



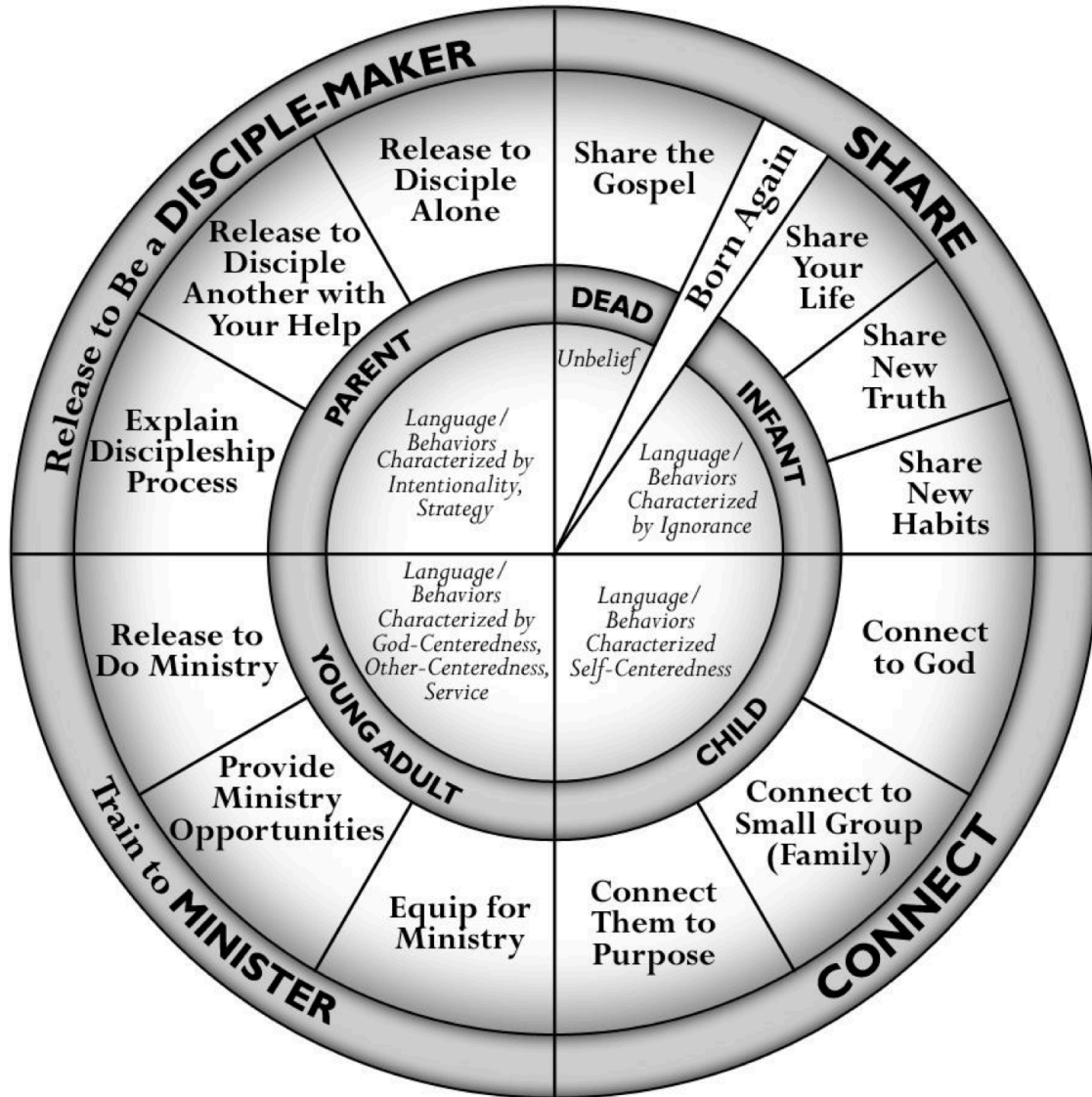
LIFE WITH GOD

LEARNING WHAT LIFE
SHOULD LOOK LIKE



Discipleship Wheel

Illustrates the 5 stages of Spiritual Growth



Stage | What is Needed at that Stage | Main Characteristics to tell if in Stage

- (1) Spiritually Dead | Share the Gospel | Characterized by Unbelief
- (2) Infant in Christ | Share Life, Share New Truth, Share New Habits | Characterized by Ignorance
- (3) Child in Christ | Connect to God, Church Family, Purpose | Characterized by Self-Centeredness
- (4) Young Adult in Christ | Equip for Ministry, Provide Ministry Opportunities, Release to Do Ministry | Characterized by God-centeredness and Others-centeredness
- (5) Parent in Christ | Explain Discipleship Process, Release to Disciple with Help, Release to Disciple Alone | Characterized by Intentionality and Strategy

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IDENTITY PILLARS: WHAT A GODLY LIFE LOOKS LIKE

Our lives probably don't look like this right now and that is okay. Where are you in each of these areas that Jesus expects us to be obedient in? What are some specific ways you engage in each of the following prompts under each of the 4 headings?

<p style="text-align: center;">(1) ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY</p> <p>Mission - joining God in doing His plan</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Family - fulfilling my roles well</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Vocation - working as unto the Lord</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Steward blessings well</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: #A52A2A;"><i>MATTHEW 25:14-30</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">(3) INVEST AND PARTICIPATE IN A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Teaching - learning</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Investing in the spiritual growth for yourself and others</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Service - caring and being cared for</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: #A52A2A;"><i>ACTS 2:42</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">(2) ABIDE IN JESUS</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Listening and learning from Holy Spirit</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Intaking God's Truth - listening, reading, studying, meditating, memorizing</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Prayer - adoration, confession, petition, supplication</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: #A52A2A;"><i>PSALM 119:9-16</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">(4) REST CONSISTENTLY</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Stopping Your Work</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Playing</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Reflecting on blessings, truth, God's character</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: #A52A2A;"><i>EXODUS 31:17</i></p>

Take some time to reflect on what you do/have to do in each of these areas. Are there any areas that seem unbalanced or take away from your ability to invest time in some of the other boxes? Do you value certain areas more than others?

STEWARDSHIP //

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that if we are now "in Christ" we are new creations. As new creations we are also ambassadors for His Kingdom. One of the first things we must learn is to take responsibility for living as new creations and as ambassadors. What does that look like?

First let's look at Matthew 25:14-30...

14 "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16 "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' 21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 22 "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' 23 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' 24 "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' 26 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' 29 "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

As we look at the bolded part in v.20-23, Jesus is using the following parable to say that the master is pleased with those servants who take responsibility for the roles and responsibilities He has given them. Let's look at 4 areas that we can begin to take responsibility:

1. God's Mission - joining God in doing His plan (evangelism, discipleship, etc,)
2. My Family - fulfilling my roles well (son, daughter, husband, father, friend, etc)
3. My Vocation - working as unto the Lord (career, student, part-time job, servant, ministry leader)
4. Steward blessings well - the things that I have been given, am I using them for others?

STEWARDSHIP // ---

HOW ARE YOU HANDLING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

What is your main goal in life? What does God say it should be?

Are you content with the way you spend your time and manage your responsibilities? Why or why not?

How do you see your life fitting in with God's plan for the world?

STEWARDSHIP // _____

HOW SHOULD YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

Take a moment to reread Matthew 25:14–30. What surprises you about the master's response? What does this reveal to you about God's expectations of his people?

When we think of being a steward, the first thing that probably pops in our head are flight attendants. They manage, supervise, and take care of the passengers on the plane. It is their job to look after the things they have been given. The same goes for Christians. God has entrusted us with His creation and designed us to steward it well. The Holman Bible Dictionary defines stewardship as "utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation."

Let's go back to the plane analogy. Stewards don't own the plane or the people on it; rather, they work for the owner of the plane. The owner gives them tools to best serve the people aboard the plane. Similarly, God gives us tools in order to serve the people He puts in our life. 1 Peter 4:10 says "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

A steward is a manager, not an owner. We have to remember that God entrusted us with resources, responsibilities, and people--*He* is the owner of these things and we are under *His* authority. We have to be aware of and resist the temptation to believe that we are in control. When we proclaim Christ as Lord, we are saying that He is supreme ruler over us in power and authority. Managing His gifts--stewarding--well serves as evidence that we believe this proclamation to be true.

What are some resources, tools, or opportunities God has given to you to steward?

What are some adjustments the Lord is leading you to make?

PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD //

WHY DO YOU NEED TO SPEND PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD?

"It is a solemn thing, and no small scandal in the Kingdom, to see God's children starving while actually seated at the Father's table. ... For it is not mere words that nourish the soul, but God Himself, and unless the hearers find God in personal experience they are not the better for having heard the truth. The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His Presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and center of their hearts"

"It is a tragic fact that many Christians have left our seeking of Him to our teachers. We have come to believe the faulty logic which says that if we have found Him (at salvation), we need no more seek Him."

"Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. " --- A.W. Tozer – June 16, 1948

As the pastor A.W. Tozer puts it, "Our relationship is not past, or passive but is present and active. We have to learn to pursue God and learn to connect to Him."

Psalm 119:9–16 (NASB95)

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. 10 With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. 11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. 12 Blessed are You, O Lord; Teach me Your statutes. 13 With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Your mouth. 14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. 15 I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways. 16 I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.

By virtue of God creating us, giving us a world, His word and Himself God has demonstrated that He desires to be with us, despite our sin and our shortcomings. The Psalmist articulates this very well in this passage by pointing out both the why and the how of connection with God.

Name some actions, and attitudes demonstrated in the Psalms passage. What are the stated outcomes of these actions and attitudes? (ex. Purity is equated with God's word and Truth, Our need to pursue and seek God so we don't wander from His way)

PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD // _____

HOW IS MY PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD?

How faithful are you in spending time intaking the Bible (listening, teaching, reading, studying, etc.), listening to the Holy Spirit, confessing, making requests? What are some ways you struggle with this?

What are some ways God has encouraged you or grown you in your understanding of Bible intake (listening, teaching, reading, studying, etc.), listening to the Holy Spirit, confessing, making requests (about relationship and connection with God)?

What is the quality of the time spent? Do you ever see it as time well spent? If it is, what makes the difference between it being time well spent and not?

PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD //

HOW SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT IT?

Proverbs 3:1-3 (NASB95)

"My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart."

We often misunderstand the purpose of spending time with God and learning about God. It is important that we view it through the proper lens. Spending time with God is not a passive activity. We must approach it like the relationship it is and who God seeks to be to us. Every verse in Scripture was divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit to provide us with truth that gives us strength to fight sin and grounds us in encouragement as we seek to live obediently to the calling Christ has for every one of our lives. So much of scripture gives us insight into the nature of our relationship with God and how we are to relate to Him. One of the reasons God gave us the Bible was because He knew on our own, we would have no idea how to live in a way that pleases Him. We need Scripture to guide us as we navigate the challenges and discouragements in life, and God encourages us that as we seek to live by His Word, it will bring peace to our otherwise troubled lives. These things include how to pray, that we need to confess our sins, that He wants us to ask Him for things, intercede for people, and cast our cares and fears on Him among other things. All of this is done as we spend time in His presence interacting and listening to Him, and spending time intaking His truth.

What is the command in Proverbs 3:1-3 above? Why do you think the author gives this command specifically?

What is the purpose of listening and learning from Holy Spirit?

What is the purpose of intaking God's Truth multiple ways such as - listening, reading, studying, meditating, memorizing?

What are the purpose of having different forms and parts of prayer - adoration, confession, petition, supplication?

PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD // BIBLE INTAKE

A common misconception is that we need to rely on pastors and other church leaders to teach us the Word. However, God gives us His Word so that we can know Him and spend time with Him personally! His heart for you and the world is expressed in every verse, and He desires you to study the Bible diligently so that you can tell others of His heart for us.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB95)

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Approaching Scripture can be intimidating, because we often feel ill equipped or unsure of whether or not we will misunderstand or be unable to grasp what God is trying to say in His Word. As we "mine" in scripture, there are a few methods that are helpful to practice as we seek to grow in learning to read the Bible.

Observation

What is going on in the text? Setting? Events? What was said?

Interpretation

Based on what took place in this account/what was said, what is the author's intention in writing this passage?

Application

How can we apply these truths to our lives? How is God's heart displayed in the passage and how can this impact the way I view my daily interactions?

Questions to ask of the text:

- What does the verse mean/What is it saying?
- Define key words
- What are the motives of the author/individual?
Tone?
- What is the historical setting of this account?
- Why do you think the individual does these things?
- What other verses are you reminded of when you read this verse?
- How have I seen this proverb demonstrated?
- What does application of this virtue look like in my life?

Reminders:

- Every passage in Scripture has a point that God is trying to communicate to us (the readers). We must keep this in mind as we go through any passage of the Scripture.
- The Bible is designed to be something we meditate / ruminates on. The Lord uses this to open up our eyes to more meaning and application to our situations and teach us more about how to live more focused on Him.
- The Bible is not just a text given to make us wiser. Every verse has been given to us for the purpose of application, because we don't know how to live the life God wants us to live.

PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD // PRAYER BASICS

Nehemiah 1:4-11 (NASB95)

4 When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 5 I said, "I beseech You, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, 6 let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned. 7 "We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8 "Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; 9 but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.' 10 "They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand. 11 "O Lord, I beseech You, may Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and the prayer of Your servants who delight to revere Your name, and make Your servant successful today and grant him compassion before this man." Now I was the cupbearer to the king.

When?

- I should pray before I do anything else

Why?

- When I pray I demonstrate my dependence on God
- It lightens my load
- it releases God's power

How?

- Base my request on God's character
- Confess my sin
- claim the promises of God
- Be specific with your requests

Write out a prayer plan based on the scripture in Nehemiah where we see the when, why, and how demonstrated. (Ex. morning, expressions I want to use, what are my requests for myself and others, etc.)

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY // _____

HOW DO YOU PARTICIPATE & INVEST IN SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY?

Participation

Acts 2:42 shows us the next steps the new disciples of Jesus took after beginning to follow Jesus through repentance and baptism. Peter, one of Jesus' disciples took an opportunity that the Holy Spirit presented and shared the news about Jesus' death and resurrection with a gathered crowd. This crowd had gathered because earlier in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit had enabled 120 people to tell the news about Jesus' death and resurrection in the native languages of the crowd. How and why was this happening? People were eager to know what and why was God doing this and three thousand people became followers of Jesus.

The people's first act was to claim their new identity as Jesus' followers and they began to participate fully in the community that had already been formed. We can't overstate the importance of both of those actions.

You must...

- (1) identify yourself as Jesus' follower.
- (2) participate fully in the already established community of Jesus' followers through a local body of believers.

Invest

Investment in spiritual community is moving from participating to helping in the facilitation of the spiritual community. This is where you take some sense of responsibility for others in the community and become the community and not simply participate in it. You decide that you can be part of the fruit that is born from your ministering to others and being on mission with others. You don't stop being served, don't stop being cared for, don't stop needing teaching, guidance or encouragement. Begin to help others more and more and take on some small leadership or service roles.

You must...

- (1) participate consistently enough to benefit from the community that you want to give back to the community.
- (2) continue to participate and add some responsibilities that contribute to the spiritual health of the individuals in the community and the community at large.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY // _____

HOW'S YOUR ENGAGEMENT IN SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY?

What has been your involvement in church growing up? What about now? What is its role in your life? What should its role be?

Have you ever had people in your life that have mentored you spiritually? Have you ever mentored or discipled anyone?

What do you see as your personal responsibility in the church community after thinking through participating and investing?

SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY //

WHAT DOES GOD SAY ABOUT SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY?

Acts 2:42 (NASB95)

"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

In Acts 2, we see how the early church responded to the movement of God in their midst. When we become a part of God's family, we need to prioritize relationship with that family as together we learn how to live as Christians and practice that life.

You need to commit to:

- "the apostles' teaching"- This means being a part of a learning environment that provides not only instruction but also accountability in practicing that instruction. Recognize that there is instruction you need and sit under teaching with someone you can be in relationship with.
- "fellowship" - This means engaging in relationships where you are investing in the spiritual growth of yourself and others.
- "the breaking of bread" - This means practicing caring for others and being cared for, and learning to live in consistent relationship rather than isolation.
- "prayer" - This means praying individually and as a community for the movement of God in our lives and the world.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NASB95)

24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

We never outgrow or have an option to quit or not be a part of Christian community. Just like we never stop being brothers, daughters, sons and parents - we never stop being God's children or part of the family of God. An easy way to stay connected with the Father is to stay connected to His family. An easy way to disconnect from the Father is to disconnect with His family.

REST // WHY DO YOU NEED TO REST? ---

Leviticus 16:31 (NASB95)

31 "It is to be a sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute.

We need rest. Once a day we need a night, once a week we need a day, throughout the year we need weeks set aside to rest. Rest is not just about recovery, it is about trust. It is about refreshment. It is about enjoyment. It is about reflecting.

How would your life improve if you developed the discipline of **stopping your work?**

How would your life improve if you developed the discipline of **spending time playing and enjoying those you do life with?**

How would your life improve if you developed the discipline of **reflecting on your blessings, what God says is truth, or God's character?**

That is why you need rest!

In order to understand the true meaning of rest, we have to look back to the Old Testament.

In Genesis 2:2-3, it says that "on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation."

The word sabbath comes from the Hebrew word shabbot, meaning "to rest", or stop.

Later on in Exodus 20:8-11, Moses says "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

In Mark 2:27, Jesus tells the Pharisees that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." In His kindness God knowing our tendency gave us a command that was just for us and those we are in control of.

REST // HOW'S YOUR REST?

What does rest look like in your life?

How do you currently find time to rest from your responsibilities? What is your relationship with rest?

What is the purpose of rest? Why does God command us to do it?

REST // HOW CAN YOU START RESTING BETTER? _____

(1) We need to come to understand that **resting and relaxing is not the same thing**. We are not resting when we are scrolling social media or watching movies or tv. Those things most definitely keep us from stopping and trusting.

(2) **To rest well we need to know when we have completed our work**. Too often we exist in a state of responsibilities hanging over our heads, this leads to hurry and an inability to rest. When I think I am supposed to accomplish more than I can or try to accomplish more than is reasonable I never feel done and I can't stop and be. Start by trying to do less tasks better in a single day and delegate things to others that can be delegated.

(3) We need to learn to **schedule times of not working, and work up to a whole day**. When we are doing stuff around the house, mowing, fixing things, etc. That is work. We try to fill up all our waking hours 7 days a week and then sleep when when just can't work anymore. That is not how God designed us to be able to live and you are suffering the consequences if that characterizes you.

(4) **Do things that give you life and perspective**. What gives me life and perspective? When I am rested, and have had adequate sleep I feel better and am in better health. I have clearer thoughts and a better attitude. When I play, I enjoy myself and the people around me. What are things that I truly enjoy doing? Puzzles, thrift store shopping, sports, reading, coffee with a great friend, etc. When I spend time reflecting on my blessings, how God has answered prayers, and God's character I am more thankful, more connected and less prone to worry.

Matthew 11:28-30 (NASB95)

28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Of the four ideas listed above, which area do you feel you struggle the most in with creating a vision for rest in your life? How will this change make a difference in your being able to find biblical rest more consistently?

STRENGTH AND GROWTH AREAS

Take some time to go through the following chart. Check off areas where you feel you are strong (e.g. I could have a conversation about this with someone to learn more how to do this better), and indicate areas you may need instruction in or practice with.

	STRENGTH AREAS	GROWTH AREAS
1) ASSURANCE IN MY RELATIONSHIP W/ GOD		
2) DEVOTIONAL TIME WITH GOD		
3) VICTORY OVER SIN		
4) SEPERATION FROM SIN		
5) CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP		
6) THE BIBLE		
7) HEARING THE WORD		
8) READING THE WORD		
9) STUDYING THE WORD		
10) MEMORIZING THE WORD		
11) MEDITATING ON THE WORD		
12) APPLICATION OF THE WORD		
13) PRAYER		
14) PERSONAL TESTIMONY		
15) LORDSHIP OF CHRIST		
16) FAITH		
17) LOVE		
18) SPEECH		
19) USE OF TIME		

	STRENGTH AREAS	GROWTH AREAS
20) WILL OF GOD		
21) OBEDIENCE		
22) HOLY SPIRIT		
23) SATAN - KNOW YOUR ENEMY		
24) DEALING WITH SIN		
25) ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS		
26) SECOND COMING OF CHRIST		
27) EVANGELIZING/WITNESSING		
28) FOLLOW-UP		
29) GIVING		
30) WORLD VISION		
31)		
32)		
33)		
34)		
35)		
36)		
37)		
38)		

Recommended Reading and Group Study

Personal

Follow Me, David Platt (Understanding Lordship)
Pursuit of Holiness, Jerry Bridges (Understanding Obedience)
The Pursuit of God, A.W. Tozer (Relationship with God)
30 Days in Psalms, Trevin Wax (Training Wheels for Personal Worship and Prayer)
Spirit of the Disciplines, Dallas Willard (Why You Need Spiritual disciplines)
Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Donald Whitney (Intro to Spiritual Disciplines)
The Disciples Journey, Jim Putman (Personally Growing as a Disciple)
Gentle and Lowly, Dane Ortland (Understanding God's Heart)
Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness, Tim Keller (Being Others-Centered)
Renovation of the Heart, Dallas Willard (Sanctification)
Words to Live By, Jenn Wilkins (Understanding the 10 commandments)
Mere Christianity, C.S Lewis (Christian World View)
Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis (Spiritual Warfare)
The Great Divorce, C.S. Lewis (Christian Worldview)

Missional

Master Plan of Evangelism, Robert Coleman (God's Strategy for Making Disciples)
Fuel and the Flame, Steve Shadrach (Doing College Ministry on Campus)
Making Friends for Christ, Wayne McDill (Missional Living)
Tradecraft, Caleb Crider (Thinking and Living Like a Missionary)
Spiritual Leadership, Oswald Sanders (Leading Others Spiritually)
Disciple Maker's Handbook, Bobby Harrington (How-to for Discipling)
Real Life Discipleship Training Manual, Jim Putman (Understanding How to Disciple)

Life

Welcome to Adulthood, J.P. Pokluda (Understanding our Purpose)
Why Does God Care Who I Sleep With?, Sam Allbery (God's Sexual Ethic)
After College, Erica Young Reitz (Challenges to Transitioning to Adult Life)
Sacred Search, Gary Thomas (Understanding Dating)
Sacred Marriage, Gary Thomas (Understanding Marriage)
Crazy Busy, Kevin DeYoung (How do I think about the schedule I keep)
Ruthless Elimination of Hurry, John Mark Comer (Learning to Slow Down)
Tech Wise Life, Amy Crouch (Personal Boundaries with Tech)
Tech Wise Family, Andy Crouch (Leading other to have boundaries with Tech)

THE STORY OF YOUR JOURNEY // TESTIMONY

Write out your testimony. This is your life story about how you came to know Jesus Christ and what came next.

WHY MUST YOU JOURNEY WITH OTHERS?

Philippians 4:9 (NASB95)

9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

We must learn what a Godly life looks like. Who in your life is modeling what this looks like?

Jeremiah 6:16 (NASB95)

16 Thus says the Lord, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'

We must want to learn how to live the life that God has laid out for us. Is this something that you desire?

Proverbs 22:6 (NASB95)

6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.

We must be trained. Do you have someone coaching you on how to live the life that God has designed for you?

2 Timothy 2:2 (NASB95)

2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

We must replicate the process. Are you able to teach others how to follow Christ? If not, would you like to know how?

WHY DO YOU NEED A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS?

Has there ever been a time in your life where you could say for sure that you were right with God? **or** Suppose you were to stand before God and He were to say, ' (your name), what makes you right with me?' How would you respond?

Let's look at why we need a relationship with Jesus and what makes us right with him.

God's Design

In the beginning, God created everything. And he created people. When he created people, he created us to be in a dependent relationship with him. Humans broke God's commands, and that broke our relationship with him. Being in correct fellowship or relationship with God is what it means to be right with him.

Sin and Brokenness

We also see traces of beauty, which is how God made the world to be. When he created the world, there was no death, disease or suffering. But starting with the very first people, we decided to leave God's design and go our own way. This is called sin. *Sin* is the cause of the world's problems.

How would you define the term sin? What do the two verses below say in your own words?

Romans 3:10–12 (NASB95)

10 as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; 11 There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; 12 All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one."

Romans 3:23 (NASB95)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Do you see how God's word presents sin as a personal problem here, and not just a generic one? When I read this, it's like scripture is pointing its finger at me, saying, 'you have a personal problem with sin that needs to be fixed.'

Other Scripture:

James 4:17 (NASB95)

17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Isaiah 59:2 (NASB95)

2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

Isaiah 64:6 (NASB95)

6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Gospel and Restoration of God's Design

God loved us so much he did not want us to stay in brokenness so he provided the only way out by doing for us what we could not do for ourselves, and that's through his Son, Jesus. Jesus came into our world, lived a perfect life and allowed himself to be killed on a cross for our sin, and three days later he rose from the dead. And He said if we would turn from our way and surrender to him and make him the King of our lives, that we would be forgiven and restored back into God's design for our life.

How would you put the below verses in your own words?

John 14:6 (NASB95)

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

Romans 10:9–10 (NASB95)

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

How Should I Respond? Repentance and Faith

Do you understand what you would need to do to be right with God?

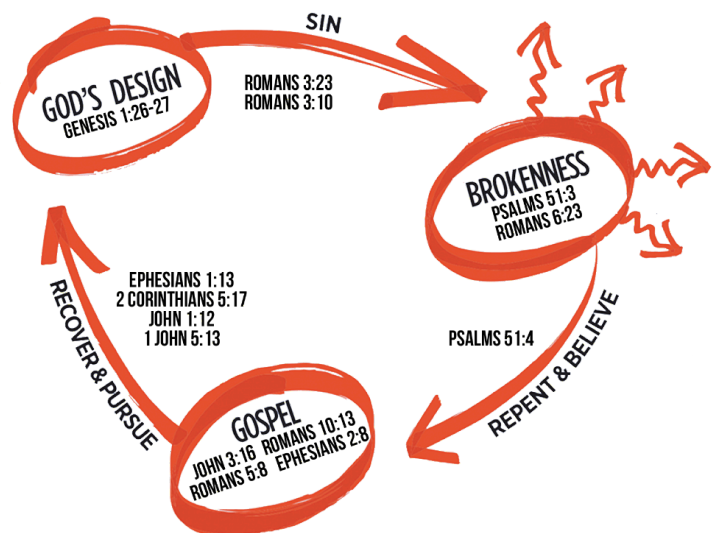
Can you think of any reason why you would not be willing to receive Jesus into your life as your King?

Are you willing to repent and pledge your allegiance to Jesus today?

Sample Prayer:

Dear God, I know that I'm a sinner and I need a savior. I know I can't save myself. Please forgive me. I'm ready to turn my back on sin and ask Jesus to be the Lord of my life. Jesus, take control of my life, I receive you now. Thank you for saving me.

Amen.



WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

A Disciple is a follower. We can be a disciple of anything or anyone. A follower sees a certain type of life and seeks to emulate it and learn from those they follow. This can be intentional or it can be unintentional. Sometimes it is hard to know who it is we are following. The best way to tell who or what we follow is to ask and then reflect on what is the "fruit of our life." Many people would say that they "follow" Jesus but does the fruit of their life reflect that fact? What does the fruit of your life reflect?

"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you— unless, of course, you fail the test?" 2 Corinthians 13:5

How we can test ourselves? The Fruit Test

Jesus really had only one test he told us to conduct to see if someone belongs to Him: the Fruit Test.

In *Matthew 7:20* He says, "You will know them by their fruit". Fruit is what one's life produces: words, actions, and attitudes. "If I showed you a tree and it had oranges hanging on its branches but I told you it was an apple tree would you believe me? It is the same thing with people. If a person says they are a follower of Jesus, their life should bear the fruit (actions and attitudes) of a Christian. What fruit do you think should be in a true Christian's life?"

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone and the new has come!"

That means that there will be some changes when you commit your life to Jesus. Committing our lives to Jesus means we follow Him - Learning and seeking to be obedient to His teachings and His life-style. When we do this, we become His disciple. "If I told you that I was hit by a semi-truck today and I showed up to our meeting uninjured and clean, would you believe me? It is the same thing when you become a Christian. If you have the living God in your life you will be different.

The following verses show the fruit that will be in a true Christian's life:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Matthew 7:21

"We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands. The man who says, 'I know Him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John 2:3-4

If you died right now and God asked you, **"What makes you right with me?" What would you say? What percentage chance would you have of being right with Him?"**

Here is a quick, 6-question test to find out if you are good enough to be right with Jesus. Circle the appropriate answer:

1. Have you ever told a lie? Y/ N
2. Have you given money to charity? Y/ N
3. Have you gone to church regularly? Y/ N
4. Have you ever stolen anything (no matter how small)? Y/ N
5. Have you ever used "God" or "Jesus" as a curse word? Y/ N
6. Have you tried to read your Bible regularly? Y/ N

Let's see how you did...

Have you ever told a lie?

The Ninth of the Ten Commandments is, "You shall not lie." In Revelation 21:8, God says, "...all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire..."

Have you ever stolen anything (no matter how small)?

The Eighth of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not steal." In 1 Corinthians 6:10, God says, "No thieves... shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Have you ever used "God" or "Jesus" as a curse word?

The Third of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain." If you've ever used the name "God," "Jesus," or "Christ" as a curse word, that offense is called "blasphemy." In Leviticus 24:16, God says, "he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall surely be put to death..."

Have you given money to charity? Have you gone to church regularly? Have you made it a practice to read the Bible regularly? These are good activities, but none of them impress God. The Bible says, "and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away" (Isaiah 64:6). That means, all our "righteous acts"—these "good deeds" that questions 2, 3, and 6 asked about—can never make up for the fact that we've broken God's Holy Commandments.

Think of it this way: if a person was guilty of a serious crime but gave money to charity, does that make up for his crime? No. The person's crime hasn't been paid for because he gave money to charity. This "good deed" will mean nothing to the judge when he passes a sentence. The crime must still be punished.

Test Result: The Bad News This test showed you how you stand up when judged by just five of God's Ten Commandments. God is perfectly just. If God judges you by His standard, would you be innocent or guilty? Do you think you would go to Heaven or Hell?

The Solution: The Good News! Imagine you're in a courtroom and you're guilty of many serious crimes. The judge says, "It's a fine of \$500,000,000 or prison." You don't have anywhere near that amount of money, so they begin to walk you out of the courtroom. Then the judge himself tells the bailiff to stop, pulls out his checkbook, writes out a check for \$500,000,000, and says, "I've paid the fine for you." Now that the fine has been paid, the law no longer has any hold on you. You're free because of the gift you've been given.

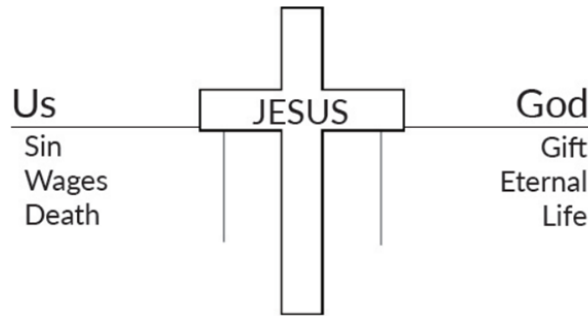
This is what God did for you by sending Jesus to die on the cross in your place. So that you wouldn't have to go to Hell, God sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross—suffering the punishment that justice demands. Then He rose from the grave, forever defeating death!

The Bible tells us: "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

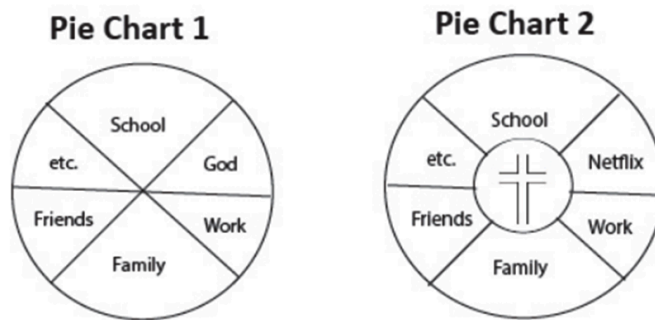
If you will repent of your sins and put your trust in Jesus, God says He will forgive all your sins and grant you the gift of everlasting life because the payment for your crimes was made by Jesus on the cross.

The Bridge Illustration helps explain this verse.

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."



The Pie Illustration shows what it means to make Jesus Lord/King of your life. Which pie chart represents your life?



You can turn from your sins and trust Christ by faith through prayer right now. God knows your heart. The words of the prayer are not magical, but if they reflect the decision you would like to make, you can use it to express your faith to God.

"Lord, I confess to you that I am a sinner and that I am separated from you. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I want to turn from all of my sins (name some) and I trust Jesus Christ to come into my life and take control of my life from now on. Please forgive me and grant me your gift of everlasting life. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

Does this prayer show the desire of your heart? If so, pray it out loud to God.

If you have truly repented and trusted Jesus, there will be some changes in your life. You will experience a new desire to honor God, a deeper love for others, and more. *1 John 5:13 says, "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."*

If you surrendered your life to Christ, this is the start of an exciting relationship with God and you can be sure He came in and will give you eternal life! You should take steps to grow in your new relationship with God. Next time, we can look further at how to grow as a follower of Jesus.

It is important to remember that salvation is in no way earned because of one's fruit or good works. *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."* Ephesians 2:8–9

Salvation is a free gift that Christ purchased for us through His death and resurrection. When one receives this free gift through accepting Christ, their life will change and produce fruit.

ASSURANCE OF RELATIONSHIP | 3 RESPONSES

1. The Ministry of Holy Spirit and our Response

John 16:7-11 (NASB95)

7 "But 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. 8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning **sin** and **righteousness** and **judgment**; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."

There should be three convictions we feel when we hear the news about Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension, which is the work of the Holy Spirit (conviction = the charge is true)

- Conviction of my **sin**
 - *Do I see myself as a sinner?*
- Conviction of my lack of **righteousness and faith in Jesus' righteousness**
 - *Do I know that Jesus' righteous sacrifice pays my debts?*
- Conviction of being under **judgment if I do not trust Jesus as the way to life**
 - *Have I begun to live allegiantly to Jesus, following Him and letting Him change me?*

Three ways we can respond to these convictions:

- *Notia* (understanding content of the news)
 - Knowing the facts about Jesus life, death and resurrection
- *Assensus* (intellectual assent to the truth of the news)
 - Believing the facts about Jesus are true
- *Fiducia* (trust in the person the news is about)
 - Trusting or exercising embodied faith - repentance (i.e. action based on faith)

While all three of these responses are necessary, only the third one is both necessary and sufficient for God. If we don't place our trust in Jesus and follow Him with our lives we have stopped short of Biblical faith.

Examples of repentance as the appropriate response to Jesus and our sin in the New Testament:

- Luke 5:17-26 (Paralytic on mat)
- Luke 7:40-50 (Women cleaning Jesus feet with hair)
- Luke 19:1-10 (Zaccheus)

2. Responding Appropriately to God's Conviction

2 Corinthians 7:8–11 (NASB95)

8 For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— 9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

- Worldly sorrow vs. Godly sorrow – The difference is repentance.
- Repentance is responding to conviction by following God's way and abandoning our own.

Repentance is moving away from our self-governed (led) life and starting a God-governed (led) life. This is what it means to be in saving relationship with Jesus. **Have you stopped short of repentance in responding to the Holy Spirit's conviction of Sin, Righteousness and Judgment?**

3. After we trust Jesus we can look forward to experiencing what He says is true. As we get to know him more, we move from trusting that Jesus is who He says He is to knowing from experience that He is who He says He is.

John 6:67–69 (NASB95)

67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

- **What if Jesus asked you right now if you wanted to go away? What would you say?**
- Peter responds that there is not anywhere else he wants to go! There is nothing else that He is trusting in. He is not looking for other options. **Why? Are you still trusting in or looking for other options?**
- Peter trusts that Jesus teaches the truth and that Jesus has the teaching that leads to life. After making this decision to follow/be obedient to Jesus, Peter has come to know in his experience that Jesus is the King that God said He would send. **Do you feel the way the Peter feels? Have you continued to be obedient to Him and found yourself move from trusting Jesus initially to knowing from experience who He is?**

YOU ARE CALLED TO BE HOLY. OBEDIENCE IS HOW YOU GET THERE.

Leviticus 11:44

"For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy..."

1. You are created in His image and likeness - You are recreated to bear His likeness

Genesis 1:26–27 (NASB95)

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB95)

17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

How have you determined your identity in the past?

Following Christ means forsaking all other identities for the one your Creator and Redeemer has given you, as only He rightfully can.

Why is it important that all other identities or labels are secondary to the one God gives you? What identities need to take a back seat to your identity as a Christian? Are there any you need to forsake altogether? What Impact would this have on your life?

2. You need to live like you have died to sin and are alive to God

Romans 6:1–6 (NASB95)

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

What does it mean to be baptized into Jesus' death? Why does it matter that we identify as people who have died in this way? How does this change your relationship to temptation and sin?

3. A changed heart produces obedience

James 2:14,20

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?... Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from your works is useless?"

Christ tells us how there is nothing we can do by our own works to be in closer relationship with Him (*Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8*), but a heart that believes in the saving work that Jesus did will naturally produce the fruit of obedience to God's Word.

How can we read this passage in light of the work that Christ did in atoning for our sins on the cross? What is James telling us about the posture of one's heart that is a follower of Christ?

4. You bear fruit when you are obedient

John 15:5,8 (NASB95)

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing... 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples."

As branches, to bear fruit we must stay connected to the vine. How do we stay connected to the vine?

Abiding in Christ is not only staying connected to Him but it means being obedient. Can we be obedient on our own? Can we bear fruit on our own? Why might we think that we can? Why do we need to be reminded that nothing happens outside of being obedient

