

Spiritual Maturity

What is it?

The best and simplest description is Christ-centeredness, Christ-likeness

*“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be **conformed to the likeness of his Son**, that he might be firstborn among many brothers.”* Romans 8:29 (NIV)

⇒ It’s not what you know but rather what you do with what you know

⇒ It’s not your learning but your lifestyle that counts

⇒ It is demonstrated more by behavior than by beliefs.

*“As the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without deeds is dead.**”*
James 2:26 (NIV)

*“By their **fruit** you will recognize them.”* Matthew 7:16 (NIV)

How do we measure it?

While it is impossible to measure spiritual maturity precisely, we can **estimate it** on a continuous scale of 0-10 where **10 = Christ**.

0 **Spiritual Maturity** **10**
Christ

⇒ Where do you think you are on this scale? You’ll be better equipped to estimate your current position after completing this course.

⇒ None of us has yet attained the fullness of Christ.

⇒ *“In the unity of common faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, we arrive at real maturity. The measure of development which is meant by **‘the fullness of Christ’**.”* Eph. 4:13 (Ph)

⇒ However, no matter where our starting point, we can all grow

“... we are not meant to remain as children... but to **grow up** in every way into Christ...” Eph. 4:14-15 (Ph)

Characteristics of Spiritual Maturity

For each of the characteristics listed below, place an X along the scale of 0-10 to indicate your current level of maturity:

<u>Immature</u>	0	10	<u>Mature</u>
Ego-centered	_____	_____	Christ-centered
Worldly	_____	_____	Holy
Immoral	_____	_____	Moral
Judgmental	_____	_____	Forgiving
Contentious	_____	_____	Loving
Undependable	_____	_____	Reliable
Foolish	_____	_____	Wise
Unfair	_____	_____	Just
Greedy	_____	_____	Generous
Fearful	_____	_____	Peaceful
Prideful	_____	_____	Humble
Discontent	_____	_____	Joyful
Impatient	_____	_____	Patient
Irrational	_____	_____	Objective
Rigid	_____	_____	Flexible
Pessimistic	_____	_____	Optimistic
Negative	_____	_____	Positive
Impulsive	_____	_____	Disciplined
Apathetic	_____	_____	Caring
Indulgent	_____	_____	Prudent

- ⇒ To estimate your overall Spiritual Maturity Quotient, add up the ratings for each characteristic above and divide by twenty. How does this rating compare with the estimate you made on page 1?
- ⇒ Revisit this chart one year from now and rate yourself again to measure your progress and to see where you still need to improve.

Spiritual Maturity Test

Below is a more comprehensive test to better help you determine your level of Spiritual Maturity. Check “Yes” or “No” for each of the following questions (if your answer lies somewhere in between, choose the one that most accurately reflects your actual behavior):

YES NO

1. ___ ___ I have been saved and have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. ___ ___ I have been baptized in water as a public expression of my identification with Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.
3. ___ ___ I have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and consistently strive to be led and filled with the Holy Spirit.
4. ___ ___ I participate regularly in Holy Communion.
5. ___ ___ I am a member of a local church, thus committing myself to a tangible relationship with the Body of Christ.
6. ___ ___ I take personal responsibility for my actions, sins and mistakes, confessing my failures to God.
7. ___ ___ I do not blame other people for my actions, sins and mistakes, and never attempt to get out of admitting my own failures.
8. ___ ___ I make restitution when I have violated someone, when doing so would not be destructive.
9. ___ ___ I don’t want credit for the good things I do for others.
10. ___ ___ I find time to help others who have real needs and hurts.
11. ___ ___ I am not too busy to help others.

12. ___ ___ I have the ability to openly face my doubts and uncertainties about God and His will for my life.
13. ___ ___ I face tragedy and failure with realistic feelings of anger or grief, and then try to learn through the circumstances.
14. ___ ___ I don't wallow too much in self-pity and accusation when tragedy and grief enter into my life.
15. ___ ___ I am able to face the sins and faults of others around me without judging or condemning them, even if their behavior is something I condemn in myself.
16. ___ ___ I am humble but I don't often think of myself as "being humble".
17. ___ ___ I love God consistently without feeling religious.
18. ___ ___ I try to do good in secret without hoping it will be discovered by accident.
19. ___ ___ I can listen to the problems of others with concern and to their good fortune without jealousy or envy.
20. ___ ___ I accept praise without vanity, and criticism without defensiveness.
21. ___ ___ I am able to enjoy prosperity without pride or guilt, and I am able to face poverty without complaint.
22. ___ ___ I live as if each day were my last while planning for the future.
23. ___ ___ I possess integrity without being legalistic.
24. ___ ___ I give and receive love without fear or guilt.
25. ___ ___ I can tolerate reasonable stress without complaint.
26. ___ ___ I enjoy both solitude and the company of others.
27. ___ ___ I am gentle and patient with the young, compassionate with the elderly, and tolerant of the weak and foolish because I will some day have been all of these.
28. ___ ___ I don't take myself or others too seriously.
29. ___ ___ I possess self-control without being rigid or intolerant.
30. ___ ___ I handle my anger constructively.
31. ___ ___ I can forgive myself and others readily.

32. ___ ___ I recognize God as the source of all good and I express my gratitude daily.
33. ___ ___ I am patient with myself and others.
34. ___ ___ I possess a capacity for assertiveness when appropriate.
35. ___ ___ I compete with my previous best rather than with others, setting goals high enough to be challenging but low enough to be attainable.
36. ___ ___ I have tact without weakness and strength with gentleness.
37. ___ ___ I love God for Himself alone and not out of a sense of obligation.
38. ___ ___ I face death without regret or fear knowing that eternal life awaits me in a more glorious dimension of time and space.
39. ___ ___ My life is characterized by the fruit of the spirit.
40. ___ ___ I manifest joy (i.e. a sense of imperturbable gladness).
41. ___ ___ I manifest peace (i.e. calmness under pressure).
42. ___ ___ I manifest long-suffering (i.e. experiencing difficult without quitting).
43. ___ ___ I manifest gentleness (i.e. relating to others with kindness).
44. ___ ___ I manifest goodness (i.e. extending a benevolent hand to others).
45. ___ ___ I manifest faith (i.e. a commitment to belief regardless of obstacles).
46. ___ ___ I manifest meekness (i.e. gentleness, power with a purpose).
47. ___ ___ I manifest temperance (i.e. a commitment to self-control).
48. ___ ___ I have a teachable spirit, viewing every one I meet as being superior in one way or another.
49. ___ ___ I spend purposeful time alone each day reading God's Word.
50. ___ ___ I commit a part of each day to prayer.
51. ___ ___ I am a regular and consistent tither, giving to God 10% of my income.
52. ___ ___ I give money beyond my tithe offerings as I am able to the expansion of the Kingdom of God and the assistance of others in need.
53. ___ ___ I use my spiritual gifts by participating regularly in at least one ministry which serves to bless other people.
54. ___ ___ I enjoy and seek out opportunities to fellowship with other believers.

55. ___ ___ I am committed to a life of Christ-likeness.
56. ___ ___ I strive to live my life in such a way that others will see Christ in me.
57. ___ ___ I pray often for the salvation of specific people.
58. ___ ___ I pray often for and I actively support the leaders of my church.
59. ___ ___ I pray regularly for the leaders of local, national and international governments.
60. ___ ___ I openly share my faith and testimony with others as appropriate.
61. ___ ___ I have the skill to explain the plan of salvation to others, and to lead another person in a salvation prayer.
62. ___ ___ I have led someone else to a personal relationship with Christ.
63. ___ ___ I am presently discipling at least one other person on a regular basis.

Scoring

Count how many “Yes” answers you checked. Then measure yourself against the scale below:

- 54-63 Paul Level (and it took him nearly 20 years to get there!)
- 44-53 Peter Level (somewhat stiff-necked and prejudiced)
- 34-43 Mark Level (young, not tough enough in Acts; matured later)
- 24-33 Eutychus Level (fell asleep and out the window while Paul preached)
- 14-23 Thief-on-the-Cross Level (he was saved, but not mature)
- <22 You better shape up before it’s too late!!

Facts About Spiritual Maturity

Spiritual Growth is an ongoing process

⇒ it is not instantaneous, there are no shortcuts

Spiritual Maturity is not automatic

⇒ being saved does not make someone spiritually mature

Spiritual Maturity is not just Bible Study

⇒ just as faith without works is dead, so too is study without experience

Spiritual Maturity is not mystical

⇒ it is practical and attainable by anyone

Spiritual Maturity is not accidental

⇒ it doesn't just happen, it must be accomplished

Spiritual Maturity is not simply a function of time

⇒ rather it is a function of effort

Spiritual Maturity requires discipline

⇒ like physical exercise, you must do your spiritual exercises every day

Spiritual Maturity requires perseverance

⇒ it is a lifetime commitment, not just a passing fad

Spiritual Maturity requires relationship

⇒ the quality of your relationship with Christ is seen in the quality of your relationships with others

*“Excercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but **godliness is profitable for all things** having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” 1Tim. 4:7-8 (NKJ)*

*“Count it all **joy** when you fall into **various trials**, knowing that the **testing of your faith produces patience**. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James 1:2-4 (NKJ)*

Understanding Discipleship

1. Mature believers are called disciples.
2. Discipleship requires discipline.
3. The more disciplined I become, the more God can use me.
4. The mark of a disciple is cross-bearing.
5. What is involved in cross-bearing? whatever it takes
to give God first place in my life!
6. How often do I bear my cross? daily (i.e. all the time).

“Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:27 (NKJ)

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11 (NIV)

Mature Beliefs

1. You don't have to be perfect to be valuable.
2. You don't have to please others, just please God.
3. The past doesn't determine the future.
4. You can always make a fresh start from wherever you are now.
5. You alone are responsible for your own behavior.
6. There is always more than one way to solve a problem, but there is only one destination. Don't get caught up in trivial arguments (1Tim. 6:3-5)

“Be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2Peter 3:18

The Path to Spiritual Maturity

1. The characteristics of Spiritual Maturity are goals
⇒ Goals are destinations (i.e. where we seek to go, what we seek to be)
2. Reaching a goal (destination) requires that we undertake a journey
⇒ Attaining spiritual maturity requires a journey of faith
3. Staying on the right path requires a road map and discipline
⇒ God's Word is "*a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path*" Psalms 119:105 (KJV)
4. Discipline requires developing good habits
⇒ We are all creatures of habit to a much greater extent than we believe

The Nature of Habits

What is a habit?

- A continual, often unconscious inclination to do a certain activity that is acquired through frequent repetition

Why do we rely on habits?

- Habits make life easier because we don't have to rethink every situation all the time

Habits largely determine who and what we are.

- Habits represent an established disposition of character

Sow a thought, reap an act.

Sow an act, reap a habit.

Sow a habit, reap a character.

Sow a character, reap a destiny.

Developing Good Habits

How do we develop good habits?

- The trick is to replace bad habits with good habits

⇒ *“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” Hebrews 6:6 (NIV)*

- It takes 3-4 weeks to become familiar with a new routine, and another 3-4 weeks before it becomes an ingrained habit.

⇒ *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.... since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” Colossians 3:5,9 (NIV)*

- The two things that are most revealing of my actual priorities are my calendar and my checkbook

⇒ We may believe that we are placing God first in our lives, but in actuality it is our behavior that best demonstrates where our allegiance lies

The Key to Success is the Holy Spirit

Perhaps the most important point of this entire course is that we **cannot** develop good habits and become spiritually mature on our own

- The Holy Spirit is our Counselor and Conscience, without Whom we are doomed to failure.

⇒ *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you..... And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who lives in you. Romans 8:9,11 (NIV)*

The Holy Spirit provides:

- 1. Reminders:** *“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”* John 14:26 (NIV)
- 2. Guidance:** *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.”* John 16:13 (NIV)
- 3. Direction:** *“While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’..... The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.”* Acts 13:2-3 (NIV)
- 4. Intercession:** *“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.”* Romans 8:24 (NIV)
- 5. Sustenance:** *“Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.”* John 7:37-39 (NIV)
- 6. Leadership:** *“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of God.”* Acts 20:28 (NIV)
- 7. Purity:** *“And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.”* Ezekiel 36:27 (KJV)
- 8. Counsel:** *“And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.”* John 14:16 (NIV)
- 9. Self-Control:** *“You are controlled by your new nature if you have the Spirit of God living in you.”* Romans 8:9 (LB)

The Five Habits of Discipleship

1. Studying God's Word

“If you abide in My word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32 (NKJ)

2. Spending Time with God

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.” Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJ)

3. Giving of Yourself for Others

“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:33 (NIV)

4. Developing Christ-like Relationships

“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34 (NIV)

5. Maintaining Moral Purity

“We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” 1John 3:2-3 (NKJ)

Habit 1: Studying God's Word

Why Study God's Word?

1. It is our textbook for righteous living.

*"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for **instruction in righteousness.**" 2Timothy 3:16 (NKJ)*

2. It guides us into the Truth.

*"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is **truth.**" John 17:4 (NKJ)*

3. It is the road map that keeps us on the right path.

*"It **straightens us out** and helps us do what is **right.**" 2Timothy 3:17a (LB)*

4. It prepares us to meet the daily challenges of physical life.

*"It is God's way of making us **well prepared** at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone." 2Timothy 3:17b (LB)*

5. It keeps us in God's light.

*"The unfolding of Your words gives **light**; it gives understanding to the simple." Psalm 119:130*

6. It equips us to resist the powers of darkness.

*"Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground..... Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist..... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the **Word of God.** Ephesians 6:13,14,17 (NIV)*

Assimilating God's Word

We must do more than just hear God's Word -- it must become part of our very fabric of being.

⇒ *“Let the word of Christ **dwell** in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.”* Colossians 3:16

⇒ *“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.* Joshua 1:8

Six Ways of Assimilating God's Word

Hear_____

Read_____

Study_____

Memorize_____

Meditate_____

Apply_____

1. How to Hear God's Word

"Faith comes by hearing... the Word of God." Romans 10:17

Ways to Hear God's Word:

- a) Church services
- b) Bible Studies
- c) Audio tapes
- d) TV/Radio

⇒ **Problem:** We forget 95% of what we hear after 72 hours!

How to Improve your Hearing Retention

- a) Be ready and eager to hear God's Word.

⇒ *"Everyone should be **quick to listen**, slow to speak....* James 1:19

- b) Consciously shed attitudes that get in the way of hearing, including:

- A closed mind resulting from fear, pride, bitterness, etc.
- A preoccupied mind resulting from worry about material things
- An apathetic mind resulting from spiritual indifference

⇒ See the parable of the sower in Luke 8:4-15

- c) Take notes on what you hear.

- Keep a Spiritual Notebook for ongoing reference

⇒ *"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.* Hebrews 2:1 (IV)

2. How to Read God's Word

"Happy is the one who reads this book... and obeys what is written in it." Revelation 1:3 (GN)

Ways to Read God's Word

a) Read it daily.

⇒ *"And it [God's Word] shall be with him, and he shall read it **all the days** of his life."* Deuteronomy 17:19

b) Read all of it.

- You can read the entire Bible in one year if you spend approximately 15 minutes a day (just reading, not studying)

c) Read it systematically.

- Don't "dip & skip"
- Preferably one book/topic/character/etc. at a time

d) Read different translations.

- Leads to improved understanding

e) Underline or highlight key passages.

- This helps to reinforce the passages in your mind
- It also make these passages easier to find for later reference

f) Choose a reading plan and stick to it!

- Without a plan, your reading will be haphazard and unproductive
- Several sample reading plans are included on the following pages

3-Year Bible Reading Plan for New Christians

First Year Read:

1 John seven times
John twice
Mark twice
Galatians through Philemon
Luke
Acts
Romans
The entire New Testament twice

Second Year Read:

A Proverb a day for four months
Two other “wisdom chapters” daily (Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon)
Read repeatedly for one month the following:

1 John	1 Thessalonians
Ephesians	James
Philippians	Romans 5-8
Colossians	John 14-17

Third Year Read:

One New Testament chapter daily
Two Old Testament chapters daily
Five Old Testament chapters each Sunday

Reading Through the New Testament in Thirty Days

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Matthew 1-9 | 11. John 1-7 | 21. 1Cor. 10-16 |
| 2. Matthew 10-15 | 12. John 8-13 | 22. 2Cor. 1-13 |
| 3. Matthew 16-22 | 13. John 14:21 | 23. Gal. - Eph. |
| 4. Matthew 23-28 | 14. Acts 1-9 | 24. Philipp. - 2Thes. |
| 5. Mark 1-8 | 15. Acts 8-14 | 25. 1Tim. - Philemon |
| 6. Mark 9-16 | 16. Acts 15-21 | 26. Hebrews |
| 7. Luke 1-6 | 17. Acts 22-28 | 27. James - 2Peter |
| 8. Luke 7-11 | 18. Romans 1-8 | 28. 1John - 3John |
| 9. Luke 12-18 | 19. Romans 9-16 | 29. Revelation 1-11 |
| 10. Luke 19-24 | 20. 1Cor. 1-9 | 30. Revelation 12-22 |

3. How to Study God's Word

“...they accepted the message eagerly and *studied the scriptures every day*” Acts 17:11 (Ph)

Studying the Bible differs from reading it in the following ways:

- a) Contemplation -- reflect and ponder what you read
- b) Questions -- who, what, when, where, why, how
 - The secret to effective Bible study is asking the right questions
 - If you can't figure out the answer, ask your pastor
- c) References -- examine cross-references & text notes for deeper insights
- d) Other translations -- useful to clear up misunderstandings
- e) Bible Study tools -- use to probe unanswered questions
 - Halley's Bible Handbook & Eerdman's Bible Handbook
 - NIV (or similar) Study Bible
 - Thompson Chain Reference Bible
 - Zondervan's Bible Dictionary and Pictorial Bible Atlas
 - Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
- f) Discussion -- talking about it with others not only reinforces the material but also leads to broader understanding of concepts
- g) Pen & pencil -- take notes, organize important points, write out in your own words
- h) Quality over quantity -- seek understanding, not speed
 - ⇒ “*Be a good workman... know what His Word says and means.*”
2Timothy 2:15 (Ph)

4. How to Memorize God's Word

"Keep my words, and treasure my commands within you.... write them on the tablet of your heart." Proverbs 7:1,3 (NKJ)

Why memorize Scripture?

1. To be victorious over sin:

⇒ *Your Word I have **hidden in my heart**, that I might not sin against You."*
Psalm 119:11 (NKJ)

2. As a sword against Satan:

⇒ *"Therefore, take up the whole armor of God..... the **sword** of the Spirit, which is the **Word of God**."* Ephesians 6:13,17 (NKJ)

⇒ *"Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For **it is written**, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve."' Then the devil left Him."* Matthew 4:10-11 (NKJ)

3. To win others to Christ:

⇒ *"The law of the Lord is **perfect**, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is **sure**, making wise the simple."* Psalm 18:7 (NKJ)

⇒ *"Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always **be ready** to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you."*
1Peter 3:15 (NKJ)

4. To give us wisdom:

⇒ *"Let the Word of Christ **dwell in you richly in all wisdom**."* Col. 3:16

5. It is commanded by God:

⇒ *"And these words which **I command you today** shall be in your heart."*
Deuteronomy 6:6 (NKJ)

Can't memorize?

- We remember what's important to us and that which we use frequently

When?

- Work on one verse every day
- Try to learn one verse every week

How?

- frequent repetition

Practical Tips:

1. Start off with verses that are familiar & meaningful to you
2. Use a Bible translation that enhances your comprehension
3. Organize the verses into topics to make them even more meaningful to you (e.g. Faith, Prayer, Holy Spirit, Victory Over Satan, Peace, Love, etc.)
4. Write the verses on flash cards for review
5. Record the verses on audio tape and listen to them in the car
6. Pray the verse back to God, as the Scriptures advise us to do
7. Use the verses against Satan & temptation
8. Apply the verses to daily events to reinforce their significance in your life
9. Use the verses to reinforce your faith in moments of weakness

And most importantly:

- Review, review, review.....

⇒ *“Take the time and trouble to keep yourselves spiritually fit.”*
1Timothy 4:7 (LB)

Scripture Memory Course

The following verses are suggested in order to establish a balance across the foundations of the Christian life and to yield spiritual growth. But don't feel tied down to this list. Follow your heart and the Holy Spirit.

Living a Christian Life

Christ-centeredness:	2 Cor. 5:17 & Gal. 2:20
Obedience to Christ:	Rom. 12:1 & John 14:21
The Word:	2Tim. 3:16 & John 1:8
Prayer:	John 15:7 & Philip. 4:6-7
Fellowship:	Matt. 18:20 & Heb. 10:24
Witnessing:	Matt. 4:19 & Rom. 1:16

Proclaiming Christ

All have sinned:	Rom. 3:23 & Isaiah 53:6
Sin's penalty:	Rom. 6:23 & Heb. 9:27
Christ paid the penalty:	Rom. 5:8 & 1Pet. 3:18
Salvation not by works:	Eph. 2:8-9 & Titus 3:5
Must receive Christ:	John 1:12 & Rev. 3:20
Assurance of salvation:	1John 5:13 & John 5:24

Relying on God's Resources

His Spirit:	1Cor 2:17 & 1Cor. 3:16
His strength:	Isaiah 41:10 & Philip. 4:13
His faithfulness:	Lam. 3:22 & Num. 23:19
His peace:	Isaiah 26:3 & 1Pet. 5:7
His provision:	Rom. 8:32 & Philip. 4:19
His help with temptation:	Heb. 2:18 & Psalm 119:9-11

Scripture Memory Course (continued)

Being Christ's Disciple

Put Christ first:	Matt. 6:33 & Luke 9:23
Set apart from the world:	1John 2:15-16 & Rom. 12:2
Be steadfast:	1Cor. 15:58 & Heb. 12:3
Serve others:	Mark 10:45 & 2Cor. 4:5
Give generously:	Prov. 3:9-10 & 2Cor. 9:6-7
The Great Commission:	Matt. 28:18-20 & Acts 1:8

Growing in Christ-likeness

Love:	John 13:34-35 & 1John 3:18
Humility:	Philip 2:3-4 & 1Pet 5:5-6
Purity:	Eph. 5:3 & 1Pet. 2:11
Honesty:	Lev. 19:11 & Philip. 4:8
Faith:	Heb. 11:6 & Rom 4:20-21
Good works:	Gal. 6:9-10; Matt. 5:16

5. How to Meditate on God's Word

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night." Psalm 1:2 (NKJ)

What is meditation? focused thinking

Two kinds of meditation: a) clear your mind (Eastern)

b) fill your mind with God's Word

Why meditate?

a) Our lives are shaped by our thoughts

⇒ *"Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is **your life.**"* Proverbs 4:13 (NIV)

b) Meditation plants righteous thoughts in our minds

⇒ *"And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind,** that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* Romans 12:2 (NKJ)

c) Meditation ensures successful living

⇒ *"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be **prosperous and successful.**"* Joshua 1:8 (NIV)

d) Meditation yields wisdom

⇒ *"Oh how I love Your law! It is my **meditation** all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me **wiser** than my enemies."* Psalm 119:97-98 (NKJ)

Practical Bible meditation tips:

- a) Visualize_____ the scene in your mind
- b) Say_____ the verse aloud, slowly
- c) Paraphrase_____ it in your own words
- d) Explain_____ it to others
- e) Pray_____ it back to God
- f) Personalize_____ it by placing yourself in the scene
- g) Probe_____ it by taking the verse apart word by word, idea by idea
- h) Write down_____ the underlying concepts & principles

Remember: Memorization is meaningless without meditation!

6. How to Apply God's Word

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.....** The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but **doing it** - he will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:22,25 (NIV)*

We only move forward along the Spiritual Maturity Scale if we actually put the principles into practice.

⇒ *Whoever **practices and teaches** these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:19 (NIV)*

Such applications typically fall into one of the three following areas:

- Within ourselves

⇒ *“But if we **walk in the light**, as He is in the light.... the blood of Jesus, His Son, **purifies** us from all sin.” 1John 1:7*

- With others

⇒ *“A new command I give you: **Love one another**. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my **disciples**.” John 13:34-35 (NIV)*

- With God

⇒ *“Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. **Walk in all the ways I command you**, that it may go well with you.” Jeremiah 7:23 (NIV)*

In applying God's Word, don't look for rules (law), but rather seek to understand the underlying, timeless principles.

⇒ *“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed **if you do them**.” John 13:17 (NIV)*

Habit 2: Spending Time With God

The Importance of a Daily Quiet Time with God

1. We were created to have a relationship with God.
⇒ “*So God created man in His own image.*” Genesis 1:27 (NKJ)

2. However, Satan interfered and created a separation from God.
⇒ “*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you.*” Isaiah 59:2 (NIV)

3. Jesus died to make personal fellowship with God possible.
⇒ “*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*” Revelation 3:20 (NIV)
⇒ “*God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” 1Corinthians 1:9

4. Personal time alone with God was Jesus’ source of spiritual strength.
⇒ “*Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there he prayed.*” Mark 1:35 (NKJ)
⇒ “*So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.*” Luke 5:16 (NKJ)

5. You cannot grow spiritually without it.
⇒ “*It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’*” Matthew 4:4

The Purpose of a Daily Quiet Time with God

1. God does not just want us to work for Him, He wants to work through us.
⇒ *“I can do everything **through Him** who gives me strength.” Phil. 4:13 (NIV)*

2. A quiet time with God deepens our relationship with God.
⇒ *“And truly our **fellowship** is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1John 1:3 (NKJ)*

3. It is the only way that we can become aware of God’s will for us.
⇒ *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He **will tell you what is yet to come**. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and **making it known to you**.” John 16:13-14*

4. It gives us direction and guidance in daily decisions.
⇒ *“... for I have put my trust in You. **Show me the way I should go**.” Psalm 143:8 (NIV)*

5. It equips us to bear fruit.
⇒ *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit of itself... I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remain in me and I in him, He will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing**.” John 15:4-5 (NIV)*

6. It provides us with a forum in which to bring our needs to God.
⇒ *“The righteous cry out, **and the Lord hears them**; He delivers them from all their troubles.” Psalm 34:17 (NIV)*

Requirements for an Effective Quiet Time with God:

1. A regular set time every day
 - When you are at your best -- not when you're tired
 - Establish a routine so that it becomes habitual

2. A quiet place
 - Away from noise and other distractions
 - Solitude and silence are important factors in hearing God

3. A specific plan of action
 - Optimize your use of this precious time -- you can also fast for improved focus
 - Establish a routine so you don't waste time -- but vary as needed
⇒ e.g. Relax, Recite, Renounce, Read, Reflect, Record, Request

4. Include worship as a priority
 - Give thanks and praise for what God has already done before asking for more
 - Worship awakens our spirit and puts us in the right frame of mind

5. Leave time for listening
 - We don't just want to talk to God, we want to hear what He has to say
 - Even if you don't "hear" anything, remain silent so that your unconscious mind can absorb spiritual transmissions

Don't: become gridlocked in a cemented routine

Do: talk with God often throughout the day.

Overcoming Problems with Your Quiet Time

1. The problem of discipline

- Your first problem in establishing a regular, set quiet time will be dealing with **quiet time robbers** such as work, family, friends, emergencies, etc.
- ⇒ Satan will use anything, good or evil, to prevent you from accomplishing your daily quiet time with God

Suggestions:

- a) Inform family and friends of your intent and schedule
- b) Resist temptations to give in to competing demands on your time
- c) If you must deviate from schedule, plan to work it in later that day

2. The problem of distractions

- Your next problem will be external or internal “noise” that prevents you from concentrating during your quiet time
- ⇒ Satan will do anything to get your mind to wander or become preoccupied with worries, plans, idle thoughts, etc.

Suggestions:

- a) Isolate yourself from external distractions and insist on solitude
- b) Don't feel guilty about lapses in concentration -- just refocus your mind the moment you realize you've been distracted
- c) Read and pray aloud to focus your attention -- write things down

3. The problem of physical and mental tiredness

- This is a hectic world full of things to do with not enough time in the day to do them all, leading to stress and fatigue
- ⇒ Satan will always try to overload you with activity so that your attention is exclusively on worldly things

Spiritual Maturity

Suggestions:

- a) Rethink your priorities and eliminate unnecessary activities
- b) Go to bed on time, fall asleep thinking spiritual thoughts
- c) Eat right, exercise, stay in good physical shape
- d) When you are tired during your quiet time, sit up straight, walk around, have a cup of coffee, read and pray out loud

4. The problem of spiritual staleness

- Sometimes you'll feel that you're not getting anything out of your quiet time

⇒ Satan will try to convince you that it's all for naught, that God isn't listening or doesn't care about you.

Suggestions:

- a) Don't get in a rut -- vary the routine to keep it fresh
- b) Don't rush your quiet time -- it must be calm and peaceful
- c) Make sure that you have not been ignoring God's leading -- if you don't do Step 1, God won't give you Step 2
- d) Don't keep your quiet time insights to yourself, share them with others -- their reactions and comments will provide new perspective

5. The problem of diligence

- Your greatest problem will be to remain consistent over the long-term

⇒ Satan counts on a lack of perseverance to undermine Godly plans

Suggestions

- a) Make a covenant or vow to God -- put it in writing
- b) Schedule your quiet time on your daily calendar
- c) Be prepared to deal with Satan's excuses for skipping a day
- d) Don't fall into the guilt trap when you do miss a day (or more)
- e) Don't give up -- after all, we don't stop eating if we miss a meal

Talking With God

Prayer is not just a time to ask God for help, but more importantly it is the time when we can commune with God.

⇒ “*The Lord is far from the wicked but **He hears the prayer of the righteous.***” Proverbs 15:29 (NIV)

⇒ “*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, **faithful in prayer.***” Romans 12:12 (NIV)

Jesus showed by His example that we should constantly turn to God in prayer.

⇒ “*Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and **spent the night praying to God.***” Luke 6:12 (NIV)

How to Revitalize your Prayer Life

1. Approach prayer with the right attitude

a) Be real

- Don't try to impress others
- Don't try to impress God
- Don't pray out of obligation but rather out of devotion

⇒ “*And when you pray, **do not be like the hypocrites**, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men.... But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*” Matthew 6:5-6 (NIV)

b) Be revealing

- Don't be superficial
- Don't hold back what is in your heart

⇒ “*And when you pray, do not keep on **babbling like pagans**, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father **knows what you need** before you ask him.*” Matthew 6:7-8 (NIV)

c) Use the 7-step model that Jesus gave to the Disciples

⇒ “*This then is how you should pray.....*” Matthew 6:9 (NIV)

Step 1: Begin with praise

⇒ “*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name...*” Matthew 6:9b (NKJ)

There are two kinds of praise:

Worship: praise God for who He is

Thanksgiving: praise God for what He has done

⇒ “*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.*”

Psalm 100:4 (KJV)

Praise God for His character:

- God is patient (see Numbers 14:18)
- God is merciful “
- God is forgiving “
- God is loving (see 1John 4:8)
- God is faithful (see 2 Corinthians 1:20)
- God is gracious (see Psalm 116:5)
- God is righteous “
- God is compassionate “
- God is the Light of the world (see John 8:12)

Similarly, make a **list of all that you are thankful for** and use it to praise God when you pray.

Spiritual Maturity

Step 2: Commit yourself to God's will

⇒ *"Your Kingdom come, **Your will be done**, on earth as it is in heaven."* Matthew 6:10 (KJV)

- Pray to know God's will for you
- Pray for the wisdom and strength to do God's will

⇒ *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who **does the will of My Father**."* Matthew 7:21 (NKJ)

- Pray for God's will to be done in your family, job, community, church, nation, etc.

Step 3: Ask God to provide for your material needs.

⇒ *"Give us this day our daily bread....."* Matthew 6:11 (NKJ)

- Pray for God to meet all your needs

⇒ *"God will supply **all your needs** from His riches in glory because of what Christ Jesus has done for us."* Phil. 4:19 (LB)

⇒ *"You do not have because **you do not ask**."* James 4:2 (KJV)

- But don't ask for frivolous things

⇒ *"You ask and do not receive because you **ask amiss**, that you may spend it on your pleasures."* James 4:3 (NKJ)

- When you have asked appropriately and righteously, expect an answer

⇒ *"He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; He will not despise their plea."* Psalm 102:17 (NIV)

- Keep a journal of your requests and the answers to your prayers.

Spiritual Maturity

Step 4: Ask God to forgive your sins

⇒ “*And forgive us our debts.....*” Matthew 6:12 (NKJ)

Four steps to forgiveness:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal every sin.

⇒ “*Search me, O God, and **know my heart**; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me.*”
Psalm 139:23-24 (NKJ)

2. Confess each sin by name

⇒ “*He who covers his sins will not prosper, but **whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*** Psalm 28:13
(NKJ)

3. Make restitution to others when necessary

⇒ “*First be **reconciled to your brother**, and then come and offer your gift.*” Matthew 5:24 (NKJ)

4. By faith accept God’s forgiveness

⇒ “*If we confess our sins, **He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***”
1John 1:9 (NKJ)

Step 5: Pray for other people

⇒ “*...as we **forgive our debtors.***” Matthew 6:12 (NKJ)

• Who should we pray for? Everybody

⇒ “*... supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made **for all men.***” 1Timothy 2:1

• Prayers for other people are extremely powerful

⇒ “*Pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man **avails much.*** James 5:16 (NKJ)

Spiritual Maturity

Step 6: Ask God for ___protection_____.

⇒ “*And lead us not into temptation, but **deliver us from evil.***”
Matthew 6:13 (KJV)

- Pray for the protection of ___yourself___ and ___others___

⇒ “*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you **protect them** from the evil one.*” John 17:15 (NIV)

⇒ “*You are my hiding place; **you will protect me** from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.*” Psalm 32:7 (NIV)

- God’s protection is ___promised_____ to us

⇒ “*Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble. **The Lord will protect him** and preserve his life; he will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes.*” Psalm 41:1-2 (NIV)

⇒ “*‘Because he loves me,’ says the Lord, ‘I will rescue him; **I will protect him,** for he acknowledges my name.’*” Psalm 91:14

Step 7: End with ___praise_____.

⇒ “*For Yours is the **kingdom** and the **power** and the **glory** forever.*”
Matthew 6:13b (NKJ)

- Acknowledge God’s ___greatness_____

⇒ “*Sing to the Lord, praise His name; **proclaim His salvation** day after day. **Declare his glory** among the nations, **His marvelous deeds** among all the peoples.*” Psalm 96:2-3 NIV)

⇒ “*Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens. Praise Him for His acts of power; praise Him for **His surpassing greatness.***” Psalm 150:1-2 (NIV)

Words of Encouragement:

*“Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while **we will reap a harvest of blessings if we don’t get discouraged and give up.**” Galatians 6:9 (LB)*

A Prayer of Commitment

*Father, I realize that I was created to have fellowship with you. Thank you for making this privilege possible through Jesus’ death. I know that **daily fellowship with you is the most important thing I can do in my life.** I now want to commit myself to spending quiet time with you every day. I trust in your strength to help me be consistent and persevere. In Jesus name, Amen.*

Habit 3: Giving of Yourself for Others

⇒ *“They gave themselves **first to the Lord and then to us** in keeping with God’s will.” 2 Corinthians 8:5 (NIV)*

Why God Wants Us to Give:

1. Giving makes us more like God.

⇒ *“God so loved the world, that **He gave His only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 (KJV)*

2. Giving draws us closer to God.

⇒ *“Where your **treasure** is, there your **heart** will be also. Matthew 6:21 (NIV)*

3. Giving strengthens our faith.

⇒ *“**Trust in the Lord** with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding... **Honor the Lord** with your wealth, with the **firstfruits of all your crops.**” Proverbs 3:5,9 (NIV)*

4. Giving is a way of expressing your love for others.

⇒ *“Whoever loves God must also **love his brother.**” 1John 4:21 (NIV)*

- You can give without loving, but you **cannot love without giving**

5. Giving is an investment in eternity.

⇒ *“... **give happily to those in need**, and always be ready to **share whatever God has given you.** By doing this, you will be storing up real treasure for yourselves in heaven - it is **the only safe investment for eternity.** 1Timothy 6:18-19 (LB)*

6. Giving is the antidote for materialism.

⇒ *“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to **put their hope in God**, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*
1Timothy 6:17 (NIV)

7. Giving brings great blessings.

⇒ *“It is **more blessed to give than to receive.**”* Acts 20:35 (KJV)

⇒ *“A generous man will himself **be blessed.**”* Proverbs 22:9

Total Number of Occurrences of Key Bible Words (NKJ)

- **Believe:** 272 times
- **Pray:** 371 times
- **Love:** 714 times
- **Give:** 2,162 times

Ways to Give:

1. Your time, in the following ways:

a) Your physical effort

b) Your spiritual effort

2. Your worldly possessions, in the following ways:

a) Your material goods

b) Your money

1. Giving Your Time

⇒ *“Give, and it will be given to you.... For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”* Luke 6:38 (NIV)

- In this temporal world, time is **our most precious commodity**. If we give it to others, we will receive it back!
- Check your calendar to see how much time you **actually** give to others.

Ways to Invest your Time:

a) Physical Effort -- We are called to do good works:

⇒ *“A curse on him who is **lax in doing the Lord’s work!**”*
Jeremiah 48:10 (NIV)

⇒ *“Do not **work** for food that spoils, but for food that **endures to eternal life.**”* John 6:27 (NIV)

List three ways below in which you **commit yourself** to doing the Lord’s work:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

b. Spiritual Support -- We are called to offer spiritual sacrifices:

⇒ “As you come to Him, the living Stone..... you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, **offering spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1Peter 2:3 (NIV)

⇒ “If someone is caught in a sin, you who are **spiritual** should restore him gently.” Galatians 6:1 (NIV)

List three ways below in which you **commit yourself** to offering spiritual sacrifices:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. Giving your Worldly Possessions

⇒ “All the believers were together and had everything in common. **Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.**” Acts 3:3 (NIV)

- You don't own your possessions, they belong to God
- You don't possess your possessions, they posses you – if you covet them in a worldly way

Ways to Give your Possessions Away

a) Material Goods -- We are called to give to everyone.

⇒ “**Give to everyone** who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.” Luke 6:30 (NIV)

⇒ “*But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give **half of my possessions to the poor**, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house.’*” Luke 9:8-9 (NIV)

List three ways below in which you **commit yourself** to giving up and giving away some of your material possessions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

b. Money: We are also called upon to give up our love of money

⇒ “*For the **love of money** is the root of all evil.*” 1Timothy 6:10 (KJV)

⇒ “*You say, ‘**I am rich**; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that **you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.**” Revelation 3:17 (NIV)*

- How much of your money are you prepared to give away?

What the Bible Teaches about Tithing

Tithe means literally one-tenth of your income.

- An *offering* is anything you give in addition to your tithe
- You should tithe the first part (i.e. before taxes, etc.) of your income
⇒ “*Honor the Lord with..... the firstfruits of all your crops.*”
Proverbs 3:9 (NIV)
- You should tithe where you worship.
⇒ “*Bring your whole tithe to My storehouse (Temple).*” Malachi 3:10
(NIV)
- You should tithe when you go to church.
⇒ “*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income.*” 1Corinthians 16:2 (NIV)

There are at least **8 Biblical reasons** to tithe:

1. Because God commands it.
⇒ “*A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.*”
Leviticus 27:30 (NIV)
2. Because Jesus commands it.
⇒ “*Yes, you should tithe, and you shouldn’t leave the more important things undone either.*” Matthew 23:23 (LB)
3. Tithing demonstrates that God has first place in your life.
⇒ “*The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God first in your life.*”
Deuteronomy 14:23 (LB)

Spiritual Maturity

4. Tithing reminds us that everything was given to us by God.

⇒ *“But **remember** the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth.”* Deuteronomy 8:18 (NIV)

⇒ *“Each of you must bring a gift **in proportion** to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.”* Deuteronomy 16:17 (NIV)

5. Tithing expresses our gratitude to God.

⇒ *“How can I **repay the Lord** for all His goodness to me?”* Psalm 116:12

6. Refusing to tithe is robbing from God!

⇒ *“Says the Lord Almighty.....’Will a man rob God? Yet **you rob me**..... **in tithes and offerings.**”* Malachi 3:7-8 (NIV)

7. Tithing gives God a chance to prove His covenant with us.

⇒ *“**Bring the whole tithe** into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. **Test me in this,**” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the flood gates of heaven and **pour out so much blessing** that you will not have room enough for it.”* Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

8. Tithing gives us a chance to prove our obedience to God.

⇒ *“Now **if you obey Me** fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be **my treasured possession.**”* Exodus 19:5 (NIV)

⇒ *“If you love me, you will **obey what I command.**”* John 14:15 (NIV)

What the Bible Teaches about Giving

1. Give with the right attitude

⇒ “*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ‘Speak unto the children of Israel, that they **bring me an offering**: of every man that give it **willingly with his heart**, ye shall take My offering.’*” Exodus 25:1-2 (KJV)

2. Give voluntarily

⇒ “*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, **not reluctantly or under compulsion**.*” 2Corinthians 9:7a (NIV)

3. Give joyfully

⇒ “*For God loves a **cheerful giver**.*” 2Corinthians 9:7b (NIV)

4. Give generously

⇒ “*For I [Paul] testify that they gave as much as they were able, and **even beyond their ability**. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.*” 2Corinthians 8:3-4 (NIV)

5. Give expectantly

⇒ “*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and **whoever sows generously will also reap generously**.*” 2Corinthians 9:6

The Key to Giving with the Right Attitude

⇒ “*They gave themselves **first to the Lord** and then to us in keeping with **God’s will**.*” 2Corinthians 8:5 (NIV)

A Prayer of Commitment

*Father, I know you love me and want what's best for me. I recognize that **all I have, or ever will have, comes from you.** I am more interested in pleasing you than in having more possessions. I want You to have **first place in my life** and I am willing to tithe as you have commanded. Out of **gratitude** for all you've done for me, and in **expectation** that you will continue to provide for me, **I commit myself** to returning **at least the first 10%** of all I earn back to you. I want to begin investing in eternity. Help me to remain faithful to this commitment. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Habit 4: Developing Christ-Like Relationships

*“Let us not give up the **habit** of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead let us **encourage one another.**” Hebrews 10:25 (GN)*

Relationships are the Foundation of a Christ-like Life:

1. We are all members of God’s family.
 - In order to be **part** of a family, we must **participate** in the family’s life
 - ⇒ *“You are a member of **God’s very own family**... and you belong in God’s household with every other Christian.” Ephesians 2:19 (LB)*
 - ⇒ *“So in Christ we who are many form **one body**, and each member **belongs to all the others!**” Romans 12:5 (NIV)*

2. We need relationships in order to grow spiritually.
 - Try as we might, we cannot become spiritually mature all on our own
 - ⇒ *“**Two are better off than one**.... If one of them falls down, **the other can help** him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it’s just too bad, because there is no one to help him..... Two men can resist an attack that would defeat one man alone”. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (GN)*
 - ⇒ *“Let us think of one another and we can **encourage each other** to love and do good deeds.” Hebrews 10:24 (Ph)*

3. We need accountability in order to grow spiritually.
 - Without accountability, it is too easy to shrug off inappropriate behavior
 - ⇒ *“**People learn from one another** just as iron sharpens iron.” Proverbs 27:17 (GN)*
 - ⇒ *“But **encourage one another** daily.... so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)*

Spiritual Maturity

⇒ *“If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should **restore him** gently.... **Carry each other’s burdens**, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)*

4. Christ is present when we fellowship together.

- Christ encourages us to commune with one another in His name

⇒ *“For where **two or three come together in my name**, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20 (NIV)*

5. There is great power when we pray together.

- Individual prayer is powerful, but when two or more join together in prayer, Christ promises to add His voice to the supplication

⇒ *“Again, I tell you that if **two of you on earth agree** about anything you ask for, **it will be done** for you by my Father in heaven.” Matthew 8:19 (NIV)*

6. Christ-like relationships witness to the world about Jesus

- What we do is a much more powerful witness than what we say

⇒ *“Father, just as you are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:21 (NIV)*

7. We are obligated to serve others.

- This is not just a suggestion, but rather a mandate

⇒ *“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to **serve others**, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” 1Peter 4:10 (NIV)*

⇒ *“There are **different kinds of gifts**, but the same Spirit. There are **different kinds of service**, but the same Lord... You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” 1Corinthians 12:4-5,27 (NIV)*

There are 58 References in the Bible with the phrase “*one another*”

- ⇒ Serve _____ *one another....* Galatians 5:13
- ⇒ Accept _____ *one another.....* Romans 15:7
- ⇒ Forgive _____ *one another.....* Colossians 3:13
- ⇒ Bear _____ *one another’s burdens.....* Galatians 6:2
- ⇒ Be devoted _____ *to one another.....* Romans 12:10
- ⇒ Honor _____ *one another.....* Romans 12:10
- ⇒ Instruct _____ *one another.....* Romans 15:14
- ⇒ Submit _____ *to one another.....* Ephesians 5:21
- ⇒ Encourage _____ *one another.....* 1Thessalonians 5:11
- ⇒ Greet _____ *one another.....* Romans 16:16

“The Christian who is not committed to a group of other believers for praying, sharing, and serving, so that he is known as he knows others, is not an obedient Christian. He is not in the will of God. However, vocal he may be in his theology, he is not obeying the Lord.” (Dr. Ray Ortland)

Ways in which the Church encourages fellowship:

1. Crowd:

- Sunday morning services

2. Congregation -- above plus:

- Sunday evening, communion and foot-washing services
- Fellowship dinners (last Sunday evening of each month)
- Special events

3. Committed -- above plus:

- Wednesday evening Bible study groups
- Development of personal ministries within the church

4. Core -- above plus:

- Small cell groups for prayer, Bible study and Christian Fellowship
- Outreach missions to the community

We must grow larger & smaller

- Larger in order to reach the community for Christ
- Smaller in order to build relationships

Our greatest need: leaders

Habit 5: Maintaining Moral Purity

⇒ *“Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God.”* Matthew 5:8 (NKJ)

Moral Purity is the Key to Spiritual Maturity

- Moral Purity is the foundation on which spiritual maturity is built

⇒ *“To the pure all things are pure, but **to those who are defiled** and unbelieving **nothing is pure**; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.”* Titus 1:15 (NKJ)

- Moral purity inside yields spiritual maturity outside

⇒ *“But the wisdom that is from above is **first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits** without partiality and without hypocrisy.”* James 3:17 (NKJ)

- God made all things pure; it is we who make them impure/defiled

⇒ *“Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food [i.e. the flesh]. **All things are indeed pure**, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.* Romans 14:20 (NKJ)

- We are purified by the presence of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit within us, not by our own doing.

⇒ *“We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And **everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**”* 1John 3:2-3 (NKJ)

- The purity that God demands is impossible unless we are regenerated within.

⇒ *“For I [Jesus] tell you that **unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.**”* Matthew 5:20 (NIV)

What is Moral Purity?

- Moral purity is not measured by our deeds but rather by what's in our hearts

⇒ *“All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the **Lord weighs the spirits.**”* Proverbs 16:2 (NKJ)

⇒ *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this..... to **keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**”* James 1:27 (NIV)

- Immorality is specifically defined as sins of the flesh (Vine's Expository Dictionary).

⇒ *“But fornication and **all uncleanness or covetousness**, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither **filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor course jesting**, which are not fitting.”* Ephesians 5:3-4 (NKJ)

⇒ *“For the **flesh lusts against the Spirit**, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”* Galatians 5:17 (NKJ)

- The following are some of the immoral acts specifically mentioned in the Bible:

1. Sexual immorality

⇒ *“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the **adulterer and all the sexually immoral.**”* Hebrews 13:4 (NIV)

⇒ *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that **anyone who looks at a woman lustfully** has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Matthew 5:27-28 (NIV)

⇒ *“I tell you that **anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness**, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman **commits adultery.**”* Matthew 5:32 (NIV)

2. Murder

⇒ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘**Do not murder.... anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.**” Matthew 5:21 (NIV)

3. Anger/Hatred

⇒ “But I tell you that **anyone who is angry** with his brother will be subject to judgment.” Matthew 5:22 (NIV)

⇒ “Anyone who claims to be in the light but **hates his brother** is still in the **darkness.**” 1John 2:9 (NIV)

4. Materialism

⇒ “Keep your lives free from the **love of money** and be content with what you have.” Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)

5. Stealing

⇒ “For out of the heart come evil thoughts..... **theft.....**” Matthew 15:19

6. Lying

⇒ “For out of the heart come evil thoughts..... **false testimony, slander.**” Matthew 15:19

7. Covetousness/Envy

⇒ “You **shall not covet** your neighbor’s wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor’s house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or **anything that belongs to your neighbor.**” Deuteronomy 5:21 (NIV)

How Do We Acquire Moral Purity?

- God requires that we attain & maintain moral purity
 - ⇒ “Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a **pure heart**.” Psalm 24:3-4 (NIV)
 - ⇒ “The Lord **detests the thoughts of the wicked**, but those of the pure are pleasing to Him.” Proverbs 15:25 (NIV)
- Earnestly desire moral purity
 - ⇒ “Like newborn babies, **crave pure spiritual milk**, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.” 1Peter 2:3 (NIV)
- Flee from sin and pursue righteousness.
 - ⇒ “**Flee also youthful lusts**: but pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord out of a **pure heart**.” 2Timothy 2:3
- Look to God’s Word to keep yourself on the straight and narrow.
 - ⇒ “**The words of the Lord are flawless**, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.” Psalm 12:6 (NIV)
- Seek to apply God’s Word in your daily walk.
 - ⇒ “How can a young man keep his way pure? **By living according to Your Word**.” Psalm 119:9 (NIV)
- Meditate on pure things
 - ⇒ “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, **whatever things are pure**, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- **meditate on these things**.” Philippians 4:8 (NKJ)

Spiritual Maturity

- Whenever your spiritual center is **stained by impurity**, repent and seek the **purifying power** of God's love.
 - ⇒ *“Repent therefore of this your wickedness and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.”* Acts 8:22 (NKJ)
 - ⇒ *“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”* Psalm 51:10 (KJV)

- The antithesis of the work of the flesh is the fruit of the Spirit.
 - ⇒ *“Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save you.”* James 1:21 (NIV)

- Finally, err on the side of caution, avoid even the appearances of sinful behavior.
 - ⇒ *“Abstain from all appearance of evil.”* 1Thessalonians 5:22 (KJV)

The 7 Steps to Developing Good Habits

1. Desire

- Start with a **strong desire** to grow in spiritual maturity
- Be **internally motivated** -- external motivation doesn't last

2. Decide

- Decide to **begin now!**
- If you wait for **perfect conditions**, you'll never get anywhere.

3. Commit

- Make a **commitment**. Make a covenant or vow. Put it in writing.
- **Go public** -- tell your closest friends and relatives about your decision.

4. Persist

- **Continuity and persistence** are essential.
- It takes **3-4 weeks** to become comfortable with a new habit and another **3-4 weeks** for the habit to become part of your life.

5. Do it now

- Don't delay -- **do it now!**
- Seize every opportunity to **reinforce** your new habit.

6. Be accountable

- Be **accountable** to someone for both encouragement and reality checks
- Get a **partner** and reinforce one another -- two are better than one

7. Depend on God

- **Allow the Holy Spirit to help you** grow into Christ-likeness
- **Don't listen to Satan** -- he wants you to fail and will use every trick in the book to get you to give up.

⇒ *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **take up his cross daily**, and follow Me.”* Luke 9:23 (NKJ)