

discipleship guide



With one short command, Jesus established our role as believers to make and multiply disciples (Matthew 28:19). At Green Acres, we believe that every follower of Jesus is called to the ministry of making disciples. That calling does not begin at a certain level of perfection or spiritual maturity—it begins when we become followers of Christ. This Discipleship Guide is specifically designed to help with the process of discipleship. What are some of the basic spiritual disciplines that lead to a healthy relationship with Jesus? Use this 6-session study to refresh and strengthen your own relationship with the Lord, but also work through it with others. The Bible doesn't merely call us to follow Jesus, it calls us to bring others along with us! Our prayer is that this Discipleship Guide will be an effective tool in transforming lives with the truth of Jesus—and that begins with each one of us.

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session one

What is Faith?

what is faith?

Throughout our study, we will spend a great deal of time exploring the Bible and consistently referring to it; therefore, it is imperative that we spend some time discussing a very important truth about the Bible.

We will also address the concept of faith throughout this study. The Bible defines faith like this:

Now faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Although we may not be able to comprehend all the circumstances in our lives, we can feel certain that our Lord constantly has our well-being in mind.

memory verse Romans 10:17

Write and memorize the verse.

For the purpose of this study, we will define faith this way:

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.

"Now without **faith** it is impossible to please God...." - Hebrews 11:6

"...everything that is not from **faith** is sin." - Romans 14:23

"For we walk by **faith**, not by sight." - 2 Corinthians 5:7

Core Concept: *The definition of faith is one that we will use repeatedly throughout the study, and it can be translated to every area of life.*

Look up the following verses in the CSB translation of the Bible and fill in the blanks.

Psalms 18:30 “The word of the Lord is _____.”

Psalms 19:7 “The instruction of the Lord is _____.”

Psalms 119:160 “The entirety of your word is _____,
each of your righteous judgments endures _____.”

consider

When you sit down to work a jigsaw puzzle, if you try to figure out what the final picture is going to be by looking at each individual piece, you'll never be able to figure it out even if you look at each and every piece. The pieces are so small and make no sense individually. Yet, once you put those small pieces together, you will know what the picture is supposed to be. When you work a puzzle, you have faith that the pieces, though individually nonsensical, work together to make a great picture.

Similarly, when the Christian learns to live by faith, he or she learns to trust that, even though each day, each circumstance, and each trial may not make sense individually, God has a great, amazing picture in mind. Learning to live by faith is learning to choose to believe that the Bible is true. When you learn to live by faith, you learn to choose what God says in His Word over all else.

For example, look up Jeremiah 31:3, and answer the question: “Does God love you?”

As you work to assemble a puzzle, the whole process is much easier if you look at the picture on the box. ***In life, the Bible is like the box.*** God has a plan and a design for your life. If you keep your eyes on the box, you will have a precise pattern to follow. ***Keep your eyes on the Bible!***

The annual Christian Bookseller's Convention showcases acres of newly released material. There are enough books released every year to fill an entire football field, row upon row. The great majority of those books are devoted to help the Christian live a Christ-like life; however, it is no secret that the lives of many who read these books do not look very different from those who have no relationship with Christ.

discuss

Why, with all the help that is available to this generation, do you think people still struggle with living a successful Christian life? Write your answer below.

Many begin their Christian walk with great enthusiasm, yet often find that they are struggling to live by faith (which means to choose to live according to the truth of the Bible). By applying God's Word to our daily lives, we can walk by faith rather than be tossed about by our emotions, circumstances or the perception of those around us.

List some circumstances in your own life with which you are struggling. For example, perhaps you are having financial difficulties, trouble forgiving others or conflicts with your family members.

Even though most of us recognize the role that faith plays at the moment of conversion, we seem to forget that faith is also essential to living the Christian life. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians that "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). God also makes this clear in Hebrews: "but my righteous one shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38). These passages clearly state that faith is critical to living the Christian life, but what does it mean to "walk by faith"?

We discover in Ephesians 2:8 that we enter the Christian life by grace through faith. This means that it is because of God's kindness that we become rightly related to Christ through faith. It is in believing in the promises of God that we become His children. "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him" (Colossians 2:6).

Ask yourself: How did you begin your Christian life? How do you live your Christian life?

We walk with Jesus day-by-day, moment-by-moment, by grace through faith. Just as we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior by grace through faith, we also need to learn to live our lives as Christians by grace through faith. This will become clear as you discover the Faith Process in the following pages.

Romans 10:17 tells us: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Once we begin to renew our minds with what God says in the Bible, then we can learn to trust the Lord in every area of our lives with all our heart, rather than leaning on our own understanding. The Faith Process involves three simple, yet profound, steps that will radically transform the way you live your life. As you apply this process to different areas of your life, you will find that the promises of God are rich and liberating, that the life of faith is indeed a wonderful journey, and that our God, whom we serve, is a faithful Father.

discuss

Robert is married and has four children. His relationships are strained because he has begun to focus on his family members' weaknesses. An atmosphere of bitterness and hostility has begun to grow in his home. Robert is in desperate need to apply God's Word to his situation and live by faith rather than by what he feels or only what he sees.

Can you relate to him? Does any aspect of his life seem similar to yours?

The Faith Process

Step One: Review the Definition

Faith, as defined by Easton's Bible Dictionary, is the "persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true."¹ Genuine faith, though, never stops with the mind. **If faith is genuine, it always affects HOW the believer lives his or her life.** James writes that, "In the same way faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself" (James 2:17). In other words, faith is never merely an intellectual experience; it always changes one's life. The first step is to internalize what is meant by the word *faith*. Living by faith is meaningless unless the believer truly understands what faith means. For the purpose of this study, we have defined faith as choosing to live according to the truth of God's word regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. A good way to begin the process of internalizing and understanding the life lived by faith is to memorize the definition of faith.

Write and memorize the definition of Faith

What does it mean to live according to the truth of the Bible?

Regardless of the **circumstances** you may be facing, regardless of the **emotions** you may be feeling, and regardless of the **cultural trends** that may be influencing your life, you choose to live according to the truth of the Bible **by faith**.

¹Easton, M.G., M.A.D.D., *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996

The Faith Process

Step Two: Ask the Faith Question

The next step in the faith process will help you turn to the Bible as the object of your faith and begin living according to its truth, regardless of your circumstances, your emotions, or the cultural trends that surround you. In order to live this way, you should begin asking the Faith Question in every situation in your life:

If I lived according to the truth of the Bible,
what would that look like in my life?

In Romans 12:2, Paul tells the believers: “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind....” Notice how Paul connects how a person thinks to how a person lives. In other words, Paul is exhorting us to reject living life according to the world and its standards. The way you reject living life by the world and its standards is by renewing your mind, or changing the way you think. Continually asking the “faith question” will help you to not only renew your mind, but it will also help you in your effort to reject conformity to this world and its trends.

Read Romans 12:2 and answer the following questions:

Should we let the world shape us to how it thinks?

What does that mean?

Should we renew our mind?

What does it mean to renew our mind?

Now ask yourself: *If I lived according to the truth of Romans 12:2, what would that look like in my life?* Record your answer.

More specifically, think back to when you experienced a time of intense uncertainty. Look up Isaiah 26:3. If you had been living according to the truth of Isaiah 26:3, how would you have lived during that time of great uncertainty? Write your answer below.

The Faith Process

Step Three: Ask for the Holy Spirit's Help

John's epistle contains one of Scripture's most wonderful promises. He writes, "This is the confidence we have before him: If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked of him" (1 John 5:14–15). Since God is more concerned with our obedience than we are, we should have the confidence that He will hear us when we ask Him to help us live according to His Word, rather than by our circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. **The third step is simply to ask the Holy Spirit of God to help you live according to the truth of the Bible.** Just as Jesus reached out His hand and took hold of Peter when his faith was weak, He is ready and willing to do the same for you.

Let's consider the example of Peter when he walked on the water. Read Matthew 14:22–33, and answer the following questions:

What miracle had Jesus just completed?

Why did Jesus send His disciples ahead of Him?

How did Jesus approach His disciples?

How did the disciples respond to Jesus?

What did Jesus tell Peter to do?

This story is a perfect illustration of what happens when we live by our circumstances and our own understanding instead of what God says in the Bible. After feeding 5,000 people, Jesus sent His disciples ahead of Him in a boat so He could pray. When He finished praying, He walked to His disciples on the water. As He approached, the disciples saw Him and were understandably afraid of what they were seeing. As Peter started walking on the water, he was a perfect example of living by faith. Jesus had given Peter the command to come to Him, and even though his circumstances seemed unusual and even difficult, he believed Jesus' words were true and walked to Him.

After Peter began to walk on the water, he soon started to look at his circumstances, and he chose to listen to his emotions and other pressures. To better understand what made Peter sink, identify the following:

What were the circumstances that Peter experienced?

What were the emotions that Peter experienced?

What were the cultural pressures that Peter experienced?

The text remains silent on how the other disciples (who were Peter's culture) were responding to Peter's actions, but it is clear that they did not follow him. The other disciples, many fishermen, understood the danger and death the sea could bring. In a previous situation similar to this one, the disciples feared that they might drown because of the strong winds and waves (Matthew 8:23–26). They may even have been telling him to get back in the boat. This peer pressure could represent Peter's cultural circumstance, which would be counter to what Jesus was saying to him. As long as Peter chose to walk by faith, he could walk on water. The very moment he began to let his circumstances (he saw the water), his emotions (he was afraid) and cultural pressures (the peer pressure from the other disciples) become more significant than what Jesus said to him, he began to sink.

Any time we take our eyes off Jesus Christ and put them on our circumstances, our faith will waver, and we will begin to sink. Notice Jesus' response to Peter in Matthew 14:31. He took Peter's hand and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" According to Jesus, why did Peter begin to sink in the water?

Remember that faith is choosing to live according to the truth of the Bible regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. Jesus said that

Peter began to sink because he had “little faith.” Peter did not begin to sink because the wind was blowing or because of what the disciples might have been saying.

Based on the verses in Matthew 14:29–31, fill in the following blanks:

Jesus told Peter to _____.

Peter began to let his circumstances consume him, and he began to _____.

Consider the following chart that illustrates the difference between the reality of Peter’s circumstance and what Jesus said to him:

| Peter’s Circumstances | What Jesus Says in Matthew 14:27–29 |
|----------------------------|--|
| Wind was blowing | |
| Asked to do the impossible | Take courage |
| Fear was overwhelming | Do not be afraid |
| Discouragement was huge | Come to Me |

We are asked to live out the impossible every day. The only way this can be done is by faith.

Peter’s circumstance was that he was asked to do the impossible. Peter’s fear and discouragement were overwhelming. Despite what Peter was experiencing, Jesus told him to take courage and not to be afraid. Then Jesus told Peter to come to Him.

In this lesson, as we have discussed the faith definition, we have laid a necessary foundation for the other biblical principles that we will discuss in the coming lessons. Throughout this study, you will discover how your relationship with God affects your relationship with others. Then, you will be able to apply these principles in your own life as you learn to make the decision to choose faith in every situation and circumstance of your life. Instead of acting on what your emotions, circumstances or cultural influences tell you, you are going to learn to trust God and to act on the truth of His Word.

your life today

The Faith Formation and the Certainty of Heaven

Let us look at some examples of how to work out this process in the reality of life. There may be times in your life when you are fearful of what will happen to you when you die. What should you do when you feel fearful about your own death? First, you should recall the faith definition:

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.

Secondly, you should ask the faith question:

If I lived according to the truth of the Bible,
what would that look like in my life?

Lastly, **you should ask God to help you live according to His truth and to take hold of you, as He did with Peter**, when the circumstances of your life are causing you to sink. For example, you could pray something like this:

Father, since you have promised me in 1 John 5:11–13 that I can live forever with You in Heaven, I am choosing to live according to that truth. Would You help me make the choice to rest in the assurance of Your Word? Please remind me several times a day that I have a promised place in Heaven because of Your Word.

before you finish...

The Faith Process starts now. Living by faith is a life-changing process; it is a process of taking the Bible and choosing of your own will to live according to its truth regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends. Faith is vitally dependent upon the Bible; therefore, you should make spending time studying God's Word a priority in your life, if it is not already. Start memorizing verses of Scripture that will help you in the Faith Process. Most importantly, begin the process today by asking God to show you areas where you are not already living according to the truth of the Bible. **Start the Faith Process now. Do it for the rest of your life.**

Faith is choosing to live according to the truth of God's word regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends.

If I choose to live according to the truth of Romans 10:17, how would I be living? How would these truths affect my life?

Take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes and actions.

Consider all the material through which you have just worked, and read the following statement. When you completely agree with the statement, sign on the line.

Today, I am making a new commitment to choose to live according to the truth of the Bible regardless of my circumstances, my emotions and the cultural trends in my life. I know that I can do this by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Signed: _____

[illegible]

[illegible]

session two

*How to read
the Bible*

how to read the Bible

In this session, we will explore the importance of reading and studying God's Word. The Bible is an extraordinary book. It is God's love letter to His people; the telling of how God's story intersects with humanity's story. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it enables us to get to know God more fully.

memory verse 2 Timothy 3:16–17

Write and memorize the verse.

faith definition:

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.

"Now without **faith** it is impossible to please God...." - Hebrews 11:6

"...everything that is not from **faith** is sin." - Romans 14:23

"For we walk by **faith**, not by sight." - 2 Corinthians 5:7

Core Concept: *God has given us the Bible so that we may know who He is and how we should live.*

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is a collection of writings and letters written by forty authors over a period of about 1,500 years. Some are very short and some very long, but despite their diversity, they have a common theme of God's reconciliation of His people back to Himself. Even though many different human authors wrote it, God inspired every part of Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

The Bible is still relevant today because it answers the timeless questions: Who are we? Where did we come from? Why are we here? How should we live? Where are we going?

The Bible is important because it is the very words of God. Since the Bible is God's Word, it should be the authority in our lives. It is our guide and our instructor, teaching us about God's plan of salvation in Christ. The Old Testament points to His coming, and the New Testament tells of His arrival. The entire book, from Genesis to Revelation, points to God's great plan--to win a lost humanity back to Himself. Salvation is its central theme, and Jesus Christ is its central personality.

WHY READ THE BIBLE?

Reading the Bible is a spiritual discipline. Spiritual disciplines are practices that help us draw closer to the Lord. In fact, the Bible promises in James 4:8 that as we draw near to God, He will draw near to us.

If your spiritual growth was measured by the quality of your Bible study, what is the rate of your growth currently?

consider

It is impossible to develop a relationship with someone to whom you never talk; in the same way, it is impossible to grow in your relationship with God if you do not spend time in communication with Him by reading His Word. With this perspective, the Bible becomes a crucial tool we must use to know our Father more fully. God communicates with us in many ways through the Bible and seeks our response.

- If God convicts us, we respond with sorrow and repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:8-10)
- If he commends us, we respond with joy and gratitude. (Psalm 18:19-20)
- If he commands us to do something, we look to Him for strength and obey Him. (Matthew 28:19-20)
- If He makes a promise, we marvel at His grace and trust Him to do what He says. (Hebrews 13:5-6)
- If He describes something about Himself, His Son or His Spirit, we admire it, affirm it and enjoy His greatness and beauty. (1 Chronicles 29:11)

discuss

What is something that you would like to hear from God?

If you heard that from God, what would your response be?

The Bible is also a tool that we can use to free ourselves from the schemes of the Devil.

“I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you.” — Psalm 119:11

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He struck back with “the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). When the enemy tries to attack, the best weapon against him is Scripture, the Truth. Knowing the Bible prepares you for fighting against temptation and keeps you from sin.

What specific sin in your life do you need help fighting? Is there a specific passage in Scripture that would help you defend against the enemy?

explore

HOW DO WE READ THE BIBLE?

Where do I start? How do I read this book and learn from it? At first glance, the Bible can be an intimidating book with hard names and difficult passages, but God has gifted us with His Holy Spirit who gives us divine understanding when reading this book.

As we walk through the practical steps to take in reading the Bible, we are going to practice applying it by reading the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32.

1. Prepare your heart to receive the Word

In Psalm 119:18, King David prayed: “Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction.” Just like King David, we should ask God to help us understand the Bible.

Take a moment to jot down a prayer for understanding before we open the Scriptures.

2. Read and consider the passage

Slowly read through Luke 15:11-32, asking yourself basic questions such as WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, etc.

Jot down a few observations or any key words you see after reading through the passage.

3. Interpret the passage and discover meaning

We can best understand the intended meaning of any Bible passage by understanding the context. This is why Study Bibles identify the author of a book, the audience, when it was written and other details. The more we understand the original context, the better we understand and apply what the Bible is teaching. Another key concept of understanding the Bible is to understand each passage in light of the entire Bible. In other words, a passage read in isolation may seem confusing by itself but can be better understood if we consider it in light of other Bible passages. Consider discussing any questions you have with a member of your Connect Group or digging deeper into the Scripture with a Study Bible. Another excellent resource for understanding the Bible is The Bible Project. You can dive into all their resources at www.bibleproject.com.

Write a two-sentence summary of the main idea of Luke 15:11-32.

What questions do you have about the text?

4. Meditate on the passage

The world defines meditation as emptying the mind, but Christians define meditation as filling the mind with spiritual truths. This happens by thinking deeply on a passage and letting it stir up convictions in us. It is all about letting the information we just learned sink from our head to our heart. We must spend significant time dwelling on the Word so that it can stir up our heart and create a change in us. Here are some practical ways to meditate and dwell on Scripture:

- Emphasize different words in the text
- Rewrite the text in your own words
- Formulate a principle from the text (what does it teach?)
- Look for an application of the text to your current circumstance
- Ask how the text points to the law or the gospel
- Journal through the text
- Pray through the text
- Memorize the text

Memorization stimulates meditation. Memorization is a great tool to help a passage become heart knowledge. Memorization supplies spiritual power (Psalm 119:11), strengthens faith (Proverbs 22:17-19), prepares us for witnessing and counseling (Acts 2:14-40), and provides a means for God's guidance (Psalm 119:24).

How would you like to spend time dwelling on the passage you read in Luke? Spend some time doing that right now.

Is there a specific passage in Scripture that you would like to commit to memory?

5. Apply the passage to your life

Read what James wrote about the importance of putting into practice what we read:

“But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works—this person will be blessed in what he does.” — James 1:22-25

The last step in the Bible reading process is to live out what you've learned. Ask questions like “How does my life need to change to live according to the text?” or “What truths of God do I need to constantly be reminded of?”

How can I apply this passage in my life today? What are some practical ways I can do that?

before you finish...

Consider the following points to help you begin the practice of regular and consistent Bible study:

1. Read the Bible every day, even if it is only for a few minutes.
2. Establish a routine. Finding the optimal time and place can be very helpful in establishing a healthy routine.
3. Before you start, pray for understanding.
4. The life and ministry of Jesus is a great place to start, so consider starting with one of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. These four books depict the life of Jesus from four different perspectives.
5. As you read, reflect on the following questions:
 - What does the passage teach us about God?
 - What does the passage teach us about man?
 - How can I apply the passage to my life?
6. Keep a journal of what you've learned.
7. Conclude your time with meditation and prayer.

My Plan for Regular Bible Reading

If you are not already doing so, choose a time of day to read. What time of day will you read your Bible?

Choose a good location free of distractions to read. Where will you read your Bible?

If you have not already begun to read a specific book of the Bible or follow a Bible reading plan, what book or plan will you choose? The YouVersion app has a wide variety of reading plans to get you started.

Consider all the material through which you have just worked, and read the following statement. When you completely agree with the statement, sign on the line.

By faith I choose to believe that the Bible is God’s inspired Word. I believe that it is given to me to help me live a life that is honorable to Him.

Signed: _____

[illegible]

[illegible]

session three

*Can You Be Secure
in Your Relationship
with Christ?*

can you be secure in your relationship with Christ?

In this session, we will explore the claims Jesus made about Himself, and we will learn the key principles of being eternally secure in our relationship with God. We will find out how we can have confidence that our relationship with God is secure and unchangeable regardless of our emotions, experience or performance as His followers.

memory verse 1 John 5:11–13

Write and memorize the verse.

faith definition:

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.

“Now without **faith** it is impossible to please God....” - Hebrews 11:6

“...everything that is not from **faith** is sin.” - Romans 14:23

“For we walk by **faith**, not by sight.” - 2 Corinthians 5:7

Core Concept: *Entering into an eternal relationship with God is a gift that we received at the moment we trusted Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins. **This gift will last forever.***

consider

Steve attended church with his parents when he was a child, but he quit going to church when he graduated from high school. It was a relief for him to get away from home and begin to make his own decisions. When he was 25, he landed his dream job, and a year later, he married his high school sweetheart. Life could not have been better.

A few months into his marriage, however, things began to fall apart. Steve and his wife had heated arguments on a regular basis. The pressures from his job began to mount as he was asked to take more responsibility, and this resulted in additional time away from home. Eventually, the word divorce started to come up in the arguments with his wife. This was not how he had envisioned his marriage.

When all this was happening, a friend from work invited him to hear a Christian speaker. At this meeting, Steve made the decision to become a follower of Jesus. Initially, he was excited to explore his relationship with God. He attended a weekly Bible study with his friend, and he started to see some positive changes in his personal life, work and marriage.

Over time, however, the arguments with his wife escalated again. As frustration on the job returned, he began going out after work rather than home to his wife. During this time, Steve attended the funeral of his grandfather. Although a solemn occasion, many people celebrated his life as a man who desired to follow God. As friends and family recounted memories of his grandfather, they also expressed their assurance that he was in Heaven.

Steve began to question if he had a relationship with God in the same way that he had a relationship with his grandfather because he was not confident that his life had changed since his decision to follow Jesus. After all, his actions did not seem to match how he thought a Christian should live. He started to wonder if Jesus was really in his life, and at times, he questioned whether he had ever had a relationship with God in the first place.

discuss

How would you counsel Steve?

explore

IS SECURITY POSSIBLE?

Like Steve, many Christians have questions as to the certainty of their relationship with God. Some may ask, “How can Jesus be in my life when my performance is so dismal?” Others wonder, “How can forgiveness and eternal life be a gift?” There has got to be more to it than accepting Christ. Many fear being cut off from God’s love when they die.

It is not uncommon for followers of Jesus to struggle with these thoughts. When these thoughts come, how should Christians respond? To answer this question, it is helpful to look at the role of your mind and your emotions in your relationship with God.

THE ROLE OF YOUR MIND

Christianity is not a blind leap of faith. It is a personal relationship with the God of the universe, revealed in space and time through Jesus Christ. It would be foolish to believe or trust in someone or something if there was no rational basis for that belief. For example, a person may believe with all his heart that he can jump off a tall building and not get hurt. Unfortunately for him, the law of gravity, not his leap of faith, will dictate the outcome of his decision to jump. We first need to ask if there is any rational basis for following Jesus. Let us look at the claims Jesus made about Himself and see what evidence He provided to support those claims.

Read the following Scriptures and note what claims Jesus made about Himself:

John 10:30-33

John 14:6-9

John 11:23-26

Mohammed claimed to be a prophet; Buddha was an agnostic; Confucius was an ethical teacher. Jesus claimed to be God. Since Jesus was the only one to confidently claim His divinity, He is the only one who risked His reputation. If Jesus lied about being God, then He placed everything He stood for in jeopardy. If He claimed to be God, and then was proven to be wrong, His whole ministry would have been destroyed.

Read the following verses and note what evidence the following passages provide to support Jesus' claims:

Matthew 8:23-27

Luke 5:17-26

1 Corinthians 15:3-6

Think back to when you accepted Christ into your life. What do John 5:24 and 1 John 5:11-13 say Jesus did for you the moment you accepted Him as your Savior?

What is the significance of knowing you have eternal life rather than just hoping or wishing that you have eternal life?

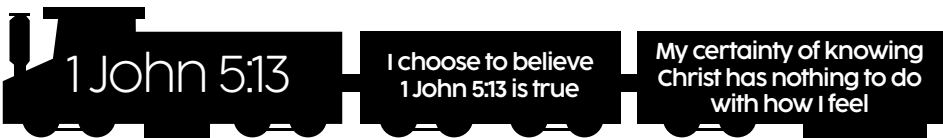
THE ROLE OF YOUR EMOTIONS

Emotions can be defined as feelings or reactions to events or experiences. Since God created emotions, they are a very important part of your life and your experiences. Because emotions change often, however, they are not a valid basis for determining whether or not you have a relationship with God.

The following illustration shows the relationship between fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word) and feeling (the response to our experience).



Use 1 John 5:13 to illustrate this relationship:



Do not depend upon feelings. The promise of God’s Word, not our feelings, is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship between fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word), and feeling. The train will run with or without the caboose. However, it would be futile to attempt to pull the train with the caboose. In the same way, we, as Christians, do not depend upon feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God (fact) and the promises of His Word.

Probably no one thing has caused more people to lack the assurance of a vital, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ than a wrong emphasis on emotions. Seeking an emotional experience contradicts faith – the very thing that pleases God. The Bible says, “Now without faith it is impossible to please God...” Hebrews 11:6.

-Bill Bright

You can be sure of your relationship with God if you have responded to His offer of forgiveness through Jesus. The promise of God's Word, not your feelings, is your authority.

Finish the following statement:

I know that I will go to Heaven because _____

_____.

discuss

How certain would you be of your relationship with God if you trusted in your emotions?

How certain would you be of your relationship with God if you trusted in His Word?

In a world full of uncertainty and hopelessness, to be able to live a life in which you are certain of your eternal salvation is revolutionary. Those who are able to grasp and hold to the assurance of their salvation are those who are able to live a life of hope and purpose.

Write Ephesians 2:8-9 in the box:

consider

In 1830, George Wilson was tried by the U.S. court in Philadelphia for robbery and murder and was sentenced to hang. Andrew Jackson, the President of the United States, granted him a presidential pardon. Wilson refused it, insisting that it was not a pardon unless he accepted it. The question was brought before the U.S. Supreme Court, and Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the following decision: "A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It's hardly to be supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must hang." What was the outcome? George Wilson was hanged.

What happens if we do not accept God's gift of forgiveness?

YOUR SECURITY WITH GOD

From the moment you receive Jesus by faith, you can rest in the certainty that you will spend eternity with God.

Write John 6:37-40 in the box:

If I lived according to the truth of John 6:37-40, what would that look like in my life? Record your thoughts below.

Write John 10:27-30 in the box:

If I lived according to the truth of John 10:27-30, what would that look like in my life? Record your thoughts below.

Write Romans 8:38-39 in the box:

If I lived according to the truth of Romans 8:38-39, what would that look like in my life? Record your thoughts below.

Write 1 John 5:11-13 in the box:

If I lived according to the truth of 1 John 5:11-13, what would that look like in my life? Record your thoughts below.

APPLYING THE FAITH FACTOR TO YOUR SECURITY WITH GOD

As you reflect on what John 6:37-39, John 10:27-30, Romans 8:38-39 and 1 John 5:11-13 say about your security with God, fill in the following chart. Note the perception of your experience in the left box and the truth of God's Word in the right box:

YOUR EXPERIENCE

GOD'S WORD

your life today

1. Which word best describes how certain you are that Christ is in your life? Circle one.

positive

hopeful

confused

doubtful

2. If you died right now, how certain are you that you would spend eternity with God?

positive

hopeful

confused

doubtful

If you have never made the decision to receive God's gift of forgiveness through Jesus, or if you are unsure of your relationship with Jesus, continue reading to learn more.

Receiving Jesus involves turning from yourself to God and trusting Jesus to come into your life, forgive your sins and make you who He wants you to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for your sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. You receive Jesus by faith through prayer.

Prayer is simply talking with God. God knows your heart and is not as concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

Jesus, I want to know You personally. I admit that I have sinned against You and am separated from You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for giving me eternal life and making me part of Your family. Take control of my life. Make me the person You created me to be.

If you just prayed to receive God's gift of forgiveness through Jesus, you have entered into a never-ending relationship with your Creator. You are now part of God's family. Hebrews 13:5 says that God "will never leave you nor forsake you." You can know that your relationship with God is secure and unchangeable regardless of your feelings, experiences or performance as His follower.

Now, pray this prayer, and sign and date on the appropriate lines:

“Father, I choose to believe that Jesus Christ died for me. I have placed my faith in Jesus and what He did on the cross for me, and I believe I will go to Heaven when I die. Thank You that I have the security that I know for certain I will go to Heaven.”

Signed _____ Date _____

before you finish...

Consider all the material through which you have just worked, and read the following statement. When you completely agree with the statement, sign on the line.

By faith I choose to believe that I can be secure in my relationship with God. I know that God wants me to enjoy absolute confidence in my relationship with Him.

Signed _____

[illegible]

session four

*Knowing Who You
Are in Christ*

knowing who you are in Christ

In this session, you will discover more about your identity as a Christian and how you are to view yourself as a follower of Jesus. Because of the forgiveness that God has provided for you through His Son, you can live securely in the confidence that God eternally loves you. Therefore, you do not need to focus on your own faults and failures.

memory verse Galatians 2:20

Write and memorize the verse.

faith definition:

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.

"Now without **faith** it is impossible to please God...." - Hebrews 11:6

"...everything that is not from **faith** is sin." - Romans 14:23

"For we walk by **faith**, not by sight." - 2 Corinthians 5:7

Core Concept: *When you become a follower of Jesus, you gain a new identity in Jesus Christ.*

consider

Jacob has always been an excellent baseball player. When he was 10 years old, his baseball team, the Blue Jays, made it into the league championship game. On the day of the game, Jacob showed up excited to play. “Coach, I’m here, and I’m ready to go!”

There was only one problem; Jacob was not wearing his uniform. He was wearing a new uniform that his grandfather had given him for his birthday. Instead of the regulation blue and white jersey and pants that the league had provided for him, he was decked out, head to toe, in red. Jacob had on a red cap, red shirt, red pants, red socks and red shoes.

“Jacob,” his coach said, “your red uniform is very nice, but you cannot wear it in the game today. You have to wear the team uniform like everyone else.” Jacob protested, “But, Coach, I like this uniform. My granddad gave it to me.” “Jacob,” the coach replied, “we are playing the Cardinals; if you will look across the field you will see the entire team is decked out in red!”

Jacob had a problem. He did not know who he was. He did not understand his identity.

Do Christians face a similar situation? Why or why not?

Your identity is extremely important in your life to help you establish and define who you are. When you become a Christian, you take on the identity of Jesus Christ. You have all the privileges and responsibilities that come with such an identity. Many Christians, like Jacob, do not understand their identities, and they go through life not truly understanding who they really are. If you do not understand and embrace your identity in Jesus Christ, you will have trouble completing all that God has intended for you to experience and accomplish.

explore

When we become Christians, we gain new identities, and God adopts us as His own children. Since we carry His name, we should strive to reflect His character. Of course, there are times when we do not act or feel like children of God. Fortunately, no matter how we behave, once we gain our new identity in Jesus at salvation, we can never behave badly enough to lose that identity.

In Galatians 2:20, Paul wrote:

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Paul mentions some important truths in the Scripture. Let us explore these truths and their significance to our daily Christian lives.

YOU HAVE TAKEN ON A NEW IDENTITY

The New Testament Scriptures discuss our new identity in Jesus Christ. For the purposes of this study, we will look at a few of these identity truths.

1. You have been declared innocent of every charge against you.

Look back at Galatians 2:20. To be “crucified with Christ,” means that when Christ died on the Cross, you died as well. Of course, you did not die in the flesh; you died to God’s wrath and the power of sin over your life.

According to 1 Peter 2:24, what has Christ done with your sins?

What is the result?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and record what it says Christ has given to us.

If I lived according to the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:21, what would that look like in my life? Record your thoughts below.

Read Philippians 3:8–9 and record what it says Christ has given to us.

If I lived according to the truth of Philippians 3:8–9, what would that look like in my life? Record your thoughts below.

consider

Imagine that a jury has found you guilty of a crime that you committed. When the time comes for the judge to pronounce your sentence, you go to the courtroom to face him, but you are not alone; your defense attorney is with you. Suddenly, your attorney walks up to the judge and speaks to him. After they finish their conversation, the judge says to your attorney, "It is my understanding that you want me to put the penalty for what your client did on you, and you want to serve the sentence I am about to hand down. Is this correct?" Your defense attorney says, "Yes, I will pay the penalty." The guards then escort your attorney out of the courtroom so that he may pay your penalty. The judge looks at you and says, "You have been declared forgiven, and you are no longer responsible for paying the penalty of the crime you committed. In fact, you will walk out of this courtroom as if you never committed the crime."

Now, try to imagine that your attorney, who has paid for your mistake, is the judge's son.

Read 1 John 2:1–2. What is your attorney's name?

Write 1 John 2:1–2 in the box.

What role does Jesus play on our behalf to the Father?

What is an advocate?

What does that mean for us?

discuss

In your own words, clarify what it means that Jesus is holy.

Do you think of yourself as a holy person like Jesus? Why or why not?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Philippians 3:8–9. The Bible says that each Christian has been declared righteous and enjoys a holy standing before God. Do you believe that for yourself? Why or why not?

What would your life be like if you were to see yourself as a person who is holy before God?

Write a thank-you paragraph to God that includes all that Christ has done for you based upon this lesson.

2. Sin no longer has power over you.

Read Romans 6:11–13.

discuss

Based on Romans 6:11–13, explain the phrase that you are “dead to sin.”

Many people would like to believe that being dead to sin means you no longer have a desire to sin. Unfortunately, this is not true. Since you have died to sin, and Christ lives His life through you, you no longer have to yield to sin when you are tempted. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, you can now withstand temptation and choose not to sin.

3. You have hope.

If you have invited Jesus into your life, you can know that you will spend eternity with Jesus. While you are free from the power and punishment of sin during this lifetime, you will also enjoy the absolute absence of sin in Heaven.

Read the following Scriptures and record what they say about your eternal life:

Ephesians 2:12–13

discuss

What does it mean to have hope?

What happens when a person is hopeless?

your life today

You Live Out Your New Identity by Faith in Christ

You have taken on the righteousness of Jesus as your new identity. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:21. If I lived according to the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:21, what would that look like in my life?

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’” —Romans 1:17

God accepts us only on the basis of the death of Jesus Christ, His Son. It is a natural human response to believe that we should behave in certain ways in order to please Him and thus earn His acceptance and approval. If you believe that you must perform to earn God’s acceptance and approval, then you will also believe that you must perform well enough to maintain His acceptance and approval.

discuss

What are some things that people do in the pursuit of God's acceptance and approval?

Why is it that many Christians believe that if they do not perform adequately then they will not sustain God's approval?

Paul discussed the new Christian's position in Christ in Romans 6:1–18. Read this passage and keep in mind the following three principles that can help believers live in the reality of their new identities.

1. Reflect on the truths of your identity

- a. Your former sinful behavior does not have to have power over you because you have died with Christ.
- b. You will never be alone again because you are joined with Christ in a new life forever.
- c. You do not have to live your Christian life on your own strength because you have the power of Jesus available to live through you.

discuss

Which of these truths are most encouraging to you?

Which of these truths is the most difficult to believe about yourself?

2. By faith, choose to see yourself in the light of your new identity

Satan's goal is to convince you that you are unlovable, a failure and unacceptable to God. You may struggle with condemning thoughts concerning your past, or hopelessness concerning your future ability to deal with temptation. These thoughts are not based on the truth of God's Word. To combat this scheme of Satan, you must evaluate your thoughts, emotions and actions in light of the identity that God has given you through Jesus. When you find yourself slipping into the feelings and behaviors of your old identity, you have to renew your mind.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” 2 Corinthians 5:17

discuss

What does it mean that we are a new creation if we are in Christ?

Why is it sometimes easier to focus on the “old you” rather than the “new you”?

3. Yield to God's leadership

A way to live out this principle is to offer up a daily prayer to the Lord before you begin your day. While it does not have to be exact, such a prayer could resemble the following:

Lord, thank You for the new identity You have given me because of Your Son. Thank You that when You look at me, You do not see my sin, but you do see Jesus. Help me to live according to Your truth. I want to offer my life to You today. I give you my thoughts, my feelings, my attitudes and my actions. Please help me as I strive to yield to Your leadership today. Help me be an example of Your love to others. Amen.

Pray this prayer every day for the next month.

APPLYING THE FAITH DEFINITION TO YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Fill in the following chart based on what you have learned from Galatians 2:20–21. Note the perception of your experience in the left box and the truth of God’s Word in the right box:

| YOUR EXPERIENCE | GOD’S WORD |
|-----------------|------------|
| | |

before you finish...

Consider all the material through which you have just worked, and read the following statement. When you completely agree with the statement, sign on the line.

By faith I choose to believe that when I placed my faith and trust in Jesus, I became a new creation and gained a new identity in Christ.

Signed_____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

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session five

*Communicating
with God*

communicating with God

The purpose of this session is to equip you to develop a more effective and intimate prayer life. While prayer is the way we communicate with God, it is not just the act of asking for what we want or need. Prayer is also listening to God so that we may develop a more intimate relationship with Him.

memory verse Philippians 4:6–7

Write and memorize the verse.

faith definition:

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.

"Now without **faith** it is impossible to please God...." - Hebrews 11:6

"...everything that is not from **faith** is sin." - Romans 14:23

"For we walk by **faith**, not by sight." - 2 Corinthians 5:7

Core Concept: *Prayer is a vital part of a Christian's relationship with God.*

consider

Catherine was living the life she had always imagined she would. She worked mornings at a local radio station where she helped research stories for news broadcasts. In the afternoons, she stayed home and cared for her two young children. She was thankful for the opportunity to be able to work and spend time with her children. She and her husband had been married for eight years, and except for an occasional argument, they got along well.

Her spiritual life, however, was a different matter. She felt restless in her Christianity because she never felt connected to God. At church, people would talk about their relationship with God, but she did not feel like she had her own personal relationship with Him. During church, she enjoyed singing worship songs, but she still felt disconnected. She tried spending some time with God because she felt like it was something she needed to do, but she never knew what she should do once she opened her Bible.

“What does God want from me?” she thought. “Why does a relationship with God have to be so much work?” she asked herself.

One day while driving home from work, Catherine heard a sermon on one of the local Christian radio stations about prayer. She learned that the reason she felt disconnected from God was that she spent very little time in prayer. Rather than taking the time to be still and quiet, her prayer life consisted of quick one-liners such as, “God, please get me out of this traffic,” or “God, please help me get my kids to bed.”

Catherine also learned that her time communicating with God was important to every area of her life. She began to set aside a few minutes every morning before work to read her Bible and talk to God about the day ahead. Soon, as her relationship with God became more intimate, she found herself getting up even earlier so that she could spend more time with Him.

Before too long, Catherine’s restlessness was gone, and her relationships with her children and husband grew even stronger. She knew this was a discipline she needed to uphold, not just for a short time, but also as a priority going forward.

How would you assess your connection with God?

Is God doing something to prompt a more intimate relationship with you?

explore

1. What is prayer?

Prayer is simply having a conversation with God. When you enter into a relationship, the only way to keep it healthy and vibrant is to give sufficient time and energy to it. When you became a Christian, you entered into a relationship with God. That relationship needs time, energy and communication, too.

It is still not uncommon for believers to struggle with their prayer life. The list of reasons why Christians struggle in their prayer life can include:

1. Some hold on to unconfessed sin.
2. Some have difficulty putting words to their thoughts, especially to someone they cannot see.
3. Some have been discouraged by previous failed attempts at communication with God.
4. Some do not believe that God cares enough about them to communicate with them.

Whatever may be hindering our prayer lives, the Bible is clear that God wants to communicate with us through our prayer lives. Let us take a closer look at the characteristics of a healthy prayer life.

Your communication with God is like a child communicating with his or her father.

Psalms 103:13 states that “As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.” Unfortunately, the term “father” leaves many people with the impression of someone who is harsh, disconnected or unavailable.

What impression do you get when you think of the word father?

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|------------|----------|
| Detached | Affectionate | Disdainful | Gentle |
| Accessible | Intolerant | Severe | Spiteful |
| Preoccupied | Accepting | Rigid | Sincere |
| Adoring | Barren | Concerned | Loving |

Read the following passages and record the words used to describe God:

1 Peter 5:6–7

Matthew 7:7–11

Psalms 149:4

Consider the previous passages, and fill in the chart below. Note your perception of your experience in the left box and the truth of God’s Word in the right box:

YOUR EXPERIENCE

GOD’S WORD

If you were living according to the truth of 1 Peter 5:6–7, Matthew 7:7–11 and Psalm 149:4, how would you be living?

You can talk to God about anything, at any time and in any place.

Read the following passage that Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6–7:

“Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

No matter what is going on in your life, God wants you to communicate with Him. You can talk to God about the good things as well as the bad things. You can go to Him when you have a pressing need, when you just feel like sharing a thought, or when you feel like you need to hear from Him.

Read the following verses and note any insights you may have concerning prayer:

Psalm 62:8

Matthew 6:9–13

Ephesians 3:14–19

Colossians 1:9–12

Hebrews 4:14–16

James 1:5

James 5:14–16

2. Why is prayer important?

Too many times, people think of prayer as a last resort. How many times have you heard someone say, “All I can do is pray”? Any energy you devote to prayer will accomplish more than anything else you might try to do to solve your problems because prayer is powerful. Other than the power that prayer can bring to your life, there are other reasons why it is important. A few of those reasons are listed below:

- **Prayer glorifies God.** “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” John 14:13
- **Prayer builds intimacy with God.** “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” James 4:8
- **God commands us to pray.** “Pray constantly.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17
- **Prayer enables us to have an impact on the world.** “The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.” James 5:16

List any other reasons you believe prayer is important.

To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives. The closer we come to the heartbeat of God, the more we desire to be conformed to Christ. To pray is to change. —Richard Foster

3. How are we to pray?

Since prayer is basically conversing with God, we have not been given a set of guidelines to follow, and there are no certain words or phrases that we have to say. It can be helpful, however, to follow a certain pattern in prayer to become familiar with the different aspects of communication. The acrostic **ACTS** is one such pattern. It stands for:

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

We will explore the ACTS acrostic in further detail.

ADORATION

Adoration is simply praising God. It means honoring and praising our Father and offering Him recognition for all of His marvelous characteristics.

Read Psalm 145:1–9 and note the characteristics of God that cause you to want to praise to Him.

Give an example of a time when you were overwhelmed with the desire to praise God.

CONFESSION

The word “confess” means to agree with God about our sins. When you become aware of an action or an attitude that is displeasing to God, you need to confess it. We need to admit our sin to God because our sins are, ultimately, against Him. That way we can maintain sincere and candid conversations with Him.

King David expressed his heart's desire in Psalm 139:23–24:

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.

There are times when we will be aware of a sin immediately or soon after we commit it. However, it is also necessary to ask God to search through every crevice of our hearts. If we do so, He will be faithful to show us any sin we may have disregarded that needs to be confessed and of which we need to repent.

A prayer of confession does not have to be elaborate or wordy. Once God has revealed a sin, you merely have to talk to God about it. You might say, “God, I agree with You that when I did _____, I sinned against you.”

Spend a few minutes right now, and ask God to search and cleanse your heart. If He brings anything to mind, confess it and accept His forgiveness and move on. Share any thoughts you have concerning any disregarded sin God revealed to you.

THANKSGIVING

Read the following Scriptures, and note what they say about expressing thanks to God:

Psalm 92:1

1 Thessalonians 5:18

discuss

How can you be “thankful in all things”?

What keeps you from feeling thankful?

A prayer of thanksgiving will include the things in your life for which you are thankful. For example: “God, I thank You for the life You have given me. Thank You for Jesus, and all the changes You are making in my life. I also thank You for my family and friends who love me.”

In the box, write a prayer of thanksgiving.

SUPPLICATION

Supplication is what happens when you make requests of God, and when you pray for your needs as well as the needs of others. Read the following passages and note some of the requests we can make of God:

Matthew 6:11

Matthew 6:13

Colossians 4:3

A prayer of supplication might look similar to the following: “God, please guide my pastor and church staff as they face the challenges of directing our church. Please guide our country’s leaders to make the decisions that You want them to make. Please help me to overcome the guilt that Satan has been trying to place on me for not being a better Christian.”

Write a prayer of supplication in the box.

4. What hinders our prayer life?

Satan does not want us to communicate with God, so he will attempt to throw many obstacles in our paths to hinder our prayer lives. Some of these things include the following:

- Doubt (James 1:6–8)
- Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18)
- Relational problems (1 Peter 3:7)
- An unhealthy fear of God (Hebrews 4:14–16)
- Past struggles (2 Corinthians 5:17)

How have any of these hindrances affected your prayer life?

discuss

What does Hebrews 4:14–16 say a believer should do if he or she is afraid to approach God?

What hindrances seem to affect your prayer life most?

your life today

Based on what you have learned in this lesson about prayer, what has God led you to do concerning your own prayer life?

If you were living according to the truth of Philippians 4:6–7, how would you be living?

before you finish...

Take a few minutes to consider the following questions:

1. In what area of prayer do you need to grow?
2. Share a time when God answered a prayer that concerned you.
3. What are some steps you can take to help make prayer a greater priority in your life?

Consider all the material through which you have just worked, and read the following statement. When you completely agree with the statement, sign on the line.

Today, I am choosing to make a commitment to grow in my relationship with Christ by staying in close communication with Him through prayer.

Signed _____

[illegible]

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines running across the width of the page, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. The background is a clean, solid white color.

session six

Making Disciples

making disciples: multiplying yourself spiritually

In this session, we will discover the concept of spiritual multiplication. Then, we will discuss the biblical pattern of spiritual multiplication found in 2 Timothy. Finally, we will explore the basis of our motivation to multiply spiritually.

memory verse 2 Timothy 2:2

Write and memorize the verse.

faith definition:

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.

"Now without **faith** it is impossible to please God...." - Hebrews 11:6

"...everything that is not from **faith** is sin." - Romans 14:23

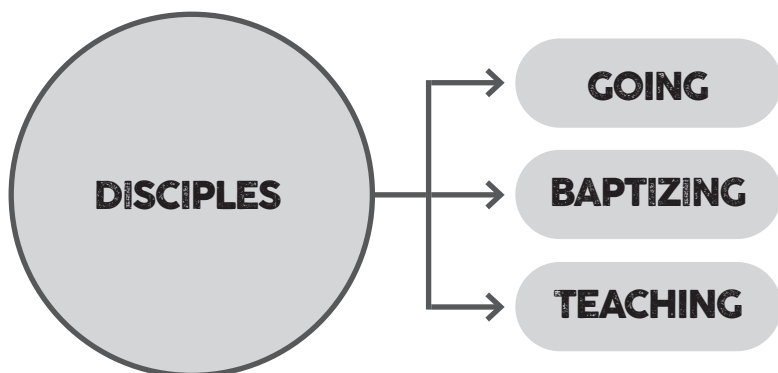
"For we walk by **faith**, not by sight." - 2 Corinthians 5:7

consider

Donald sat in the pew and listened to the visiting preacher speak on Matthew 28:18–20. He had heard that this passage was part of what was called the Great Commission, but this preacher made it seem so urgent. He likened the Great Commission to a relay race in which members of a team must successfully pass the baton in order to complete the race. "The key to winning the race," he said, "is to pass the baton. If we do not pass the baton to the next generation of

Christians, our society will be in trouble.” Donald thought the Great Commission was for missionaries and preachers. It had never occurred to him that the Great Commission was meant for him. Now, he saw that he could leave a legacy and impact the next generation.

Read Matthew 28:18–20. In this passage, the main verb “make disciples” is a command. The verbs “go,” “baptizing” and “teaching” are participles that tell you how to do the command.



This passage means that we make disciples by:

- **Going** “Go” means being intentional about making disciples. We are to be intentional about making disciples as we go about our lives.
- **Baptizing** “Baptizing” addresses the principle of helping others to be introduced to and identified with Jesus Christ.

How does baptism identify us with Jesus?

Why is it important for believers to be baptized?

- **Teaching** “Teaching” means that we should teach other Christians to obey God’s Word by faith.

Read 2 Timothy 2:2 and Acts 1:8. These verses are considered to be parallel passages to Matthew 28:18–20.

Spiritual Multiplication Defined

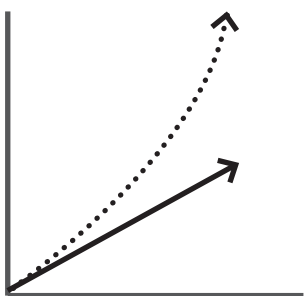
Spiritual multiplication is mentoring that equips a believer to evangelize and mentor others so that they can evangelize and mentor others, and so on, and so on. Spiritual multiplication is different from spiritual addition:

Spiritual addition: Leading someone to faith in Jesus Christ or helping a believer spiritually.

Spiritual multiplication: Mentoring and preparing someone to mentor and prepare others who will, in turn, mentor and prepare others.

Anyone who wants to be involved in spiritual multiplication needs foresight as to how God wants to increase Himself through him or her. This involves fostering relationships, adhering to the truth, staying accountable, modeling godly living and having a desire to minister according to the pattern established in the New Testament.

Compare the following:



If you introduced ten people each year to faith in Jesus for the next ten years, you would see 100 people added to the church. VS. If you disciplined one person per year for the next ten years, who were then equipped to reach and disciple one person per year, and so on, you would be part of raising up over a thousand trained workers for the body of Christ in a ten-year period.

Which of the above represents spiritual multiplication?

explore

If you are going to understand what it means to spiritually multiply, you need to look at it from Paul's perspective in 2 Timothy 2:1–10. Read 2 Timothy 2:1–10, and note the necessary principles of spiritual multiplication.

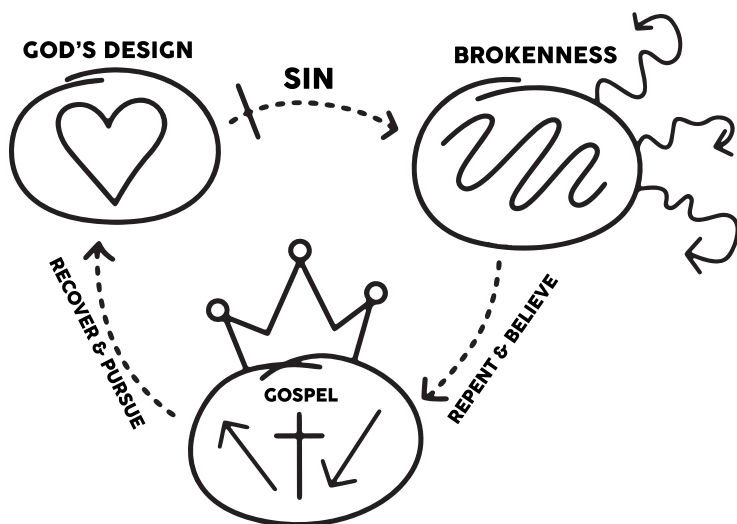
1. Understand the motivation of grace.

“You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”
(2 Timothy 2:1)

Someone who is passionate about mentoring does not mentor only because he has been commanded to do so; he does it because this is what he desires to do. He understands that God has done an amazing work in his own life, and he wants to share that with others.

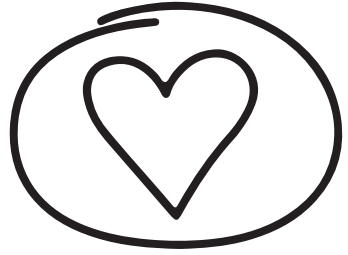
Why do some Christians not share the Good News of God's grace with others?

The following image sequence is a presentation of the **3 Circles: Life Conversation Guide** from Life on Mission. The illustrations have been created to be a tool to share the Gospel with other people, and have been designed so that they can be simple enough to draw on the back of a napkin. An illustration of the 3 Circles presentation and a helpful app can be found at lifeonmissionbook.com/conversation-guide.

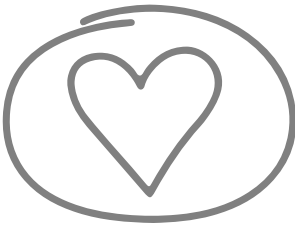


Circle 1: God's Design From the very beginning, God had a plan for humans. Not only did God have a plan for humanity at large, He had and has a plan for every human individually. God has a design for the way we should treat our families, work our jobs, and interact with friends and strangers; the plan is perfect. The Creator who knit together every being desires nothing more than for His plans to be implemented in every life.

GOD'S DESIGN



GOD'S DESIGN



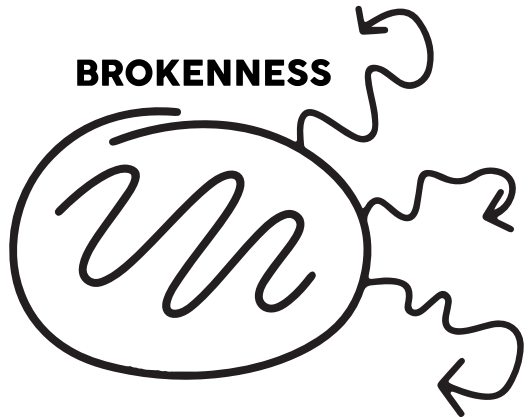
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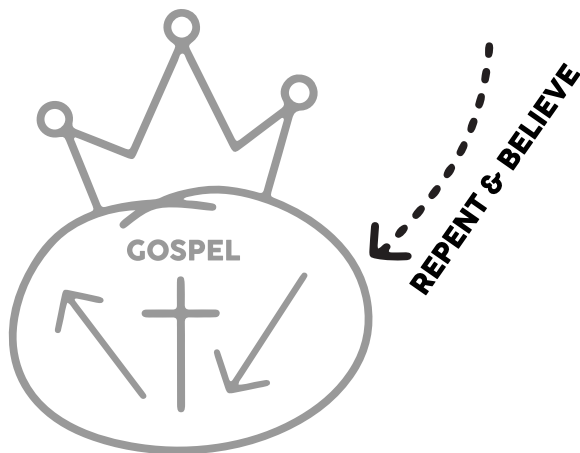
The challenge is that there is something within people that pushes us to depart from God's design, to go in our own direction. The Bible has labeled that departure from God's design "sin." Sin leads to a world of consequences. When we sin, we find ourselves in a place of "brokenness."

Circle 2: Brokenness The feeling of brokenness is the result of our poor choices or even the choices of others that negatively affect us. This state exemplifies itself in ruined relationships, addictions, unease, fear and a mountain of other negative circumstances and states of being. Our brokenness, the feeling of emptiness and desperation, leads us to look in many different directions for healing.

BROKENNESS



We turn to religion, success, beauty, substances, anger and many other seemingly filling solutions to fix the brokenness in our lives. The challenge is that none of the solutions we carve out for ourselves will work; the brokenness remains.

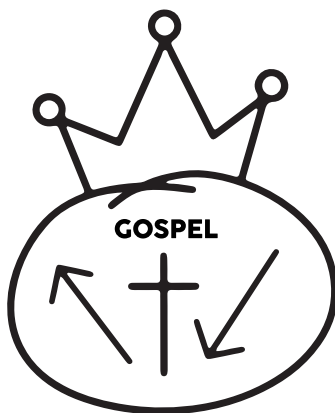


Although brokenness is bleak, God uses it for good. God uses brokenness to help people understand that there is a problem that needs a solution. When someone surveys his life and recognizes the destruction around him and

acknowledges that his solutions have failed, he often becomes open to the idea of a different path. He becomes open to a genuine change. The Bible's word for change is "repent." We want to change and repent but we realize that we can't do much on our own (as evidenced by our own solutions to our brokenness). The good news is that God has a plan to fix the problem of brokenness; it's called the "Gospel."

Circle 3: Gospel The Gospel is the story of what Jesus did for us. Jesus, who is God in flesh, came and lived a perfect life. He never departed from God's design; He lived a life completely without sin. He taught people about God's love for them and His design for their lives. He healed the sick, spent time with the poor, and sought the outcasts.

When He was around 33 years old, people that He loved nailed Him to a cross and murdered Him. While Jesus was on the Cross, God did something incredible. He took the sins of the world and placed them on Jesus. So in His death, Jesus paid the penalty for all of our sin. After He had accomplished His mission on the Cross (bearing the

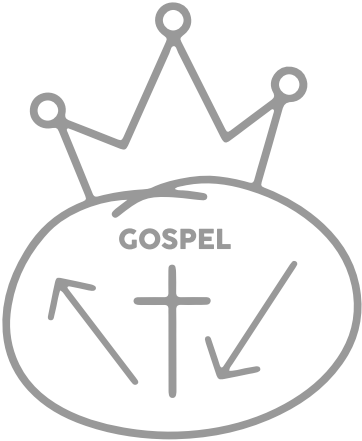


consequences of the world's sins), Jesus died and was buried in a tomb. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead. In His conquering of death, Jesus proved that He was who He said He was, the Son of God. Jesus proved that He could do what He said He could do, forgive sin. And this is the Good News.

The death and Resurrection of Jesus opens up the path by which we might return to the design of God. God's provision means that we can do no good of our own to fix brokenness, nor can we lose that provision by making mistakes. The path to restoration and redemption is this: Repent and believe.

When we make the step of turning from our sins (repentance) and turning toward Jesus (belief), God restores us. He does a work in our hearts that helps us to recover and pursue God's design. No matter what our brokenness looks like or how deep we are in it, God restores us to a right relationship with Him through Jesus.

RECOVER & PURSUE



When we come to faith in Jesus and are restored to His original design for us, we begin to experience the good things that God intends for us to have: purpose, forgiveness, community, hope, joy. As we experience these blessings from God, He sends us back into the brokenness of the world to help others discover the Good News that we have found.

| STAGE | SUPPORTING VERSES |
|------------------|---|
| GOD’S DESIGN | Genesis 1:31; Psalm 19:1 |
| SIN | Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23 |
| BROKENNESS | Romans 1:25; Proverbs 14:12 |
| GOSPEL | John 3:16; Colossians 2:14 |
| REPENT & BELIEVE | Mark 1:15; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9 |
| RECOVER & PURSUE | Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10 |

Many people understand what their culture expects of them (what they should or should not do), and they try to live by those expectations. They give money, volunteer or go to church because they feel they are expected to do so. Even though God wants us to do these things, He wants us to do them out of the overflow of our hearts. Once people are disciplined, and they understand grace, they are free to give money, volunteer and go to church because they are grateful to God. They are also excited about all He has done for them, and they are overwhelmed with gratitude.

For a greater understanding of this gratitude, go back and review the 3 Circles illustration. Practice presenting the 3 Circles below:

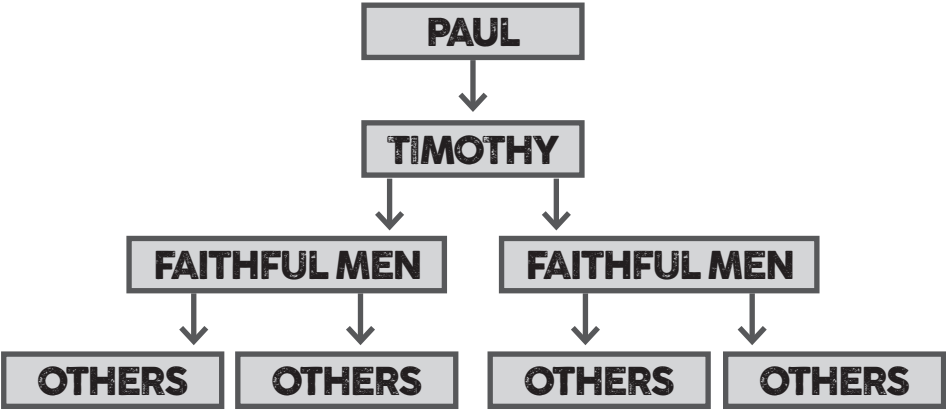
If you are going to understand what it means to spiritually multiply, you need to look at it from Paul's perspective in 2 Timothy 2:1–10. Read 2 Timothy 2:1–10, and note the necessary principles of spiritual multiplication.

2. Commit to a life of multiplication.

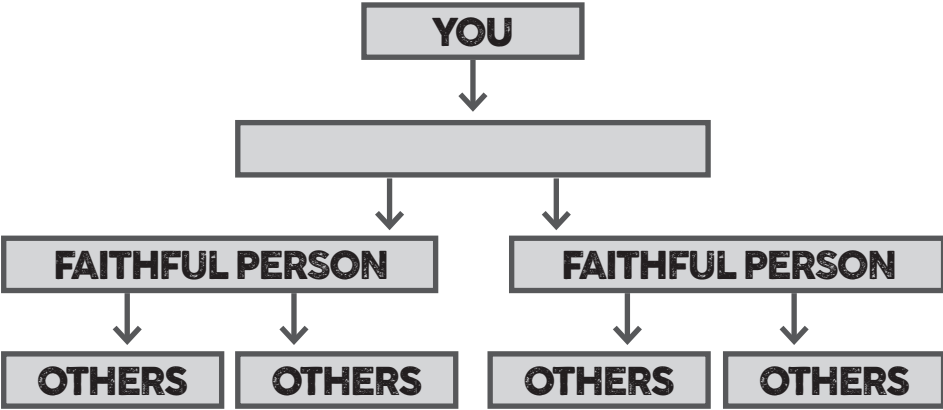
“What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

Ben went to the wedding of a young man he had mentored two years earlier. Although he was happy to attend Jackson’s wedding, he was sure he would not know anyone else at the wedding. During the reception, five of Jackson’s friends introduced themselves to Ben and told him that they were all in different stages of the mentoring process. Jackson had disciplined one of them; he disciplined another, and so on, and so on.

If you want to multiply spiritually, you must commit your life to investing in the lives of others and encouraging them to do the same. The chart below illustrates Paul’s ministry of spiritual multiplication. Paul only needed to mentor Timothy. Then Timothy needed to develop disciples who would develop disciples. This chart also illustrates why the selection of those to be disciplined is so critical. If someone decides not to share what he or she has learned with others by developing their own mentoring relationships, spiritual multiplication will stall.



Prayerfully consider who you would like to disciple. As you do so, think about the influence you could have many spiritual generations into the future. Begin now to pray for the person you will mentor and for the people he or she will mentor, and so on.



3. Look for the potential in others.

As you prayerfully begin to consider who you will disciple, there are three main characteristics to look for in the life of a person who is ready to be discipled. These characteristics are:

- Availability
- Teachability
- Faithfulness

List some of the attributes of someone who is available.

Someone who is available will desire to be discipled and make it a priority above other things. He/she understands his/her need to mature spiritually and is excited to start the process.

List some of the attributes of someone who is teachable.

List some of the attributes of someone who is faithful.

4. Be a model for change.

It is important to keep in mind that no one is perfect. As you begin mentoring others, you will likely encounter people whose lives are in need of certain changes. If you want to help someone change his or her life, then you have to be committed to be a model for change. In order to show someone how to allow God to change them, you must allow God to change you.

Describe a time when someone else was used by God to help you change.

5. Commit to live a disciplined life.

“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Timothy 2:3–7).

Paul uses three professions, the soldier, the athlete and the farmer, to illustrate the perspective and commitment that is needed to multiply spiritually. Note the principles that Paul teaches from these three professions.

THE SOLDIER (v. 3–4)

- A good soldier is single-minded in purpose. He is willing to say “no” to good things in order to please his ranking officials.
- A good soldier is willing to suffer hardship.

discuss

List some of the things you may consider to be “good things” to which you might have to say “no” in order to participate in spiritual multiplication.

What are some difficulties that someone who is committed to multiplying spiritually might face?

THE ATHLETE (v. 5)

- The victorious athlete is disciplined. He knows that hours of rigorous training and discipline lie behind every victory.
- The victorious athlete knows and follows the rules of competition.

discuss

In what ways does one who wishes to participate in mentoring need to be disciplined?

THE FARMER (v. 6)

- The successful farmer is unafraid of the hard work and patience needed to produce a harvest.
- The farmer enjoys a fruitful harvest. His patience and hard work are rewarded when the harvest is brought in.

discuss

Describe a time when you encountered a relationship that required hard work and patience.

One must spend time studying the Bible and meeting with his/her mentoring partner. This will establish a great model for your partner, which will likely carry over into his/her subsequent mentoring relationships as well.

your life today

Applying the Faith Principle to Spiritual Multiplication

Fill in the following chart based on 2 Timothy 2:3–4. Note your perception of your experience in the left box and the truth of God’s Word in the right box:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <div>YOUR EXPERIENCE</div> | <div>GOD’S WORD</div> |
| | |

Now do the same for 2 Timothy 2:5.

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <div>YOUR EXPERIENCE</div> | <div>GOD’S WORD</div> |
| | |

Now do the same for 2 Timothy 2:6.

YOUR EXPERIENCE

GOD'S WORD

REVIEW

Faith is choosing to live according to the truth of the Bible regardless of circumstances, emotions or cultural trends.

ASK

If you choose to live according to the truth 2 Timothy 2:3–6, how would you be living?

PRAY

Take a moment to ask God to make these biblical truths a greater reality in your attitudes and actions. Share your thoughts below.

before you finish...

Your Ministry of Spiritual Multiplication

Take time to reflect on your ministry of multiplication. Answer the following questions:

1. Are you willing to:
 - Be committed to spiritual multiplication?
 - Be a model for change?
 - Look for the potential in others?
 - Be committed to live a disciplined life?
 - Rely on the Holy Spirit to accomplish all of the above?
2. What can get in the way of your ministry of spiritual multiplication?
3. List some of the people you believe are ready to participate in spiritual multiplication:

Ask God to raise up a person with whom you can share this information so that he/she can become a spiritual multiplier, too.

Consider all the material through which you have just worked, and read the following statement. When you completely agree with the statement, sign on the line.

By faith I choose to believe that God is calling me to invest my life in the ministry of spiritual multiplication.

signed _____

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

[illegible]

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for writing or drawing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

resources

After reading this guide, you may have further questions. That's not unusual! Salvation is just the beginning; most Christians spend the rest of their lives growing in their relationship with Christ. Below are some wonderful resources that will help you navigate this journey as a Christ-follower.

gabc.org

On the Green Acres Baptist Church website, you can learn the church's beliefs and history, find additional reading materials, and if you need personal guidance, look up contact information for our ministers. You can also find classes, meeting times, events and small groups to help you engage in the life of our church.

gabc.org/connect-groups

Green Acres has almost 70 Connect Groups which are small groups that provide opportunities to build key relationships, study God's Word, and ensure mutual encouragement and growth. The "Group Finder" on this webpage will allow you to find the Connect Group that is a perfect fit for you.

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