

Making and Multiplying Disciples:

Aggie Cru Discipleship Training Packet

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Making and Multiplying Disciples: the Aggie Cru Discipleship Training Packet

An Introduction

Multiplying discipleship is really exciting and rewarding, but it can also feel complicated. Sometimes we lack direction and don't know where to start or what to do for a "discipleship time." We may feel unprepared or even unqualified from our lack of experience. This packet is designed to help clarify discipleship and give vision for a lifetime of disciple making.

As you read this, you may be someone who is trying to figure out how to disciple someone. Or, you may be someone who needs some tools to help another person disciple someone else. Hopefully, this packet will help prepare you both!

Wherever you are, a great starting point is the *Making Disciples and Launching Movements* sheet, which is found on the next page. This is a great tool for keeping the big picture in mind. It answers the question: "What am I trying to accomplish through discipleship?"

Hopefully after reading this resource you will know what discipleship is, who to disciple, and steps on how to begin, all while having a clear vision for where you are headed in the process.

Our prayer is that the Lord will use this packet and resources to continue to equip you to be a lifelong, Christ-centered laborer, by the power of the Spirit!

Check out our [website](#) for information about Aggie Cru, discipleship resources, and more.



MAKING & MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES

LOST STUDENTS:

- Created in the image of God, every person has value
- Apart from Christ, we are lost and separated from God
- 1 Timothy 2:3-6

WIN : Expose lost people to Jesus

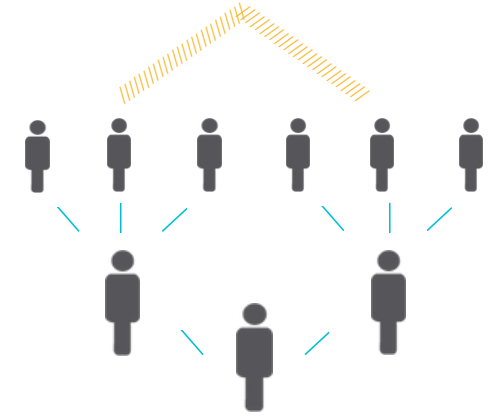
- Pray
- Identify areas of influence and cultivate relationships
- Explore where people are spiritually
- Initiate opportunities to authentically share about Jesus
- Use helpful tools: KGP, testimony, Soularium, EveryStudent.com & Bring to a point of decision
- Read the Bible together



WHERE AM I?
WHERE ARE
MY FRIENDS?
WHERE CAN
GOD USE ME?

CHRIST-CENTERED LIFETIME LABORER

- A spiritual multiplier with a willing and available heart to meet the spiritual needs of the world
- Lives with an eternal perspective and in light of the Great Commission
- Mathew 28:18-20, Revelation 7:9-10



PROFESSING BELIEVERS:



- Identifies with Jesus
- Grasping God's love, Assurance of salvation and the Spirit filled life
- 1 John 5:11-13

FAITHFUL DISCIPLE:



- Increasing commitment to grow spiritually
- Growing as a follower and learner
- Mark 8:34-36

FRUITFUL WORKER:



- Growing in desire and capacity to impact others for Christ
- Becoming a leader and "giver"
- 2 Timothy 2:15

SPIRITUAL MULTIPLIER:

- Spirit Filled Disciple leading others to Win, Build and Send
- Influencing others to multiple generations
- 2 Timothy 2:2

BUILD : Establish a growing relationship with God

- God's Word
- Basic Follow-Up
- Community
- Small Group
- Spirit Filled Life
- Local Church
- Weekly Meeting
- Conferences and Retreats

TRAIN : Equip to make an impact for Christ

- Address heart and character issues
- Model and coach in Evangelism and Discipleship
- Lead a Bible Study
- Initiate Gospel Conversations
- Take Faith Steps
- Participate in a Summer Mission

SEND : Engage and multiply servant leaders

- Mobilize and train for multiplying discipleship
- Instill ongoing vision
- Grow in heart for the world
- Launch new movements
- Engage others in the mission
- Bring others to conferences, retreats and summer missions
- Owns ministry

BLESS : Expand resources for Christ's kingdom

- Go/Do as God leads to help fulfill the Great Commission
- Seek to be a blessing to the world with their time, talent and treasure
- Develop new ways to expand the gospel to new places
- Send others into God's harvest



MAKING & MULTIPLYING DISCIPLES

LOST STUDENTS:

- Created in the image of God, every person has value
- Apart from Christ, we are lost and separated from God
- 1 Timothy 2:3-6

WIN

- Pray, Identify areas of influence and cultivate relationships
- Explore where people are spiritually
- Remember Successful Witnessing & Initiate opportunities to authentically share about Jesus
- Use helpful tools: KGP, testimony, Soularium, EveryStudent.com & Bring to a point of decision
- Read the Bible together

This sheet has everything you would need to disciple someone throughout their time in college.

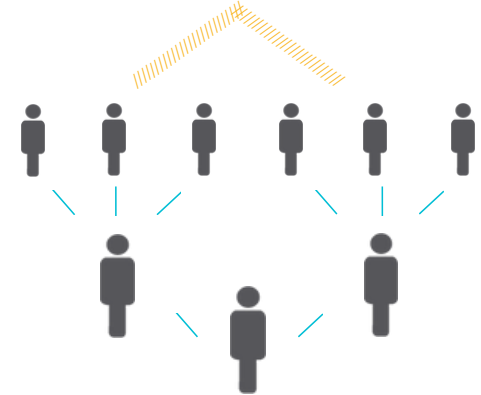
You will need God's Spirit empowering you, a humble & teachable heart, and to be with Jesus yourself.

Use the hyperlinks on this page to be connected with life-changing material.

Aggie Cru Discipleship Packet

CHRIST-CENTERED LIFETIME LABORER

- A spiritual multiplier with a willing and available heart to meet the spiritual needs of the world
- Lives with an eternal perspective and in light of the Great Commission
- Mathew 28:18-20, Revelation 7:9-10



PROFESSING BELIEVERS:



- Identifies with Jesus
- Grasping God's love, Assurance of salvation and the Spirit filled life
- 1 John 5:11-13

BUILD

- Assurance of Salvation
- Position in Christ
- Spirit Filled Life
- Local Church, Fellowship
- The Word, God's Word
- Prayer
- Sharing the Gospel
- Basic Follow-Up
- Confession
- Challenge to Discipleship

FAITHFUL DISCIPLE:



- Increasing commitment to grow spiritually
- Growing as a follower and learner
- Mark 8:34-36

TRAIN

- Conflict resolution
- Sexuality
- Guilt and Shame
- Mental Health (Anxiety, Depression, etc.)
- Forgiveness
- Scripture Memory
- Temptation
- Apologetics
- Eternal Perspective

FRUITFUL WORKER:



- Growing in desire and capacity to impact others for Christ
- Becoming a leader and "giver"
- 2 Timothy 2:15

SEND

- Biblical Justice
- Local Church
- Discerning God's Will
- Evangelism
- Family/Parents
- God's Heart for the Nations/1040 Window
- Holy Spirit
- Soularium/Perspective cards
- Trials

SPIRITUAL MULTIPLIER:

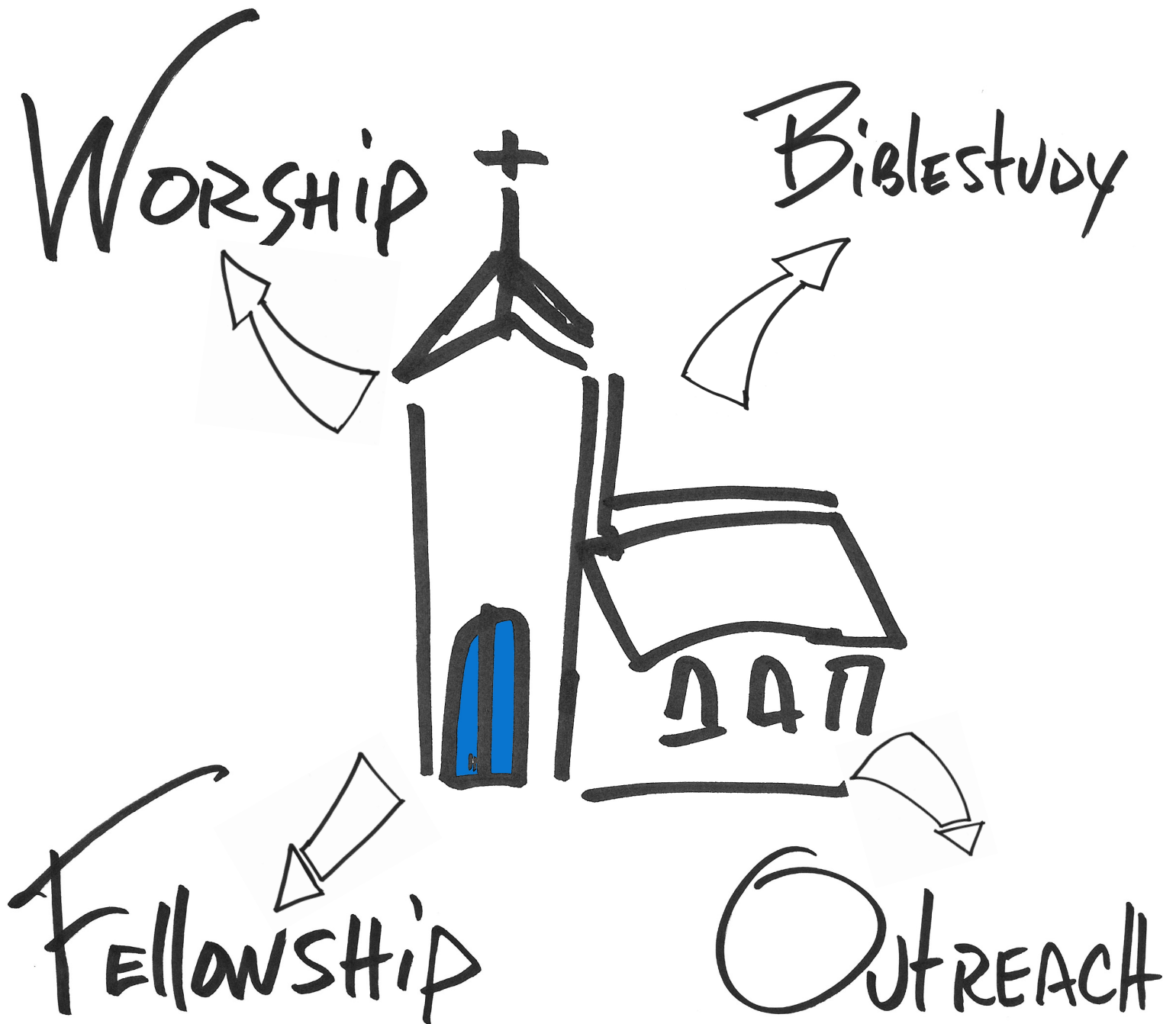
- Spirit Filled Disciple leading others to Win, Build and Send
- Influencing others to multiple generations
- 2 Timothy 2:2

BLESS

- Prayer & Fasting
- Pride & Submission
- Purpose
- Regular Spiritual Growth (Sanctification)
- Relationships
- Spiritual Multiplication/Discipleship
- Stewardship
- Stress/Worry

Discipleship

by Tony Evans



If you want to find out what mattered most to someone, read his last words. Usually, whatever a person considers to be most important is on his mind when he comes to his last days on earth. That's why we pay so much attention to last words, especially of people important to us.

As those who seek to be obedient followers of Jesus Christ, we need to know what matters most to Him so it can matter most to us. Thankfully, we don't have to wonder about it. After His resurrection from the dead, and just before His ascension back into heaven, Jesus told His disciples – and us – what was uppermost on His mind. His last words on earth are recorded for us in Matthew 28:18-20.

Notice verse 19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” There it is – the mission of the church, stated in clear and concise terms: *to disciple the people of God so that they affect the world for Christ*. If Christ's mandate for the church is to make disciples, then His will for us as individual believers is that we would become disciples through the process of personal spiritual growth. The way we achieve Christ's will for us is what we're going to talk about in this ebook.

To grow spiritually as a disciple of Christ means that we become like Him. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 10:25 “It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher.” So becoming a disciple is where we ought to be heading in our Christian lives. This is the goal toward which discipleship is because before we can begin the process we have to see and understand the goal for which we're aiming.

Let me say right off that being a disciple, getting down to the essentials of the Christian life, is a lot different than just going to church once or twice a week. To get

excited because the preacher moved you and the choir inspired you is nice, but that's not spiritual growth.

The goal and the cornerstone of our activity, that which brings God the most glory, is for us to become disciples. God's goal is not salvation; that is just the introduction to God's goal. His desire is that those who are saved become disciples.

It is not enough simply to say: “I'm on my way to heaven.” The issue is, are you becoming like the One who is taking you to heaven? That's discipleship, and that's what Christ wants from us. Let me give you a working definition of discipleship. Discipleship is *that developmental process that progressively brings Christians from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity so that they are then able to reproduce the process with someone else*.

Notice that this brings discipleship around full circle. Disciples are to turn around and make other disciples. Ultimately, that's how we fulfill the mandate of Matthew 28:18-20.

The Concept of Discipleship

Discipleship was not a new idea in the New Testament times. It was a well-established concept in the Greek world in the centuries before Christ. The word disciple means “learner, student,” and the Greeks had disciples in the realm of philosophy.

Plato, often called the “father of philosophy,” developed a system of thought that dealt with issues of epistemology, or how we gain knowledge, and issues related to the meaning of life. Plato disciplined his student Aristotle, who took what he had learned and built “gymnasiums,” or academies.

In the ancient world, gymnasiums were not arenas for sporting events. They were training centers to teach students Plato's thought and the system developed by Aristotle, known as Aristotelian logic. The students thus trained were "gymnatized," which is the verb form of the Greek word for gymnasium.

So successful was this discipling process that it allowed the Greeks to influence the whole Greco-Roman world. This process was called "Hellenization," in which people who were not Greek began to adopt Greek thinking, language, and culture. That was all part of this concept of discipleship.

The New Testament picked up this concept and put it in a spiritual context so we would know what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship involves an apprenticeship in which the apprentice, or student, is brought toward a particular goal.

The Four Essentials of Discipleship

Few people would disagree that the greatest church in history was the first church, the church at Jerusalem in the early chapters of Acts. This church was on fire, possessed by the Holy Spirit, exploding on the scene on the Day of Pentecost.

One reason this church was so dynamic is that it got off to a great start. Jesus had told the disciples in Acts 1:8, "Don't have church until the Holy Spirit shows up" (in my personal paraphrase). They obeyed Him, and the Spirit showed up in great power at Pentecost.

Acts 2 shows that this church made an impact not only on those within it but they also made a far-reaching impact that transformed those around them. It did this

through four vital, Spirit-inspired experiences that are necessities for those who would follow Christ in discipleship. These four experiences are meant to operate simultaneously in our lives as we grow and develop. They include outreach (witnessing), growing in the Word, fellowship and worship, and are laid out for us clearly in one key verse, "**They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**" (Acts 2:42)



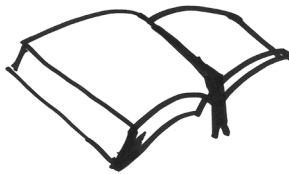
Outreach

When the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, the church became a catalyst for change. They offered themselves as a witness for Jesus Christ. Evangelism is one of the absolute necessities for being a disciple. The most obvious event of the church's witness in Acts 2 was

Peter's great Pentecost sermon. This is the same Peter who, just a few weeks earlier, was too scared to admit he even knew Jesus. What changed Peter? Acts 2 tells us that the Holy Spirit had taken control of Peter. He was about to take off and soar in his spiritual life. He would experience things he had never experienced before because now he will be a faithful witness for Jesus Christ.

One of the things you must ask God to do if you're going to grow as a Christian is to help you open your mouth and be a witness. You may say, "But I'm not bold. I'm a private person." Well, the fact is that most of us are only private when we want to be. I've met a lot of "private" people who become very vociferous when their favorite team takes to the field or the court. In other words, when something exciting enough happens in your life, you will talk about it without a whole lot of prompting. Anyone who is so private that he or she never talks about anything that matters has to be a pretty boring person.

BIBLE STUDY



One reason a lot of us Christians don't share Christ is that we've lost our excitement about Christ. When He is exciting to you, you can't keep Him to yourself. When something dynamic occurs internally, you want to express it externally. The believers who

received the Spirit on Pentecost became witnesses. The result of their witness and Peter's sermon on that special day was the addition of 3000 new believers to the body of Christ. Now that's a witness! And please notice that these 3000 people did not come because of an evangelistic program. They came because God's people were overwhelmed of His Spirit. They were excited about Jesus.

Growing In The Word

Along with their dynamic witness, these early believers were growing in their knowledge of God's Word. Scriptural education is the second necessity for being a disciple.

This is the process by which the Word of God gets off the page and into our lives. A disciple of Jesus Christ is a person for whom the Word of God is as necessary and desirable as food is for the body. It is Scripture that equips us to live the Christian life. Your mind is the key to becoming a disciple, because you are what you think about (Proverbs 23:7). If you've got a messed-up mind, you're going to have a messed-up life. The body reflects the thought processes of the mind, and many of us have come into the Christian life with warped minds, contaminated by an ungodly world.

Our minds need to be renewed (Romans 12:2). Only then will our lives be transformed. I've discovered that when you try to change people's actions without changing their thinking, you only do a temporary, patchwork job. If you want to fix what you do, you must first fix how you think about what you do. A transformed mind comes through the study and practice of the Bible.

All of us know about brainwashing. It's repeating certain data over and over again until a person absorbs that data into his brain, believes it wholeheartedly, and begins to act on it. That's what the Word of God is designed to do. Many of us have habits in our lives that we want to get rid of. But we say, "I can't" because we've been brainwashed by the enemy to believe we will never have victory in this area.

But God's Word can change that, if we will feed on it regularly the way we feed our bodies. The believers in Acts 2 devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. If you are going to become a disciple, you must have a dynamic experience with the Bible. When it comes to our spiritual education, we have a divine Teacher – the Holy Spirit. Jesus said the Spirit would remind us of all that He taught (John 14:26).

You may say, "Sure, Tony, if Jesus would come and teach our Sunday school class next Sunday, we would get excited about the Word." Well, that isn't going to happen. But you have something better. You have the indwelling Spirit to make God's Word come alive. He is eager to set your heart on fire.

Life-Changing Fellowship

The third necessary experience in following Christ is also found in Acts 2:42. Along with devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, the believers were devoted to fellowship. Biblical fellowship is not just coffee and donuts in Sunday school, or a meal in the fellowship hall. Fellowship is the sharing of our lives with other believers. You'll never grow to full maturity in Jesus Christ all by yourself. You cannot become a disciple of Jesus Christ independently of others.

That's why the church is so important. It is the "fireplace" where one log touches another and the fire is maintained. The church at Jerusalem not only shared their lives with one another, they shared their possessions as needs arose (v. 44-45). That's part of fellowship too. If you are getting dull in your spiritual



life, you need to be in proximity to others who are on fire so their fire can ignite you. If you are losing your spiritual fire and you're alone, you're going to become ashes. Are you connected with other believers who desire to be on fire too? Fellowship is designed to keep the fire burning. There was no such thing as a non-churched Christian in the New Testament. They were in dynamic fellowship with each other.

We need each other because the best of us can get spiritually dull and want to throw in the towel. The best of us sometimes fall flat on our faces. The Bible reminds us, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12) because falling is often right around the corner.

Back in the days of slavery, Sunday was a very important day. It was the day the slaves didn't have to work. But more important, they would come together for worship, and then devote a major part of the day

to fellowship. One sister would bring the potato salad, another sister the fried chicken, and still another the corn. They would enjoy a meal together.

That Sunday fellowship was so important to the slaves because they all had to go back to slave work on Monday. Monday was painful, with heartaches and headaches. So the reinforcement of Sunday was critical. But as we have become more affluent and more independent, we've lost our need for one another. Fellowship in the Bible was designed to show you that you need other believers. You can't make it on your own, and neither can I.

Dynamic Worship

The fourth necessity in following Christ is worship. Again in Acts 2:42, the believers devoted themselves to **“the breaking of bread and to prayer.”** They were going to the temple every day and praising God continually.

Worship is the furnace of the spiritual life. Worship is the celebration of God for who He is and what He has done. The issue in worship is not necessarily what you get out of it, but what God gets out of it. Praising God, worshipping Him, celebrating God for who He is and what He has done, are the ways to get God's attention. God responds to our worship. In fact, God invites us to worship Him. He has taken the initiative.

You will be surprised at the way the Spirit of God will ignite your Christian life when worship becomes not an event, but an experience; not a program, but a way of life. That includes both public and private worship because both are critical for a growing disciple of Christ.

Many of us want to quit when something goes wrong. But our spiritual ancestors didn't throw in the towel when their whole world went wrong. Why? Because

many of them had what we don't have – a worshipping lifestyle. No matter what is wrong in your life, there is always a reason for celebrating God, exalting Him for what He has done.

What happens when you become a witnessing, learning-the-Word, fellowshipping, worshipping kind of disciple? If those four experiences are a part



of your normal Christian life, I guarantee that you will be progressing in your discipleship. When we submit to the Spirit of God that He might cultivate those things in us, we are going to see exciting results. The early believers had the four necessities going strong, and Scripture indicates that at least two things happened: They had spiritual power and they saw spiritual results.

Getting Started

Getting Started

We've addressed why and how we disciple others, now let's briefly touch on who to disciple and how to get started. As you prayerfully consider who to disciple, read Mark 3:13-19 and 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

- What are some key things we learn about discipleship in these passages?

Excerpts from Master Plan of Evangelism:

"One cannot transform a world except as individuals in the world are transformed, and individuals cannot be changed except as they are molded in the hands of the Master. The necessity is apparent not only to select a few helpers but also to keep the group small enough to be able to work effectively with them."

"Though he did what he could to help the multitudes, he had to devote himself primarily to a few men, rather than the masses, so that the masses could at last be saved. This was the genius of his strategy."

"We must decide where we want our ministry to count—in the momentary applause of popular recognition or in the reproduction of our lives in a few chosen people who will carry on our work after we have gone."

Why selection?

1. Realistically, you can only disciple a few
2. It's what Jesus did
3. Not everyone wants to be disciplined by Cru
4. Not everyone wants to move toward biblical discipleship
5. Long-term impact is key

****Remember that discipleship is more than just friendship with someone. You can have a great connection with someone and hang out all the time but that is not discipleship. Discipleship is intentionally investing into someone with the expectation that they will multiply their life into others as well. This is why you want to find **people who are faithful, available, and teachable.******

Getting Started Cont'd.

One of the best ways to begin a discipleship relationship is by having a getting-to-know-you conversation. Ask what they struggle with, what they are passionate about, what they are afraid of, what they have experienced in life, what they want to see God do in their life through discipleship, etc. Make note of what your disciple says. Write things down if you have to. This will give you a good starting point on how to help them grow and develop.

Here is a grid to help you think through your first discipleship time:

1. Pray and consider three people to disciple

- Who are two or three faithful people you could invest in regularly?
- Who do you see becoming a multiplying disciple?

2. Share with them the overall purpose for the time

- Use the Making & Multiplying Disciples document.
- Where are they on the sheet?
- Share what you envision for discipleship.
- Share how you want to get to know them better and help them grow in Christ, but also how you want to help equip and engage them in making disciples.

3. Two questions of focus for personal growth

- **What is an area you would like to see growth in personally?** This has to do more with their character and spiritual growth.
- **What would be a step of faith for them to take?** This question has more to do with action and mission. What steps can they take in tangibly making Christ known?
- **Growth Circles:** This is a great tool to use for helping to answer these two questions and for giving you more tracks to run on! You will find it on

pages 14 - 17.

Growth Circles

The Growth Circles

Learning About Your Disciples

In discipleship, it is important to have a plan on where you want to take your disciple and what areas you want to help them grow and develop in. Some of these areas are vital truths that all Christians should be grounded in: assurance of salvation, the church, eternal perspective, prayer. Others will be specific struggles that people have: specific temptations, pride, anxiety, etc. As a discipler, you want to be a learner of your disciples, trying to understand where they are, so you can help take the next step in their relationship with Jesus. Using Growth Circles, you can prayerfully formulate a plan to help your disciples grow in their relationship with Jesus, trusting that God will use you to help them grow.

Here is how to use this exercise:

Sit down with your disciples with the blank growth circles sheet and the topics list, found on pages 17 and 18. Tell them that this exercise will help both of you identify some areas that they can grow in spiritually.

After you have given them the list and the circles, have them fill out the circles with all the items on the list according to how they think they are doing in each area. The areas they are doing the best in will be in the middle and the areas they need growth in should be written farther to the outside, relative to how much they feel they need to grow. *Note: putting a topic in the center doesn't mean they are perfect in a certain area, it just means that that is an area with which they feel more confident.*

Your goal as a discipler should be to work with them on the areas outside of the center circle. After you've done this exercise, hopefully you will have a good idea of some of the areas you can work through in discipleship with the person(s) you're discipling. Ask God to use you to help your disciple grow in those areas that they want to grow in, and prayerfully look down the road and plan out what to study in the weeks and months ahead.

You can finish the time praying for God to help you both grow in your time together (Psalm 139:23-24) and then schedule a time to meet up again!

If you like, you can come up with a semester discipleship plan based on the areas that they want to grow. A blank semester discipleship plan is included in this packet (page 19).

**To help you plan out and prepare for discipleship, check out the resources page in this packet, visit our website, or reach out to a staff member!*

Growth Circle Topics*

- Assurance
- the Local Church
- Community
- Confession
- Time with the Lord
- Discerning God's Will
- Eternal Perspective
- Evangelism
- Holy Spirit
- Family/Parents
- Prayer
- Conflict resolution
- Relationships
- Pride
- Regular Spiritual Growth (Sanctification)
- Scripture Memory
- Sexuality
- Temptation
- Studying God's Word
- Stress
- Mental Health (Anxiety, Depression, etc.)
- Stewardship
- Biblical Justice
- Knowing God Personally booklet (KGP)
- Soularium/Perspective cards
- God's Heart for the Nations/1040 Window
- Forgiveness
- Identity in Christ
- Spiritual Multiplication/Discipleship
- Guilt and Shame
- Purpose

**Note: This list is not exhaustive! If there is something that applies to you that isn't here, you can add it to the list.*

Semester Discipleship Plan

[illegible]

Great Commission Groups:

A Model for Discipleship Times



Great Commission Groups

IN TIME

1. **Look Back** (20 min)
 - a. Care: Share about how you are doing
 - b. Worship: Read scripture together
 - c. Intention: Share about “*Look Forward*” Intentions/Goals from the last GCG meeting
2. **Look Up** (50 min)
 - a. Discuss New Lesson/Growth Circle Article
 - b. ***Remember:** Most disciples will become discouraged at different times, and that's why **it is important to refresh our perspective that the essence of the Christian life is what God does in and through us, not what we do for God.** We must remember that God's Spirit is at work in and through us and that the Holy Spirit is the source of our deepest satisfaction. **Following Jesus is always about “being with Him” more than “doing for Him.”**
 - c. Reflect/Apply: From what we discussed today, how might we intentionally interact with Jesus and others the next couple weeks?
3. **Look Forward** (20 min)
 - a. Connect with God:
 - i. How do you hope to connect with God this week (share and write down)?
 - ii. What challenges or life circumstances make it hard for you to connect with God?
 - b. Connect with Others:
 - i. Who can you connect with in “*OUT Time*” (share and write down)?
 - ii. What will that look like practically?
 - c. Pray: Write down the intentions you discussed for connecting with God and with others. Pray for one another, students and those places during the week.

OUT TIME

1. Be intentional

- a. Initiate spiritual conversations with people on campus
- b. Prayer Walk campus asking the Lord to move

2. Identify your Pockets

- a. Spend extended time with friends from your pockets of campus
- b. How can you Bless, Befriend, and Care for your friends there?

3. Invite Participation

- a. Give friends opportunities to experience your Christian community
- b. Examples include parties, playing sports, study groups, etc.

****One idea would be to create a shared document for your GCG, where you can write down what your hopes/plans are for the next week and your prayer requests. Then the GCG can see what you wrote, be praying for those hopes/plans and be praying for whatever is going on in your life.*

Discipleship Resources

There's so much to talk about and learn with your disciples! Here's a few topics that are a great place to start for every believer, no matter where they're at:

- [Assurance](#)
- [Biblical Justice](#)
- [the Local Church](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Confession](#)
- [Conflict resolution](#)
- [Discerning God's Will](#)
- [Eternal Perspective](#)
- [Evangelism](#)
- [Forgiveness](#)
- [Family/Parents](#)
- [God's Heart for the Nations/1040 Window](#)
- [Guilt and Shame](#)
- [Holy Spirit](#)
- [Identity in Christ](#)
- [Knowing God Personally booklet \(KGP\)](#)
- [Life Concepts: New Believer Follow Ups](#)
- [Mental Health](#) (Anxiety, [Depression](#), etc.)
- [Prayer & Fasting](#)
- [Pride](#)
- [Purpose](#)
- [Regular Spiritual Growth \(Sanctification\)](#)
- [Relationships](#)
- [Scripture Memory](#)
- [Sexuality](#)
- [Soularium/Perspective cards](#)
- [Spiritual Multiplication/Discipleship](#)
- [Stewardship](#)
- [Stress/Worry](#)
- [Studying God's Word](#)
- [Temptation](#)
- [Time with the Lord](#)

Also check out: [Aggie Cru website](#) and Cru's [Collaborative discipleship](#) website

Life Concepts: New Believer Follow Ups

LIFE CONCEPTS



STEPPING
FROM
UNCERTAINTY
TO
CONFIDENCE

LEADER'S GUIDE



BIG IDEA

Every believer has a genuine need for assurance. Yet many people experience different degrees of uncertainty. The new believer is particularly vulnerable to this struggle. This Life Concept seeks to give the new believer confidence in what God's Word says about Jesus and eternal life.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE TEMPLATE

The goal of your interaction is to effectively and relationally communicate key biblical concepts, and so each interaction contains the following elements: Comparing Our Stories; Considering Our Struggles; Exploring the Solution; Examining the Sketch; and Taking Steps.

STEPPING FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE



I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Almost everyone who begins a new relationship with Jesus Christ experiences struggles. The first struggle usually deals with the issue of assurance. You want to help the new believer move from uncertainty toward a real sense of confidence in their relationship with Christ.

Share your struggle with uncertainty in two minutes or less. You should share about your struggles, but stop short of how they were solved. You can discuss that later. For now, you only want your friend to identify with the need.

If your experience seems inappropriate to share for this concept (i.e., you've never had significant struggles with uncertainty), ask some of your Christian friends about their struggle with assurance after receiving Christ. It's just as appropriate to begin by saying, "Let me share with you my friend's story."

Ask what kind of questions the person has had since becoming a Christian. Go over the common questions listed on the first page.

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

The central issue behind all of these questions is uncertainty.

How would you define uncertainty? The dictionary definition is "the lack of sure knowledge; the condition of being in doubt."

Discuss the illustration about a newly married couple.

WHAT IMPACT WOULD DOUBTS LIKE THESE HAVE ON A MARRIAGE? WHY? They would begin to undermine it and create a wall blocking communication. They could produce feelings like tension, worry or frustration. Basically, the couple would probably lose all joy or excitement about the marriage and wonder if they had made the right decision to marry one another.

HOW COULD SIMILAR DOUBTS HAVE AN IMPACT ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST? WHY?

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

Together read the whole passage aloud.

WHAT IS TESTIMONY? The key word in this section is testimony. Have the new believer circle testimony each time it is used in this passage (six times in 5:9-11). We normally think of testimony being given in a courtroom. In that context and in general, testimony is the verbal witness of someone verifying the truth of something.

WHAT MAKES TESTIMONY TRUSTWORTHY? The character and knowledge of the witness. It involves both their integrity and their knowledge of the issue. We believe people when they give reliable testimony. Since God is more trustworthy and knowledgeable than people, we must believe God's testimony even more.

WHAT HAS GOD MADE TESTIMONY ABOUT? About the Son, Jesus.

SINCE GOD HAS GIVEN US HIS TESTIMONY, WHAT TWO OPTIONS EXIST? We can believe Him or not believe Him.

WHAT IS TRUE IF WE BELIEVE GOD? The one who believes in the Son has God's testimony in his heart.

WHAT IS TRUE IF WE DON'T BELIEVE GOD? We make God out to be a liar – one who has told us something that we don't believe is true.

GOD'S TESTIMONY SAYS TWO THINGS ARE TRUE. WHAT ARE THEY? First, God has given us eternal life as a gift that we must receive in order to experience. Eternal life is not something we can earn; that would be a wage, not a gift. The second thing God says is true is that eternal life is found in the Son.

CONSIDER USING THIS ILLUSTRATION: If I put a letter inside an envelope, wherever the envelope goes, the letter goes with it. Right? Suppose I put the envelope in my book bag. Where's the letter now? In the book bag. When the envelope is not in my book bag, can the letter be there? Not as long as it is in the envelope. The same thing is true with eternal life. It's found in one place – or to be consistent with the analogy, one envelope – in Christ. Wherever Jesus Christ is, eternal life is there. Where He is not, eternal life is not. That's the point of verse 5:12.

WHAT TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE ARE THERE? Those who have the Son and, thus, have the life, and those who don't have the Son or the life.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE THE SON AND NOT HAVE THE LIFE? No. The life is in the Son.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO NOT HAVE THE SON AND STILL HAVE THE LIFE? No.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO THINK YOU HAVE THE LIFE BUT DON'T? Yes, it's possible. In fact, there are many people who think they have eternal life. But unless they have the Son, they are fooling themselves.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE THE LIFE BUT NOT BE SURE? Yes. That is exactly why John is writing this letter.

TO WHOM IS JOHN WRITING THESE THINGS? To those who believe in the name of the Son of God.

WHY DOES HE WRITE THEM? So they would know they have eternal life.

DOES JOHN BELIEVE WE CAN KNOW WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE? Yes, by believing in the Son and, thus, having both the Son and the life.

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

Use the sketch to illustrate these concepts and relate it to your own life. Then apply it to the new believer's life.

The Two Lines: Life and Death

THE ISSUE: HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE THE SON?

A. READ JOHN 3:16. *WHAT TWO POSSIBLE DESTINIES ARE DESCRIBED IN THIS VERSE?* To perish or to have eternal life. The ends of these two lines represent the two destinies.

WHICH DESTINY DOES GOD DESIRE FOR US? WHY? Eternal life. Because He loves us. Circle the words "Eternal Life."

B. READ ROMANS 6:23. *WHAT HAVE WE EARNED? HOW?* Because of our sins, we've earned death.

Put an "X" on the lower line and label it with your name. Referring back to your story, explain that before you received Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you were on the line of eternal death.

WHAT DOES GOD DESIRE TO GIVE US? HOW? According to this verse, God wants to give us eternal life as a gift through His Son.

C. READ ROMANS 5:8. God's love for us didn't quit even though we were sinners. In fact, He expressed it in the most powerful way.

WHAT COMPELLED GOD TO GIVE HIS SON TO DIE FOR US? Because of His love. The key is in understanding why Jesus had to die.

WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE? He died to pay the wages, or penalty, for our sins so that we could be forgiven and have new life.

D. READ JOHN 5:24. *ACCORDING TO THIS VERSE, WHAT IS MY PART IN SALVATION?* To hear the message and believe.

Share the rest of your story explaining how you received Christ. Draw an arrow from the lower line, through the cross, up to the line of eternal life. Place an "X" to represent yourself on the upper line. Share briefly again about your uncertainties and how you now have confidence you have eternal life because you know Christ is in your life.

After reading the paragraph, look back at I John 5:11-13.

ACCORDING TO THIS SKETCH, WHERE IS THE PERSON WHO HAS CHRIST? On the eternal life line.

WHERE IS THE PERSON WHO DOES NOT HAVE CHRIST? On the death line.

WHERE WOULD YOU PUT YOURSELF ON THE SKETCH AND WHY? If the person chooses the life line, ask, "When would you say you crossed from death to life?" For the person who chooses the death line, ask, "What must be true of you to be here on the life line?" You must have Christ in your life. Before moving on, ask, "Is this true of you?"

ON A SCALE OF 0-100%, HOW SURE ARE YOU THAT YOU NOW HAVE ETERNAL LIFE?

5. TAKING STEPS

After reading the two descriptions of people to whom John wrote, find out which scenario best fits your friend's situation. If the person's uncertainties center on Jesus, suggest reading the Gospel of John to examine the evidence for Jesus as the Son of God. If the person's questions center on themselves, make another suggestion. If your friend is confident about believing in Christ, suggest reading the whole letter of I John. The keyword in I John is "know." Have them circle it each time it appears in the passage.

NEXT CONCEPT

The next concept deals with our failures in living the Christian life. Though we intend to do what's right, we often blow it, many times and in many ways but God wants us to experience His love and forgiveness. The second Life Concept shows us how. Set up a time to get together again and look at this second concept.

How would you change your lifestyle and behavior if Jesus were always physically present with you? Would you have to quit doing certain things so that you would not offend Him? What attitudes would you try to change? Your sins and struggles will affect how you experience your relationship with Christ, for He is with you always. (Hebrews 13:5).



LIFE CONCEPTS

STEPPING
FROM

FEELINGS OF

UNWORTHINESS

TO

FORGIVENESS

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Though Christians are forgiven, we all still struggle with sin and failure.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you been aware of similar struggles?

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

HOW would you feel if you knew you had failed another person who was very important to you?

HOW would these feelings affect your actions and responses in the relationship?

HOW would it impact you if you didn't know that the other person had forgiven you?

WHAT difference does forgiveness make in a relationship?

Sin has a similar impact in our relationship with Christ.
HOW?

I JOHN 1:5–2:2

5This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. 2My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

STEPPING FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

John is writing to a group of believers who have become unsettled by false teachers. In this section, he is dealing with the wrong attitudes about sin in the teaching of these individuals. All of his responses are based on the truth about who God is and what it is like to live in a relationship with Him.

THE FOUNDATION (1:5)

What does it mean that God is light?

What does light do in everyday life?

How would God's character do a similar thing?

1. FALSE CLAIM (1:6)

RIGHT RESPONSE (1:7)

As we live in a right relationship with God, what is happening to our sin?

2. FALSE CLAIM (1:8)

RIGHT RESPONSE (1:9)

What are we to do about our sin?
What does confess mean?
What does God do as we confess our sins?

3. FALSE CLAIM (1:10)

RIGHT RESPONSE (2:1-2)

What should we try to do about sin?
What is the ultimate solution to our sin?

SUMMARY

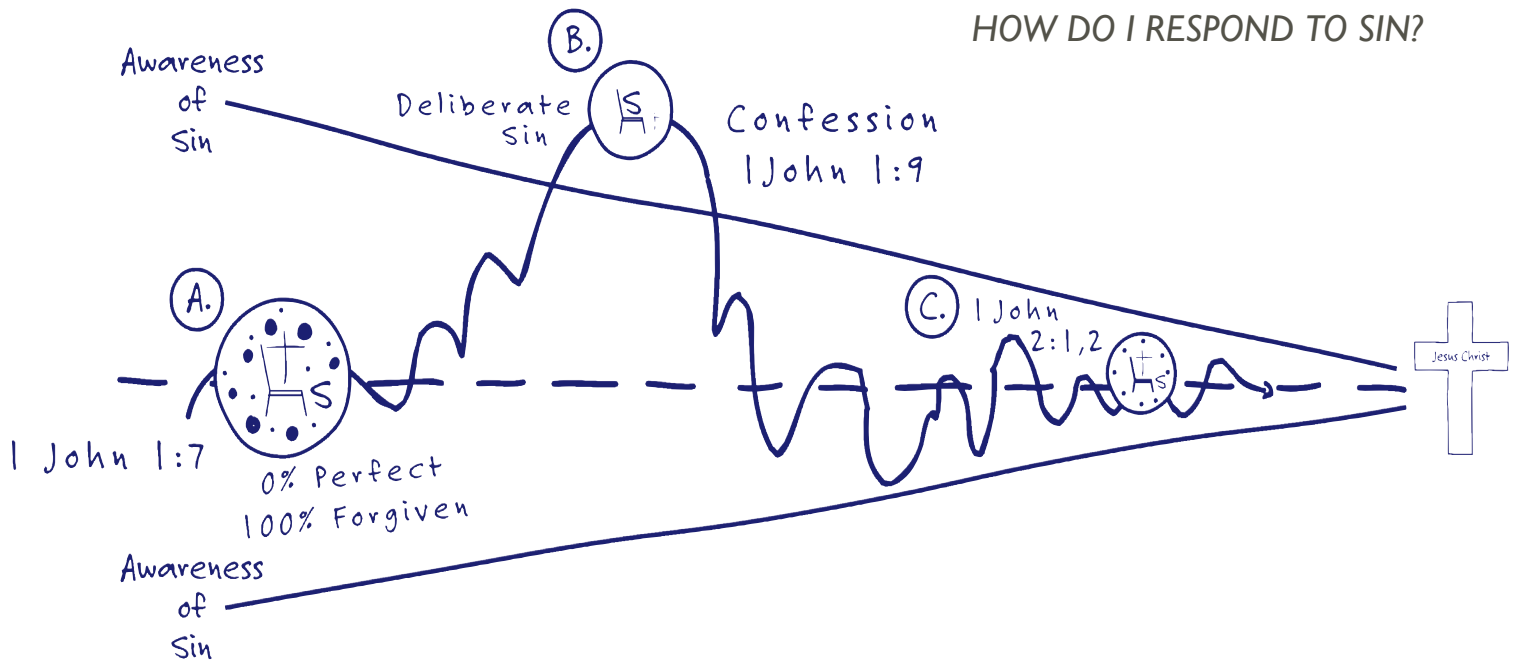
THE THREE WRONG APPROACHES:

My sin doesn't matter.
There is nothing wrong with me.
I've done nothing wrong.

THE THREE RIGHT RESPONSES:

Walk with God in light of who He is.
Openly agree with God about your sin. Seek to avoid sin.

THE ISSUE:
HOW DO I RESPOND TO SIN?



4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

A. When I first trusted Christ as my Savior, how many areas of my life were perfect? How many of my sins were forgiven when I came to Christ?

According to I John 1:7, how does God deal with the sins and shortcomings of which I'm not aware?

B. According to I John 1:9, what should I do when I deliberately disobey God and my life passes outside of the lines?
Confession involves agreeing with God.

1. Agree that we have sinned.
2. Agree that he has forgiven it.
3. Turn away from the sin.

C. The longer I walk with God, what will happen to my awareness of sin? Why?

According to I John 2:1-2, what should my attitude be toward sin? Why?

SUMMARY

To walk in the light is...

- to live in a love relationship with God in light of His character.
- to openly agree with God about my sin.
- to seek to avoid sin as I become more conscious of what is displeasing to God.

5. TAKING STEPS

Three steps will help you live these truths.

1. CLAIM CHRIST'S CLEANSING.

In prayer, thank God for continuing to cleanse you from all sin.

2. CONFESS SPECIFIC SINS.

On your own, make a list on paper of any sin of which you are currently aware. Confess it to God, writing 1 John 1:9 across the page. Tear up the list. This is a visual reminder that Jesus Christ has cleansed you from your sins by His death.

3. CHOOSE TO AVOID SIN.

Be aware that by ourselves, we lack the ability to change or avoid sin. We must rely on God's power.

NEXT CONCEPT

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

Suppose you did everything you could to imitate a world-class musician, a professional athlete, or another famous person. The level of frustration you would experience would be in direct proportion to the difference in ability between you and your hero. Jesus Christ is the only one who ever perfectly lived the Christian life. We are to imitate Him (Ephesians 5:1-2). How much difference is there between His ability to live the Christian life and yours?



LIFE CONCEPTS

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Because of our relationship with Christ, we have a genuine desire to live the Christian life. Yet we often find ourselves failing to do so. In fact, the Christian life often seems impossible to live.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you experienced frustration in your Christian life?

STEPPING FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

WHAT thoughts and emotions occur when you are unable to do something you want to do? Why?

WHEN we are frustrated with our inability to live the Christian life, we should consider four possible reasons:

- We lack the necessary power or ability to live the Christian life.
- We have the power and ability, but we don't know that we have it.
- We know we have the power and ability, but we don't know how to use it.
- We know how to use the power and ability, but we choose not to use it.

In what follows, we will discover the first reason isn't a possibility for a true believer, and we will begin to learn about the power we have been given and how we are to use it.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-3:3

9However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" - 10but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16"For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. 3Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly - mere infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?

Circle the word *Spirit* each time the word is used.

STEPPING FROM

BEING UNABLE TO

EMPOWERED

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

Paul is writing to a group of believers struggling to live consistent Christian lives. They have become divisive and even formed cliques, claiming to follow different leaders. In this section, Paul is discussing the power or ability needed to understand God's truth.

WHO IS THE SPIRIT?

The Spirit works in many ways in the believer's life. What is one of His purposes according to 2:12?

Three spiritual conditions are described in this passage. Note how each spiritual condition influences the Spirit's ability to fulfill this purpose.

1. WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE PERSON IN 2:14?

How much spiritual truth does this person comprehend? Why?

2. WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE PERSON IN 2:15-16?

How much spiritual truth is this person able to comprehend? Why?

3. WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE IN 3:1-3?

How much spiritual truth are they able to comprehend? Why?

How would you summarize what Paul is saying about the Spirit and our spiritual condition?

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

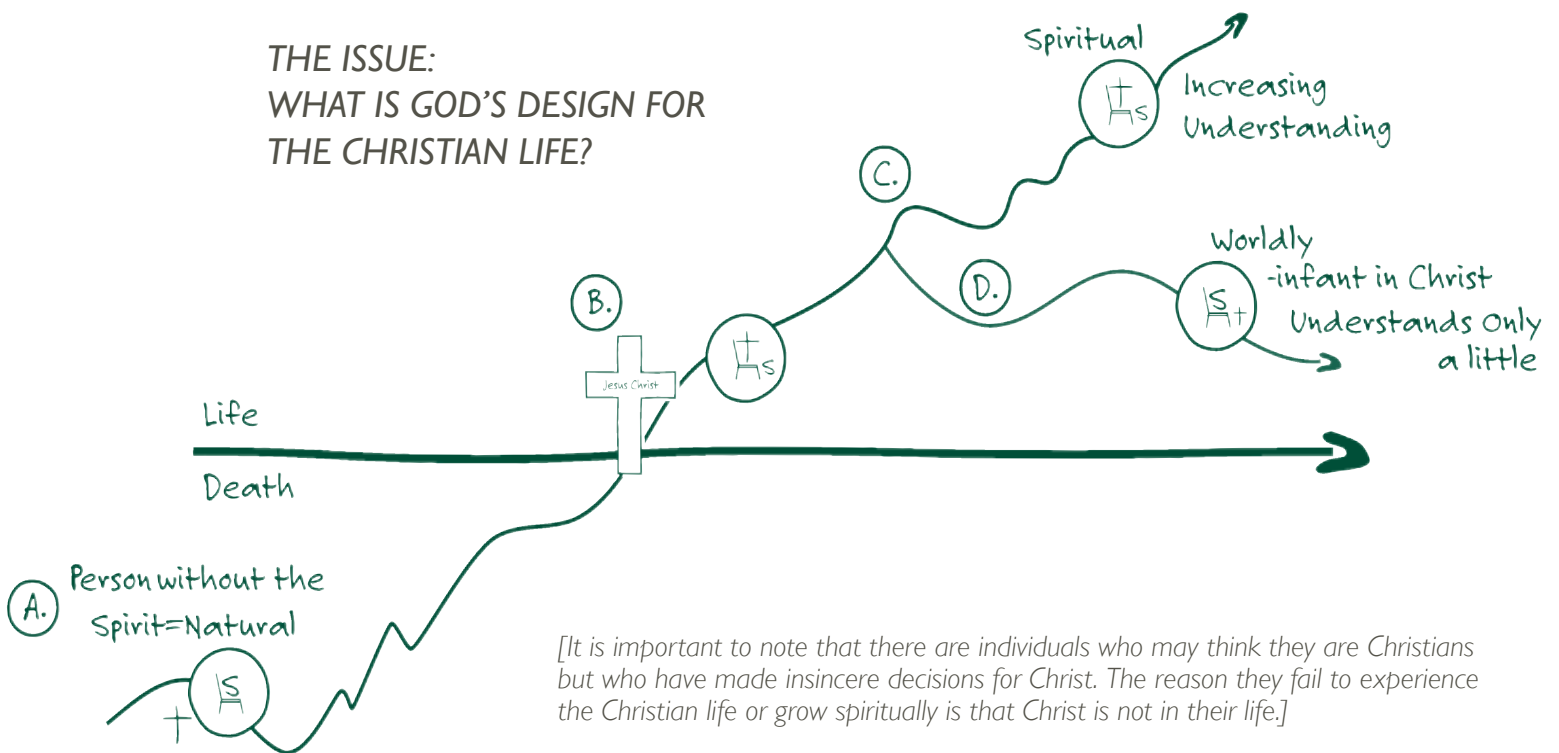
A. The lower circle represents my life before I received Christ. What was my spiritual condition? What was true of my ability to understand the things of God? Why?

B. When I received Christ and He entered my life, I became spiritually alive and was given the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to every true believer. (John 7:37-39)

C. God intends for me to continue growing in my relationship with Him, learning how to live the Christian life and relying on His Spirit to work within me to give me power and understanding. According to Galatians 5:22-23, what would be the result?

D. But there is another possibility. I could fail to grow in my Christian life and never learn how to experience the power God has given me by His Spirit. What would my life be like then?

THE ISSUE:
WHAT IS GOD'S DESIGN FOR
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE?



SUMMARY

When a person begins a relationship with Christ, it's important to grow in the experience of the Spirit in order to understand spiritual truth and have the power to live the Christian life. God's design is for us to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit as an ongoing experience.

5. TAKING STEPS

Read Ephesians 5:18. What are we commanded to avoid? Why?

What are we commanded to do?

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives

His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

WE ARE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT BY FAITH.

Jesus pictured believers as coming to Him to drink from the living water, which is His Spirit (John 7:37-39). Are you thirsty?

D - DESIRE Do you desire to be filled (that is, directed and empowered) with the Spirit?

R - REPENT Are you turning from known sin and confessing it to God?

Y - YIELD Are you surrendering control of your life to Christ?

If so, pray in faith asking God to fill you with His Spirit as He commanded you to be. Thank Him that He will direct and empower your life as you continue to trust Him.

NEXT CONCEPT

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

Anyone can experience an inner struggle over conflicting desires to do what is right and wrong. But the believer will often experience this struggle more intensely. For the believer, it is not simply a matter of obeying the conscience or some rule. It involves our genuine desire to please our new Master which conflicts with the old ways we pleased ourselves. It can also involve a conflict between our desire to experience the life God wants to give us and the desire to live life our own way. The good news is that experiencing these struggles is evidence of a genuine change in our lives as a result of our new relationship with Christ.



LIFE CONCEPTS

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

The Christian life isn't struggle-free. Yet most Christians are unprepared for the inner struggles they will experience.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you experienced an inner struggle over conflicting desires—that is, wanting to please yourself versus wanting to please Christ?

STEPPING
FROM
BEING

UNPREPARED

TO

EQUIPPED

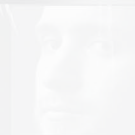
2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

Why do you think most believers are unprepared for these inner struggles?

HOW do people feel when they are faced with a significant challenge for which they are not prepared?

FOR EXAMPLE, HOW would you feel if you were enrolled in an upper level language course for a language in which you had never learned the basics?

In a similar way, we must master the basics of the Christian life to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead.



GALATIANS 5:16-26.

⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ¹⁷For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. ¹⁹The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

STEPPING FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

Paul wrote this letter to a group of believers who were also facing this struggle. They were being told by others that the solution was to try harder at doing what was right by following the Law—the written commandments explaining what is right and wrong. But Paul wanted them to realize they did not have the power in themselves to do what was right or follow the Law. Neither do we.

THE CONFLICT (5:16-18)

Who are the opponents?

The word flesh is used for sinful nature in some translations. When used in this way, it does not refer to the physical aspect of people. Rather, it is that aspect within people which leads them to live independent of God, in opposition to Him and His ways. Compare Romans 8:5-8.

THE CONSEQUENCES (5:19-23)

The source of our desires will determine the nature of what is produced.

What happens when the desires of the sinful nature go unchecked? (5:19-21)

What is produced when we walk by the Spirit? (5:22-23)

Notice that the Spirit always leads us to do what is right, never to do what is wrong. (5:23)

THE CONCLUSION (5:24-25)

According to verse 24, how has our relationship to the sinful nature changed?

Since we now live by the Spirit, what should characterize our relationship with the Spirit? (5:25)

SUMMARY

What the Bible explains, we should believe. What is true about yourself?

What the Bible commands, we should do. What are you commanded to do?

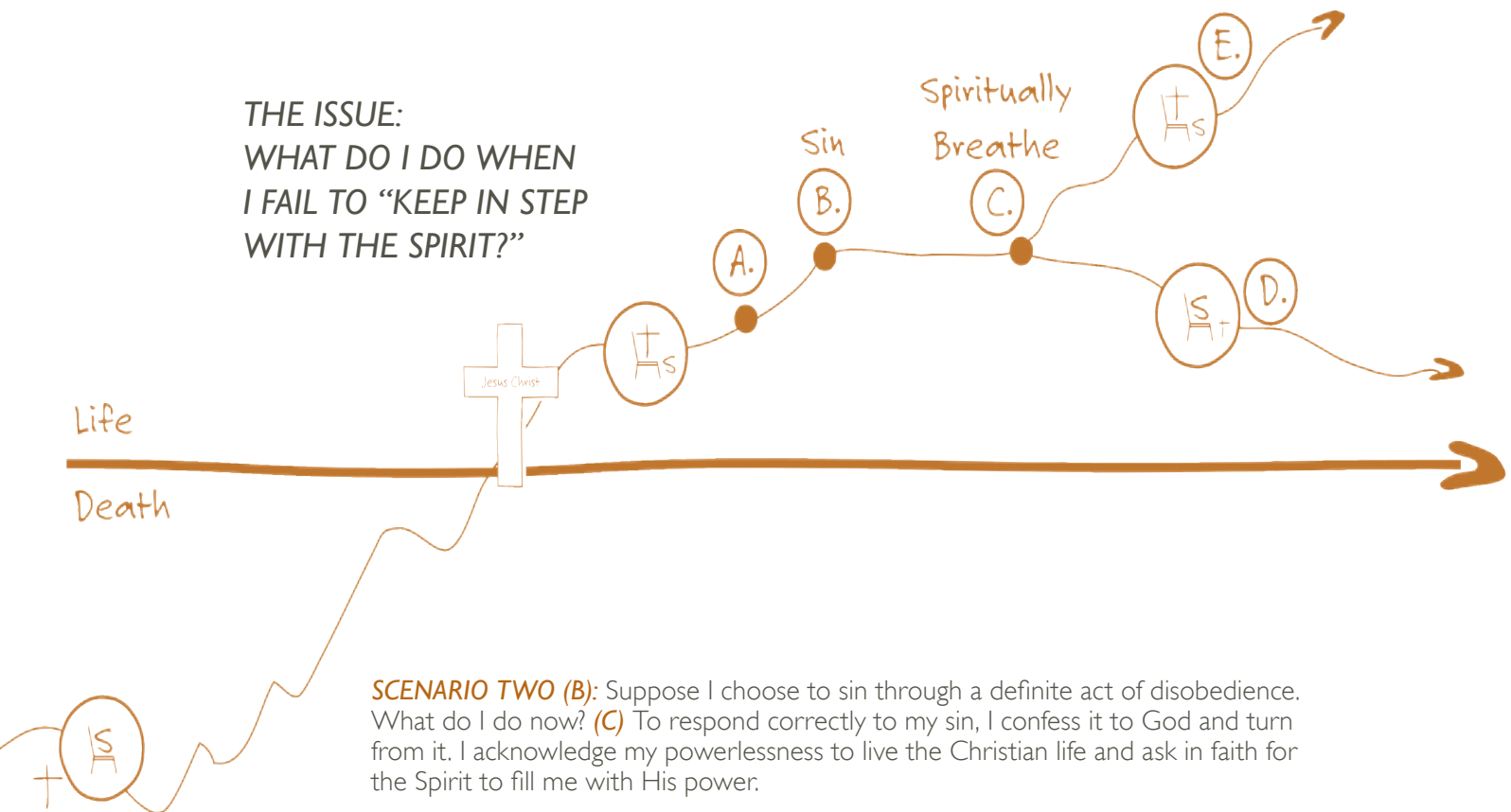
What the Bible promises, we should expect. What are the results in my life?

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

As I grow in my relationship with God, there are two common scenarios.

SCENARIO ONE (A): Though I sincerely desire to please God, sometimes I become aware of an area of my life that is displeasing to Him, either an attitude or an action. I am not intending to disobey. It's just that I am learning more about what God is like and becoming more aware of sin. What do I do? I simply thank God that He has already forgiven my sins, claim His love and forgiveness by faith and trust Him for the power to change in that area. This allows me to continue enjoying fellowship with Him.

THE ISSUE:
WHAT DO I DO WHEN
I FAIL TO "KEEP IN STEP
WITH THE SPIRIT?"



SCENARIO TWO (B): Suppose I choose to sin through a definite act of disobedience. What do I do now? **(C)** To respond correctly to my sin, I confess it to God and turn from it. I acknowledge my powerlessness to live the Christian life and ask in faith for the Spirit to fill me with His power.

A simple way to remember this is by using the word picture of "spiritual breathing." Physically, we exhale impure air and inhale the pure. Spiritually, I exhale by confessing my sin (1 John 1:9) and inhale by claiming the Spirit's power (Ephesians 5:18).

What would happen if I refused to deal with my sin? **(D)** Over time, I would find myself becoming more and more worldly, like the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). But as I deal with my sin and rely upon the Spirit **(E)**, I will become more spiritually mature and see the fruit of the Spirit produced within me (Galatians 5:22-23).

As you look at this sketch, where do you see yourself in this process?

5. TAKING STEPS

Four steps can help us put these truths into action:

RECOGNIZE the conflict.

REMEMBER the source of the conflict—the Spirit's desires versus the desires of the sinful nature.

REJECT the desires of the sinful nature.

RELY on the Spirit's power to produce His fruit in our lives.

Consider an example. Suppose your roommate does something wrong to you:

RECOGNIZE the conflict between your desire to be mad and get even and the Spirit's desire to forgive and restore the relationship.

REMEMBER the source of this inner struggle is between the sin nature and the Spirit.

REJECT the desires of the sinful nature to be mad or get even.

RELY on the Spirit's power to produce genuine love and forgiveness and provide wisdom in how to respond.

Is there an area where you are currently struggling? How would you apply these steps?

NEXT CONCEPT

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

There are two basic reasons why people aren't mature. One is time and the other is health. The world is full of immature people. Some are children who are healthy but have not had the time to grow. They, of course, are normal. Others have had adequate time but have failed to mature either physically, emotionally or socially. They are a source of concern. Their immaturity isn't normal and can indicate either a health problem or an unhealthy growth environment. Spiritual growth has many similarities to growth in the other dimensions of life.



LIFE CONCEPT

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

The Christian life is a life of growth in our relationship with Christ. Spiritual maturity is attained over time, not in an instant.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

How much of a spiritual foundation have you received for your Christian life—either from your family or your religious background?

What one or two things from your background do you think will be most helpful in your Christian life?

STEPPING

FROM BEING

UNDEVELOPED

TO

MATURITY

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

WHY do you think many believers fail to grow spiritually at a normal, healthy rate?

WHAT might be some evidence of spiritual immaturity?

HOW would you feel if, after many years, you looked back and realized you had failed to grow in the most important area of life, your relationship with God?

We need a healthy environment for spiritual growth to ensure that we mature in our relationship with God.

ACTS 2:42-47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes

and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.



STEPPING FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

The Book of Acts is an historical account of the first believers' experiences after the resurrection of Jesus. In the second chapter, Peter (one of the early leaders) addresses a large crowd and many become new believers. This passage is about that group of new believers and what characterized their spiritual growth.

There are four characteristics of growing Christians found in this passage:

1. DEVOTED TO THE WORD (2:42)

What does it mean to be devoted to something?

Who were the apostles?

What did they teach?
(See Matthew 28:18-20)

How could we devote ourselves to this same teaching today?

2. DEVOTED TO FELLOWSHIP (2:42)

What is fellowship?

What motivated the believers to gather together so often? (2:46)

How would close relationships like these help us in the Christian life?

How can we experience this kind of fellowship today?

3. DEVOTED TO PRAYER (2:42)

What is prayer?

What motivated the believers to devote themselves to prayer?

How can we devote ourselves to prayer today?

4. HAVING AN IMPACT (2:47)

Why did other people join them?

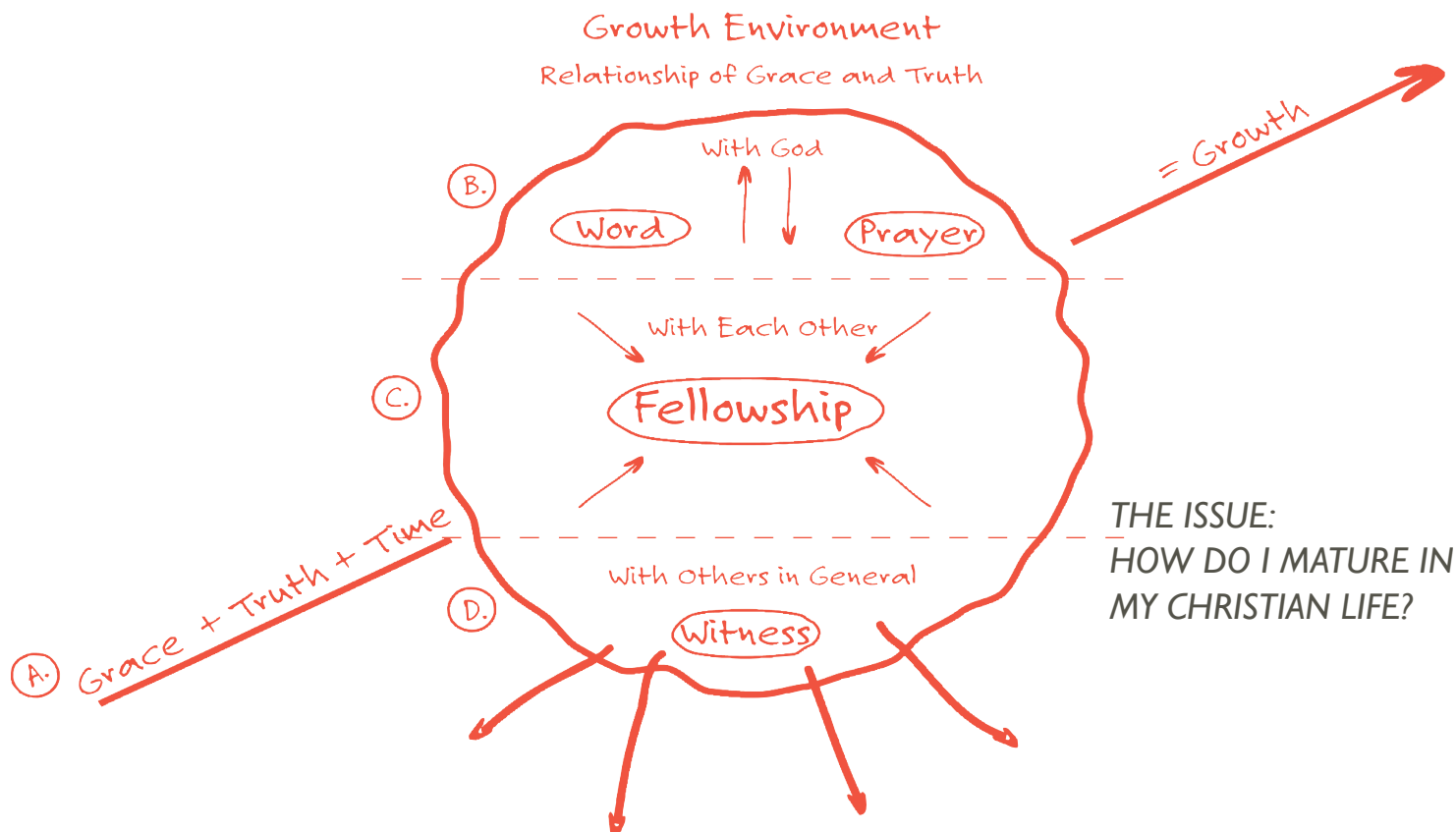
Imagine how exciting it would be if God used your life to influence others to become true believers in Christ.

4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

Consider a seed that is planted in poor soil with little water or nutrients and little sun. How well would it grow?

What would happen if the same seed was placed in rich soil with plenty of nutrients, water and sun?

The difference in growth would be caused by the environment. The same is true for us spiritually.



A. The two primary ingredients that God uses to cause growth in our lives are grace and truth. Truth gives us the understanding we need to live the Christian life. Grace provides the acceptance and encouragement we need to keep on going. But growth doesn't happen all at once. It occurs as process over time. Thus, the formula for an ideal growth environment is:

$$\text{Grace} + \text{Truth} + \text{Time} = \text{Growth}$$

Like the new believers in Acts, we experience "Grace + Truth + Time" in the context of relationships.

- B. The upward relationship is with God and is experienced through His Word and prayer.
- C. The inward relationships are with each other (believers) and are experienced in fellowship.
- D. The outward relationships are with those who do not believe in Christ. Our influence with them is through our witness for Christ.

5. TAKING STEPS

Develop an action plan for each of the relational characteristics of the growth environment.

UPWARD – Word and Prayer

Example: Take about 10 minutes each morning to continue reading the Gospel of John and talk to God about your day.

Your plan:

INWARD – Fellowship

Example: Go to church or to a Christian gathering.

Your plan:

OUTWARD – Witness

Example: Identify one or two people you care about and begin praying for them. Look for appropriate opportunities to tell them about the difference Christ is making in your life.

Your plan:

LIFE CONCEPTS

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY

In John 10:10 Jesus says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Jesus is speaking about every area of our life, including our sexuality. Unfortunately, many of us do not experience “life to the full” in our sexuality. The world around us says that sexual experiences are for our enjoyment any time and any way we want. We end up out of sync with God’s plan and full of guilt and shame. Thankfully, God offers something better.

LIFE CONCEPTS

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

We grow up learning about sexuality from many sources: parents, friends, school, and the media. What were the prominent messages you heard or observed about sexuality while you were growing up?

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

STEPPING
FROM

Sexual Brokenness
TO

WHOLENESS

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

HOW have the messages you heard about sexuality growing up shaped your life positively and negatively?

Guilt and shame can be two of the emotions that arise when people talk about their sexual perspectives and experiences. Why do you think this is?

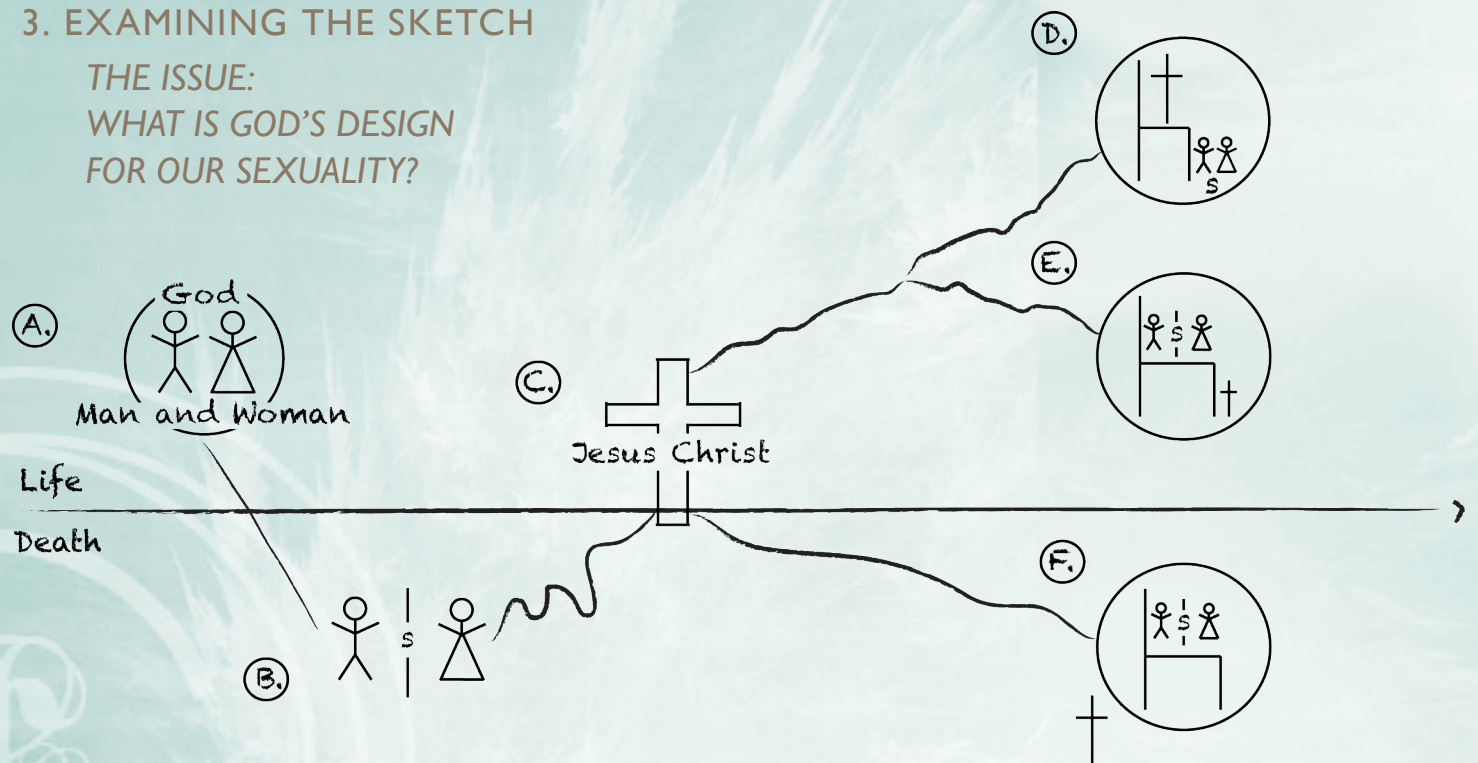
If someone asked you to describe God's view of sexuality, what would you say?

WHY do you think God would care about our sexuality?

3. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

THE ISSUE:

WHAT IS GOD'S DESIGN FOR OUR SEXUALITY?



A. In the beginning, we were in perfect relationship with God and one another. Our sexuality was and is a good gift from God given in Genesis 2:18-25. We can honor God in our sexuality in both singleness and marriage. God created sexual intimacy to be expressed in a life-long covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. What does Genesis teach us about God's original design and plan for our sexuality?

B. When Adam and Eve sinned, their perfect relationship with God, and with each other, was broken. Selfishness, the choice to do what we want instead of what God wants, separates mankind from both God and other people. With this separation, comes an understanding and expression of sexuality and relationship that is based on our own sinful desires rather than God's good plan, Galatians 5:19-21. All of us express and experience sexuality that is outside God's intent. This happens as we reject God's design for our sexuality and choose to sin through areas such as lust, masturbation, pornography, sexual intimacy, etc. outside of marriage. This is what we call sexual brokenness.

C. When we trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus for forgiveness of our sins we enter into eternal life. Our broken relationship with God is repaired and we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit to live in us. The Holy Spirit brings restoration to our relationships with one another and to our sexuality. He gives us the wisdom and self-control needed to experience sexual wholeness. As we understand and live out our sexuality in a holy way we experience some of that, "life to the full"

D. Those who have eternal life through Jesus have a repaired relationship with God. They have a new identity as sons and daughters of God that will remain secure for all of eternity. Their past and future sexual sin does not and will not separate them from God again. They have entered into a surrendered relationship with God and are able to live in light of God's design and authority regarding their sexuality. This surrender enables them to understand and express God's good gift of sexuality in a holy way in singleness or in marriage. The Holy Spirit gives them the desire and strength to resist temptation and will draw them back to God when they do sin. There is great hope that they will experience, "life to the full", in sexual wholeness.

E. Those who have eternal life through Jesus, but are not willing to surrender to God's design and authority in their sexuality, are not experiencing the fullness of their repaired relationship with God. This will lead to a distorted view of God's good gift of sexuality, similar to someone who does not follow Christ.

F. Those who reject eternal life through Jesus continue to experience the brokenness of their relationship with God and have a distorted view of their sexuality.

STEPPING FROM SEXUALITY

4. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

I THESSALONIANS 4:3-8

3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote this letter to new Christians to encourage them and help them understand how to live the Christian life, as well as to bring clarity to God's view on sexuality.

GOD'S HEART

As we saw from the sketch, God's intention has always been that we would experience a perfect relationship with him and others. Part of this perfect relationship came as God gave us the good gift of our sexuality. Complete restoration of these relationships and our sexuality will only come as Christ returns, but even now we are able to grow in our pursuit of sexual holiness. Through his word, God gives us helpful instructions on how to understand and experience our sexuality in a way that pleases him.

Why do you think God gave us instructions regarding our sexuality?

GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

What does it mean to be sanctified (v 3)?
What is sexual immorality?

What does it mean to control our body in a holy and honorable way? (v 4)

How would you define passionate lust? (v 5)
What is a pagan?

Why is lust (v 5) tied to taking advantage of a brother or sister? (v 6)

What did God call us to? (v 7)

Who are we rejecting when we don't follow these instructions? (v 8)
How does the Holy Spirit help in this area?

Why do you think we still struggle with sexual sin even though we have new life in Jesus?

Why would someone want to follow these instructions?

FROM SEXUAL BROKENNESS TO WHOLENESS


SUMMARY

God made our sexuality, called it good, and teaches us how to experience it in the best way possible. Being sanctified is a lifelong process. Over time, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we learn how to control our bodies in a way that is holy and honorable. When we are living in light of God's truth we experience "life to the full".

5. TAKING STEPS

Knowing God does not take away our sexual temptation, but it does give us hope that there is something better to fulfill our desires. Throughout the Bible there are examples of people who struggle as we do to surrender to God's good design in many areas of our life, including our sexuality. One such man was David.

David knew God. In fact, God once described David as, "a man after my heart." Even in the midst of this close relationship with God, David battled sexual sin. He lusted, viewed pornography, and pursued adultery. Because David knew God, he had a heart that was open to God's intervention in his sexual brokenness. Psalm 51:1-17 lets us see David's conversation with God about his sin. Read the passage and then consider David's response to his sin.



EXAMINE - David took the time to examine his own heart and actions in light of what God had already taught him about his sexuality. He had a humble heart and was willing to take responsibility for and verbalize his wrong beliefs and actions. (v 1-4)

CONFESS - David confessed his sin. He agreed with God that he had sinned and trusted that God had forgiven him. David talks with God, not as one who is afraid, but as one who knows he is in a secure relationship. (v 5-12)

TURN - David turned from his sin and obeyed God. He even determined to teach others what he had learned so they too could live inside God's good plan. He praised God that he could be restored and know how to live "life to the full" (v 13-17)

Why was David willing to examine, confess, and turn from sin? He saw who God really was. The one who made him, loved him, forgave him, pursued him, and provided great truth to follow. These are the same things that free us up to examine, confess, and turn.

David shows us there is hope for experiencing sexual wholeness. By God's power we can turn from our sin. This turning happens over time as we grow in our relationship with God. For some of us, the brokenness of our sexuality has led to sexual addiction in our life. If you think that might be your situation please know that you are not alone and there is hope.

Take a moment to silently talk to God about your sexuality. Ask him to help you examine, confess and turn from sin. Praise God that in his goodness he forgives and directs your life. If you are willing, it can be helpful to share what God brings to mind with a trusted friend who can pray for you and point you to God's truth. If it would be helpful, you could share more with me.

Continue to take time to talk to God about your sexuality this week. As you do so, the following passages would be great places to learn more about God's heart for you. Ephesians 5:1-14, Hebrews 4:12-16, and 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.