christ in us) will no longer shine. The result? We will become a casualty. The fallout? Not our own salvation, but the salvation of others. They may not come to know the Lord Jesus Christ through us, and God will not be glorified.

The good news is that with God there is always hope, and our hope is in Christ Jesus! God has given us a sure and certain defense against Satan and his evil schemes. Commit these defenses to memory; you will need them.

- ▶ His Word (Psalm 119:105)
- ▶ His Grace (1 Peter 5:10)
- ▶ His Spirit (John 14:6)
- ▶ His Son (1 John 3:8)

Read Ephesians 6:10-18. List the seven pieces of spiritual armor (be sure to include prayer) and include a brief description of their purpose.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

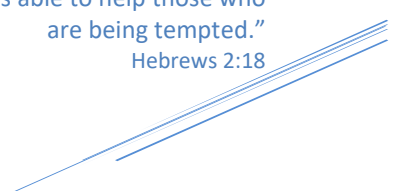
Summary Points:

- ▶ We should always BE ALERT and be 'on guard' so we can RESIST temptation.
- ▶ When tempted, we should ASK God to help us resist it.
- ▶ Spiritual warfare is very real and affects every believer.
- ▶ The battle is in our mind.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Rely on God more - trust Him to help you in your times of trouble.
- ▶ Listen to the Holy Spirit more - rely less on 'self,' and ASK God for advice!
- ▶ Pray the armor over yourself every day this week and make it your daily habit.

“Because he himself suffered when he was
tempted, he is able to help those who
are being tempted.”
Hebrews 2:18



Session 9

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith”

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 3:23

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

1 Peter 2:24

“‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’”

Romans 10:13

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Sharing the Gospel

The Gospel is the most important news you will ever hear, and it is the most life-changing news you could ever share.

The Gospel is not about you; it is about Jesus! Jesus is the center of the Gospel. Your testimony is not the Gospel. Your testimony is the story of you hearing the Gospel then acknowledging your sin, repenting, and asking Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. When sharing your personal testimony, it should never be a substitute for sharing the Gospel. However, it can be used as an incredibly effective tool (see Sharing Your Testimony) to point people to Jesus.

Read Romans 1:16-17. Why does Paul tell us we are not to be ashamed of the Gospel?

“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

Romans 10:12-13

According to Romans 10:12-13, who does Paul tell us will be saved?

How will we be saved?

Not everyone explains the Gospel the same way, but we always need to include the critical elements below.

- ▶ Tell them about God’s plan (John 3:16)
- ▶ Share our problem (Romans 3:23)
- ▶ Tell them about God’s remedy (1 Peter 2:24)
- ▶ Our response (Romans 10:13)

People need to hear the Gospel. They need to hear that God loves them, that Jesus died for them, and that that they too can have eternal life. As Christ Followers, we are commanded to share God’s redeeming love to everyone everywhere.

“And then he told them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.’”

Mark 16:15 (NLT)

Sharing Your Testimony

We all love stories. Your testimony is God's story in you. Since it is your personal story, you know it well. Whenever we discover something wonderful, our first response is to treasure it, and then we want to share it with others. As Christ Followers, we are called to share the joy and peace of knowing Jesus with others.

Your testimony is God's
story in you!

In Mark 5:18-20, read what Jesus tells the demon-possessed man He has healed. *"As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹ Jesus did not let him, but said, 'Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.' ²⁰ So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed."*

Testimonies come in all shapes and sizes, and each one is unique. Sharing your testimony is simply telling someone else about how you came to know Jesus, your relationship with Him now, and what He has done for you and in you.

Your testimony story should have three segments:

First Segment - 'Before' you came to know Jesus. This should make up about 25% of your story.

- ▶ Be relevant. If you happen to know something about the person you are talking to, connect with them by using the part of your story that matches their situation.
- ▶ Be transparent. Explain what your life looked like before you accepted Jesus. Include past failures, unhealthy relationships, bad attitudes, sin, etc.
- ▶ Do not glorify a sinful lifestyle or exaggerate your past.

Second Segment - 'When' you received Jesus. This should make up about 50% of your story.

- ▶ This is where you want to share the Gospel, the Good News.
- ▶ Be relatable. Avoid using words or phrases that you only hear in church. If you cannot avoid these words, be sure to explain them. Some examples are "I got saved" or "I was washed in the blood of the Lamb."
- ▶ Describe how you felt when you first believed.
- ▶ Do not boast about what you gave up for God BUT rather about what He gave up for you. You gave up sin, hell, judgement, guilt, and shame. God gave EVERYTHING. He was judged, made guilty, and put to shame, and died for you.
- ▶ Do not portray the Christian life as perfect and trouble free. If you speak of a better life, be sure to inform them that in this life we will all have trials and tribulations. Otherwise, if their life after 'coming to Jesus' is not what they expected, they may be disappointed. Jesus tells us that

there will be trials in this world, BUT He has already overcome them through His work on the cross.

Third segment - What your life is like 'after' coming to know Jesus. This should make up about the last 25% of your story.

Avoid the idea that everything has been perfect since you came to know Jesus.

Be transparent and share how your struggles reveal the character of God: His mercy, His grace, and His patience.

Lastly, give the other person a chance to respond to your story. Get their thoughts. Ask them, "What do you think about what we have been discussing?"

What, in your opinion, is the most powerful part of your salvation testimony?

What was the most impactful moment that helped you realize your need for the Savior?

Share one truth about God that you have experienced since coming to know Him.

Navigating the Conversation

Understanding your testimony and how to relate it to others is important. If you do not know how to start the conversation and move it in a spiritual direction, you will not get the chance to share your story.

Be Engaging

***"When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her,
'Will you give me a drink?'" John 4:7***

Jesus engages in conversation with this woman, but not in an overly spiritual way. He was thirsty, there was a well, and the woman had the means to draw water. It was a perfect springboard into a conversation. It made sense. Be natural, not spiritual, when starting a conversation. Use the situation, the surroundings, or current events to begin the conversation. Examples include current events (even deaths and tragedies), or things they are wearing (logos, sports jerseys, jewelry, tattoos, etc.). Make eye contact, smile, and say, "Hi." If you receive a cordial "Hello," then proceed with the conversation.

Gospel tracts are another great conversation starter. Gospel tracts are literature, usually not very long, that share the Gospel. Try to find Gospel tracts that do not seem too religious or too 'churchy.' Funny or light-hearted tracts are easier to use and will keep the conversation going.

Swinging the Conversation

In John 4:10, Jesus answered the Samaritan woman, *"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."*

Jesus moves this natural conversation to a spiritual conversation in one sentence. An effective transitional phrase is, "Do you have any spiritual beliefs?" It is common to feel like you do not have an opening to 'swing' the conversation to a spiritual one. The conversation does not normally swing to a spiritual conversation by itself. Notice, Jesus moved the conversation deliberately.

By swinging the conversation to the spiritual, you will be able to naturally roll right into your testimony. You will be surprised how eager people are to talk about spiritual things. The more you do it, the more natural it will feel.

Using your imagination, come up with three additional transitional phrases that you could use.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What in your opinion, would be an effective transitional phrase for you?

Here are four things a person needs to do to receive God's gift of salvation:

- ▶ Recognize - Admit they are a sinner and that Jesus died on the cross for their sins.
- ▶ Repent - Ask forgiveness and be willing to turn away from their sins.
- ▶ Receive – Ask Jesus to be their Lord and Savior and commit to follow Him.

Sharing your testimony is not about accomplishing a task. It is about sharing God's love with the person you are talking to; someone He loves and wants a relationship with.

Summary Points:

- ▶ The Gospel IS Good News.
- ▶ We are called to share the Good News.
- ▶ The Gospel is not your testimony.
- ▶ Your testimony is your personal God story.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Attend an entry level evangelism class. This will provide you with training on evangelism from start to finish.
- ▶ Volunteer for outreaches where you will be able to observe, participate and practice sharing your faith.
- ▶ Volunteer to go on a short term mission trip with your church.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”

Romans 1:16

Session 10

Growing as a Christ Follower - Faith and The 5 C's

Faith

Building a Strong Faith

As you have already learned, faith is the key to the Kingdom of God. The word faith is defined as ‘belief that is not based on proof.’ In God’s Kingdom we can no longer rely on our five senses, we must believe in the truths found in God’s Word.

Faith is like a muscle; the more we use it, the stronger it becomes. Just imagine how strong Moses’ faith must have been after he witnessed the plagues of Egypt, and how strong his faith was by the time he reached The Red Sea! The more we seek and obey God, the more He rewards us with stronger faith. The stronger our faith becomes, the more dependent we become on God. This bond with the Father is the healthiest relationship that we will ever have. It is a magnificent and divine connection.

As we trust in God for truth and direction, we grow as Christ Followers. We will begin to understand what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. We pray that you will come to understand how much God loves you, how devoted He is to you, and begin to understand God’s plan for your life.

Read the following verses.

Hebrews 11:6. What will please God?

Ephesians 3:18. What specifically does Paul want us to understand?

2 Corinthians 5:20. Along with being a child of God, what other assignment do we have?

Walking in Faith

We previously read that being a Christ Follower does not exempt us from the storms of life. However, faith will guide us peacefully through these storms. By believing God’s promises more than we believe our circumstances, we can ‘walk on water,’ even though the storms are raging around us. Remember, as long as Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, He never even noticed the storm around him. But when he focused on the storm, he began to sink.

“‘Come,’ he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’” Matthew 14:29-31

Peace, like faith, is one of the many Christ-like characteristics that we receive at salvation. We can experience this divine trait, through faith, when life becomes difficult. But, like everything else in God’s Kingdom, the key to peace, joy, hope, love, and grace, is faith!

Read 1 Samuel 17:40-50 to see how the size of our God always trumps the size of our storms. Even though our ‘five smooth stones’ may look puny compared to the ‘Goliath’ you are facing, remember, God is with you in every battle! When David faced Goliath, he did not talk about how dangerous Goliath was, he talked about how great God is.

Read the following verses.

1 Samuel 17:45. What sentence did David speak to Goliath, and how did it influence his victory?

Galatians 5:22-23. List the fruits of the Spirit.

Praying in Faith

We have the awesome privilege of talking to the Creator of the universe. Amazing isn't it? So, it just makes sense that we combine this divine privilege with our faith. Philippians 4:6 tells us *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”* This means that instead of worrying, we should ask God for help regarding our issue, then in faith thank Him for answering our prayer. Much like Paul did for Philemon when he said, *“I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers.”* Paul was thanking God for Philemon as he prayed for his friend.

Effective prayers in faith can include God's Word. A perfect example of this is Jesus in the wilderness when He was tempted by Satan. Matthew 4 tells us that Jesus refused Satan's every offer of fame and fortune with, *“It is written...”* Those three words sent Satan packing!

“It is written...”

This shows us how powerful the Word of God really is. When we begin our prayer with *“God, you said...”*, the spiritual world moves. For example, *“God, you said that You would supply all my needs according to your riches in glory by Christ Jesus. I thank You for supplying every need I have in Jesus' Name.”* This type of prayer includes thanksgiving, the Word and faith.

Praying out loud can also be faith-building. Remember, Satan cannot read your mind. Only God is omniscient (all-knowing). According to God's Word, when we pray out loud Satan is put on notice and our faith becomes stronger. Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17 (ESV)

Philippians 4:6

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

John 8:44

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Revelation 12:10

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. “

1 Corinthians 1:30

“It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

Write out a prayer request according to Philippians 4:6. Then pray it out loud.

How is your faith strengthened after praying like this?

Believing Who You Are in Christ Jesus By Faith

Jesus says in John 8:44 that Satan is the father of lies. In Revelation 12:10, a loud voice from heaven calls Satan the “accuser of the brethren.” Both are absolutely correct! As the accuser of the brethren, Satan tries to convince us that we are not who the Bible says we are. Yet, 1 Corinthians 1:30 tells us *“It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”* In other words, Jesus allows us through His sacrifice to be righteous, holy, and redeemed. Our part in this divine relationship is to believe this truth and walk in it by faith. When we look at our sinful flesh to determine our righteousness, then our faith is weakened, and we are susceptible to Satan’s lies.

How much more wonderful each day when we remind ourselves who the Word says we are in Christ Jesus. As the sons and daughters of God:

- ▶ We are positioned in heavenly places with Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3)
- ▶ We are anointed (2 Corinthians 1:21)
- ▶ We are holy (1 Corinthians 3:17)
- ▶ We are given grace and forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7)

We enjoy this abundant life by faith when we look past the natural and believe God’s Word. Living in peace and joy then becomes a way of life.

Even though we all have 'missed the mark' on more than one occasion, nothing we do, say, or think can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:39). If God can take Saul of Tarsus, the great persecutor of the Church (Acts 9) and turn him into Paul an anointed apostle of Jesus Christ, then just imagine what He can do for us!

List a few ways you can remind yourself of your spiritual identity throughout your day.

What are the weapons we have been given to combat Satan's lies?

Five Keys (5 C's) to Becoming More Like Jesus

Following Jesus transforms us. It changes us. It makes us more like Him. So how do we become more like Jesus? Below are five specific action points called, Five Core Commitments (5 C's). These biblical principles are keys to effective spiritual growth. They are key elements we find in Scripture that helped the disciples turn their world upside down! And for that reason, they are the heart and soul of what Christ Followers are called to do.

Commit to be a growing follower of Christ. A committed Christ Follower no longer leads their life; they choose to follow God in full obedience to Him. This happens when we realize we are sinners, recognize that Christ died for us, repent of our sins, and receive Him as our personal Savior. Following Christ is not an event; it is the greatest lifestyle in all the world! If you have not already done so, we invite you to begin this new life in Christ today. It is too good to miss out on! (Matthew 16:24)

Celebrate and live the fulfilling lifestyle. We celebrate our new life in Christ 24/7! He knows us by name, forgives all our sins, directs our steps, and gives us the power and desire to live for Him. He works all things together for our good and promises us that we will live forever with Him in heaven! It does not get any better than that! With this kind of a 'benefit package,' how could we help but celebrate? (Matthew 16:25, John 10:10).

Connect to others in personal vibrant relationships. To really grow in Christ, we cannot just be committed; we also need to connect with other believers. When we connect with others this makes a large church feel like family. One of the ways to connect is through groups. Join a group, grow in your walk with God, and make new friends along the way (Philippians 2:4).

Communicate and share the Good News to everyone everywhere. Jesus said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." These words are the heartbeat of church, both locally and throughout the world. Lost people matter to God! Our part is to communicate the Good News with passion and power. We want to reach out to those in our communities and beyond, meeting needs

and sharing the love of Jesus. One by one we are making a difference for eternity. It is our greatest privilege! (Mark 16:15)

Contribute your time, passion, talents, and possessions. God's work on earth is accomplished by Christ Followers who share what they have to bless others. This is demonstrated in many ways. From the army of volunteers who so generously invest their time and talents, to the generosity of God's people giving their tithes and offerings, the results are the same. Those who contribute find purpose and fulfillment, and the work gets done with joy and excellence! So go ahead – find a place to serve and see for yourself that it truly is more blessed to give than to receive! (Matthew 16:27; Malachi 3:10; Mark 10:45)

If you are serious about following Jesus and becoming everything God created you to be, then let these Five Core Commitments (5 C's) be your roadmap!

Summary Points:

- ▶ Faith is the key to the Kingdom of God.
- ▶ Faith will guide you peacefully through the storms of life.
- ▶ Remember that nothing we do, say, or think can separate us from the love of God.

Next Steps:

- ▶ Study the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).
- ▶ Pray out loud privately to help build your faith.
- ▶ To know who you are in Christ, study God's Word daily.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of
the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
Matthew 28:19

Now What?

Congratulations! We hope that you have grown in your faith and commitment to Christ and we pray that you continue to set aside time each day to spend with God and study His Word. The things you have learned through this journey will only benefit you if you apply them to your life.

Jesus instructed His disciples in Matthew 10:8, “Freely you have received, freely give.” Every Christ Follower is to become a growing disciple and then help make other disciples. We are to grow from spiritual infants to mature followers of Christ.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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 men in their deceitful scheming.” Ephesians 4:11-14

Jesus tells us the Great Commission of the Church is to make disciples.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20

Thank you for your commitment to grow spiritually and do your part in seeing the Gospel go to the ends of the earth. May God richly bless you as you continue to serve Him!

Notes

1. Billy Graham, "How Can I Be a True Disciple of Christ? Billy Graham's Answer," Bill Graham Evangelistic Association, August 15, 2018, found at <https://billygraham.org/story/how-can-i-be-a-true-disciple-of-christ-billy-grahams-answer/>

