

# THE ELEMENTS of SPIRITUAL FORMATION



C.L.A.S.S. 201a

# ELEMENTS 1: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

## **THEOLOGY:**

### **The Purpose of this class:**

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. 2 Peter 3:17-18

1. To understand the process of Spiritual Formation in the Christian's life.
2. To gain the knowledge and inspiration to engage in consistent spiritual disciplines so that we can grow in the grace and in the knowledge of Jesus.

*watch your thoughts; they become words.  
watch your words; they become actions.  
watch your actions; they become habits.  
watch your habits; they become character.  
watch your character; it becomes your destiny.*

Author Unknown

### **Who you are on the inside is an accurate representation of the real you.**

No matter what service you perform for God, or what you appear to be to others, the important thing is the purity of your inner-self. Listen to the words of Jesus as he spoke to the 'religious' people of his day.

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside*

*also will be clean. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. (Matthew 23:25-28)*

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION: WHAT IS IT?**

- It is not Knowledge (learning the Bible)
- It is not Things We Do. (Reading the Bible, church attendance, praying, witnessing, social action, etc)
- It is not Gaining Skills (Ability to teach the Bible, Lead Groups, be an Elder, etc)
- IT IS Transformation of the Heart

*Spiritual formation in the tradition of Jesus Christ is the process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human being, the heart, which is the same as the spirit or will. It is being formed (really, transformed) in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ.<sup>1</sup>*

The "heart" is the place in human personality where spiritual formation takes place.

*It is the inner nature of the tree that determines its outward product.  
Therefore, change the inner nature, and the outward product  
changes.*

### ***Escaping Corruption and Developing a New Heart***

*4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the*

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<sup>1</sup> Dallas Willard, ***Spiritual Formation: What it is, and How it is Done***  
<http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=58>

corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:4-8

### **MAKE EVERY EFFORT**

- In your faith supply \_\_\_\_\_ (moral excellence)
- In your moral excellence supply \_\_\_\_\_
- In your knowledge supply \_\_\_\_\_
- In your self-control supply \_\_\_\_\_
- In your perseverance supply \_\_\_\_\_
- In your godliness supply \_\_\_\_\_
- In your brotherly kindness supply \_\_\_\_\_

### **Role of The Holy Spirit**

2 Peter 1:4-8 seems to indicate that we bring about our own spiritual formation by our own effort. Is that true? What is the role of the Holy Spirit? Is it us or is it the Holy Spirit who can bring about this transformation?

What do you think?

- Jesus said in John 15:5 that *“Without me you can do nothing.”* Regarding spiritual transformation we need to understand that understood implication of that verse is: *“If you do nothing, it will be without me.”*



This is about: obedience.

*I am the one who has to "make every effort"  
Do I do it alone?  
No. But if I do nothing, it will not be done.*

In spiritual formation this is called "the union of passivity and activity."

Dallas Willard goes on to say, "Spiritual formation is something that requires us to take wise steps in accomplishing it. The "old man" will not be put off, and the "new man" put on, unless I do something--and, indeed, unless I do the right things. And so the need as we approach the topic of spiritual formation, is to understand as well as we can what is our part and what is God's part, and take care of our part that God may be able to work with us in bringing us to be the kinds of people that we need to be and he wants us to be. (If the idea that we must do something to "enable" God to do something bothers you, you have just hit a major barrier on the pathway of spiritual formation.)"<sup>2</sup>

**So...**

**SPIRITUAL FORMATION** is "the process by which true Christ-likeness is established in the very depths of who we are." It is how people are inwardly transformed in such a way that the personality and actions of Jesus naturally flow out from them.

**How does this work?** *Understanding human will*

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<sup>2</sup> ibid

***The human will exists in three conditions.***

**1. The vital or impulsive will**

- a. “This is a willing that is outwardly directed and moved by and toward things that are simply attractive. You see this in a baby. A little baby very quickly begins to be attracted to things, to reach for them, and move in relationship to them. And that’s all there really is to will in the baby.”
- b. This is: “I want to,” and “It pleases me.”
- c. You simply choose what you desire.

**2. The reflective will**

- a. The reflective will is oriented toward what is good for the person as a whole, not merely to what is desired. And so we have the conflict that we all know too well, as human beings, between the good and the bad, and the good and the not so good, and the good and the better. This conflict goes on constantly in our lives...”
- b. Instead of just doing what you want or desire, you choose for what is good. For Jesus-followers, you choose what God wants.
- c. This is the “WWJD” stage.

**3. The embodied will**

- a. “Embodied will is where one of the other two has sunk down into your body to such an extent that you automatically do what they dictate. And this is the standard situation for most human beings on earth. Their body is running their life from choices that have formed their will and positioned it in their body.”
- b. When Peter denied Jesus three times, that was “embodied will for evil. Peter reflected after the fact and discovered what he was really like inside.”
- c. Or, when people are insulted, they normally insult back. “That’s embodied will as it exists in a fallen world... it is an “epidermal response,” because it lies right at the surface of your skin – you thought and feeling.”

d. Embodied will – this is who you really are.<sup>3</sup>



**”Spiritual formation transforms your embodied will. It transforms your embodied will so that what comes out of you automatically are the words and deeds of Christ.”**

- **This is the point where we can stop thinking about our responses.**
- **This is the point where we have the mind of Christ.**

This is what Paul writes in Galatians when he talks about “*Christ being formed in you.*”

*My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, Galatians 4:19*

To begin this process it requires that we need to discipline ourselves in areas where God is most likely to work in our lives. This is where the regular systematic habit of spiritual disciplines can accelerate our spiritual growth. These disciplines serve to water and cultivate the seed God plants in our lives. Without the regular habit of spiritual disciplines the Christian cannot grow.

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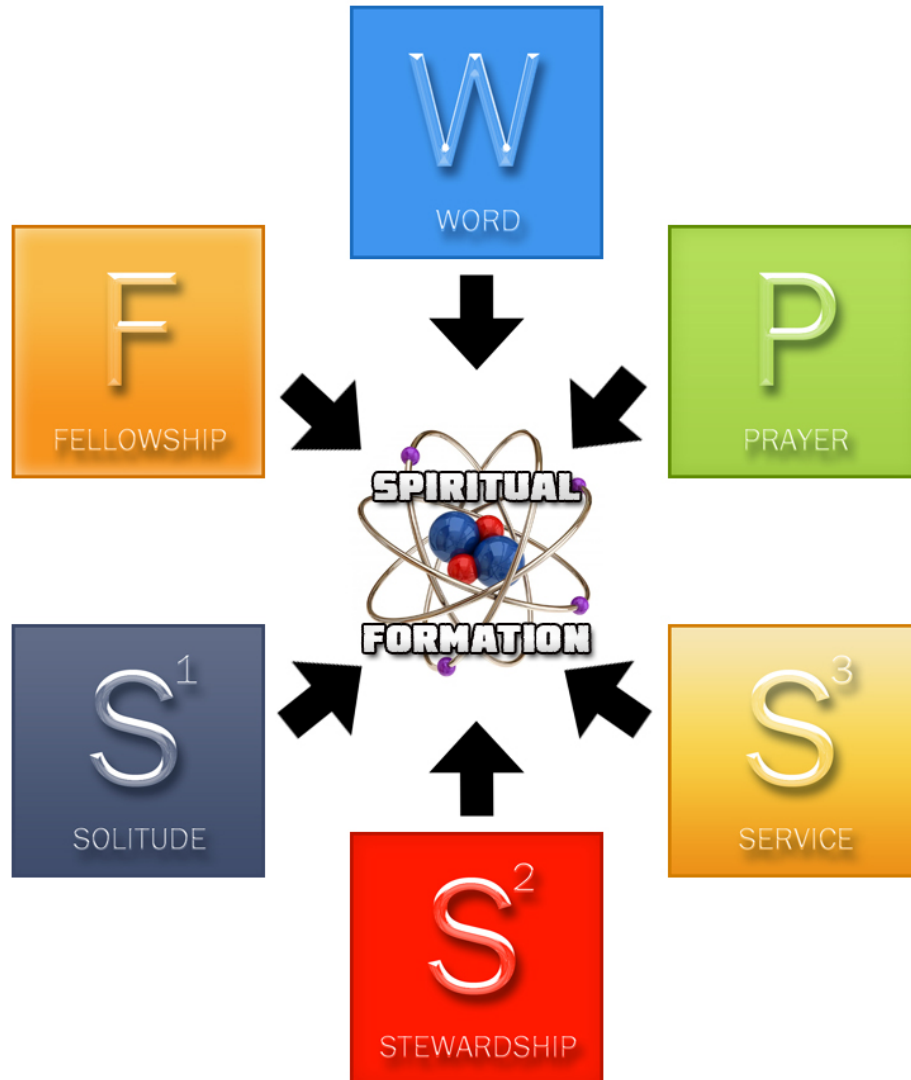
<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

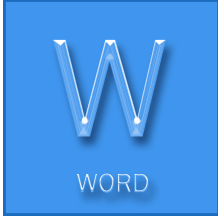


Ultimately, spiritual formation is not just about having our hearts transformed, but about the increasing ability to draw nearer and nearer to the one who loves us and gave Himself up for us.

**APPLICATION**

# THE 6 DISCIPLINES OF A DISCIPLE



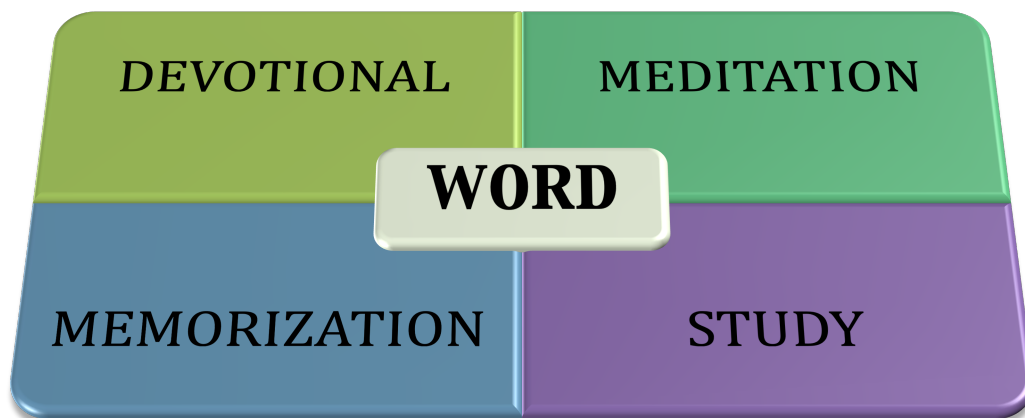


# 1. WORD

*We believe that God has revealed himself through the Bible. We believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the only inspired, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative Word of God.<sup>4</sup>*

*16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

1. In your own words, from the passages above, what is the nature of God's Word?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the ultimate purpose of God's Word in our lives according to 2 Timothy 3:17?



<sup>4</sup> WDCC bylaws, doctrinal statement

## A. DEVOTIONAL READING

### HOW TO READ DEVOTIONALLY

When we talk about a devotional reading of God's Word we mean that the primary purpose of that reading is to show devotion to God. Generally this means that as we read we are asking God to speak to us through his Word.

→ We are asking for direction or maybe for a greater understanding of who He is SO THAT we can draw nearer to him.

A devotional reading is not study in the true sense of the word. We are not going very deep into the nuances or even general syntax of the passage.

→ We are looking for the general sense of the passage asking God to teach us what we need to hear for that day or time.

The book of Deuteronomy contains instructions for Israel when they chose a king, like the other nations, to rule over them. Though we are not kings, the passage is applicable to us as we serve the real King in our everyday lives.

*When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.*  
Deuteronomy 17:18-19

1. According to the passage, how often should we read the Word of God?
2. What two reasons are given for this practice?

### Other suggestions for reading the Word devotionally.

- Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Shut off the cell phone.
- Read through it systematically: That way you won't neglect the more obscure passages of Scripture

- Use an easy to understand version (NIV NLT, etc.) without notes or helps: rely on what God wants to say to you not what he may have said to someone else.
- Stay away from devotional guides or pamphlets: Focus on the Bible alone. Those other materials may be helpful but too often we rely on them to the neglect of his Word.
- Read it out loud: I guarantee you will not fall asleep.

## **B. SCRIPTURE MEMORY**

### **Why memorize Scripture?**

1. It helps you to withstand temptation

*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

*Psalm 119:11*

2. It will help you meet the needs of others

*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Proverbs 25:11*

3. It helps you to clearly communicate with unbelievers.

*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15*

4. It facilitates a deeper intimacy with God.

John Piper once wrote:

*Storing texts in our minds about God helps us relate to him as he really is. For example, imagine being able to call this to mind through the day:*

*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not*



*deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:8-14)<sup>5</sup>*

## **How to memorize Scripture**

1. You can either pick various verses that have spoken to you or get a systematic Scripture study pack (Various publishers sell these). There are some basic cards at the end of this section to help you get started.
2. Remember to say the reference before and after the verse as you memorize.
3. Break long verses into understandable phrases. Memorize sections at a time. Make sure you understand what the whole verse means. It is easier to memorize something that you attach meaning to rather than just a string of words.
4. Use a variety of methods to memorize (flash cards, erase one word at a time, compose a song, etc.)

- **The key to memorization is review. Make sure you constantly review what you have already memorized and then add to it,**
- **We remember what is important to us. You will remember what you're interested in.**

*The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold. Psalm 119:72*

## **C. MEDITATION ON THE WORD**

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/why-memorize-scripture>

*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*

According to this verse what is the result of meditating on God's Word?

What does it mean to be "prosperous and successful?" Hint: Read the context to this verse (Joshua 1:1-9).

**Christian meditation** is much different than what most people think meditation is. For many people, because of the influence of eastern religions, the concept of meditation has come to mean to totally empty one's mind. Christian meditation consists of the exact opposite. In Christian meditation we seek to fill our minds with God's Word. We purposefully ponder and think upon the things of God. We desire that our souls ruminate on it. Rather than disconnecting from our world we want to see the connection that God has in his Word to our personal lives. Meditation will ask the question what does the Word mean to me?

What exactly does that look like in a practical way?

As westerners we value action and busyness more than stopping and considering. Meditation involves stopping and considering God's Word. It will take practice for most of us.

There are a variety of ways to meditate on God's Word. For example:

1. Take time to read a verse or passage over and over. Let it sink in.
2. Begin to memorize all or part of it.
3. Listen—quiet your heart to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you through God's Word. Listening is the most important part of meditation.
4. Become emotionally involved. Personalize it. —Allow yourself to feel what God feels, his desires expressed through his words. Place your name or situation in the verse.

- Rewrite John 3:16 placing your name as the object of the passage.

5. Consider how the truth and power of the Word of God should affect your behavior.

6. Focus on a topic in God's Word and think about that. For example: What do the Scriptures say about Christian purity? What verses come to mind? What stories? How does what God says about purity differ from the way you normally think about it? What do you need to change about your thinking?

## **D. SYSTEMATIC STUDY**

To study the Scriptures means to dig deeper than we would in the other Word disciplines. We are looking for a systematic and comprehensive understanding of God's Word. Study of the Bible is essential for your spiritual growth. As the writer of Hebrews would say, this is the meat of the Word rather than milk.

*We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

Hebrews 5:11-14

From Hebrews 5:11-14, what is one result of living on solid food (Study of the deep things of God)?

This section is a very summarized version of the class "*STUDY: How to travel from the original context to the timeless truth.*" It is recommended that you make the time to attend that extensive class.

## A Practical Process for Studying God's Word

1. Observe the Passage: What do I see?
  - Sentence structure?
  - Verbs? Other parts of speech?
  - Cultural and historical context?
  - Patterns?
  - Emphasis? Mood?
  
2. Understand the Passage (Interpretation): What did it mean?
  - What did this passage mean to the original hearers? Consider context again.
  - Don't jump to what you think the meaning is or application.
  - What genre is the passage in? How does that affect meaning?
  - Focus on the text you are in. Don't bring other Bible passages in yet.
  - Don't presuppose you know what the passage means - especially with familiar passages.
  
3. Implications: How does this relate to me?
  - What is the **eternal timeless truth(s)** in this specific passage? Write it out!
  
4. Connection: What do I do?
  - How does the truth(s) in this passage **relate to all times**?
  - Relate the timeless truth to a contemporary situation.
  
5. Practice the Timeless Truth (Application)
  - Who Should I Be?
  - How Should I Think?
  - What Should I do?
  - Where Should I go?

- Who will I Teach?

### **Go For It!**

Read Luke 15:1-7 and go through the passage following the 5 steps above.



### **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING: DISCOVER THE TIMELESS PRINCIPLE.**

- What did it mean to the original hearers?
- What is the timeless principle?
- How do I apply it to my life?

## **KEY PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**

- Context is key – context shapes meaning. Remember eternal content is being communicated through a specific context.
- Scripture will never contradict other Scriptures. The best interpreter of Scripture is other Scripture.
- Interpret Scriptures Plainly. Scripture can never mean what it never meant. Consider genre.
- Did I mention context?



*Poor interpretation results in  
poor application which results in  
no transformation.*



**MY PLAN  
FOR INCORPORATING THE  
DISCIPLINES OF THE WORD IN MY  
LIFE.**

Remember that the purpose of these “Word disciplines” are not to only understand the Bible but to allow God to transform our hearts. Understanding without subsequent transformation can stifle our spiritual formation.



### **DEVOTIONAL & MEDITATION:**

I will have a daily time with God at \_\_\_\_\_ for  
(Specific time)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(How long)

Put this time in your calendar like you would any other appointment! Make it a priority!



### **STUDY:**

I will study God’s Word by:



### **MEMORIZATION:**

I will memorize \_\_\_\_\_ Scriptures per month.



## **2. FELLOWSHIP**

### ***A. WORSHIP***

## What is Worship?

There are a number of great definitions of worship out there such as:

*“The worship of the church...consists of individual, corporate, public, and private service for the Lord which is generated by a reverence for and submission to Him who is totally worthy.” - Charles Ryrie*

*“Worship is our response to what we value most.” - Louie Giglio*

*“Acknowledging that someone or something else is greater – worth more – and by consequence, to be obeyed, feared, and adored...Worship is the sign that in giving myself completely to someone or something, I want to be mastered by it.”  
- Harold Best*

*“Worship is the believer’s response of all that they are – mind, emotions, will, body – to what God is and says and does.” - Warren Wiersbe*

But what worship ultimately comes down to is:

- 1. An affirmation that God is present.**
- 2. Our understanding of who God is.**

To really worship God we have to believe that he is here and we have to know who he is. God designed us to allow worship to naturally flow out of us when we have a correct understanding of who God is in light of who we are.

For example, we cannot really worship God if we believe that God has flaws. We only can worship God in truth when we see that he is holy. That is separate from us in kind and absolutely perfect in every way.

**So worship is a function of who God really is and how much we understand who he is.** Therefore, worship is not simply singing, praying or standing in his presence. Those things are means to worship and are no more worship than working to our best ability or taking care of the bodies God gave us.

Worship looks like many things but it is always a response to God’s character and goodness in our lives.

**KEY THOUGHT: Worship is living a devoted life in his presence.**



## **WORSHIP IS FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.**

### **Why Worship?**

#### **1. We are commanded to worship.**

*"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth." Phil 2:9-10*

*"And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" Mt 4:9-10*

#### **2. Disciples must practice the discipline of worship because it is our eternal vocation.**

*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:23-24*

*"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.  
Worship the LORD with gladness;  
come before him with joyful songs.*

*Know that the LORD is God.  
It is he who made us, and we are his ;  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise;  
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

*For the LORD is good and his love endures forever;  
his faithfulness continues through all generations."*

Psalm 100:1-5

### 3. Worship can expose our sin so God can deal with it.

*“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” Isa 6:5-7*

### 4. Most importantly, because God is worthy of worship.

*Then the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.” So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. Ex 34:5-8*

We were not created to worship as if is one of many things we are to do. We were created as worshippers. It is the essence of who we are as human beings. Our main purpose as human beings is to worship God.



### ***Three things that should characterize our worship.***

- 1. Awe before the Wholly Other.**
- 2. Shame before the Absolutely Pure.**
- 3. Joyful gratitude before the Merciful One.**

*“When we know that he alone is God, we fall before him in awe. When we know that he alone is perfect, we fall before him in shame. But when we know that he, the Holy One, so desires our fellowship that he gave his only Son to*

*make it possible, we fall before him in gratitude and praise and sing the wonder of his holiness and the glory of his amazing grace.”<sup>6</sup>*

## ***QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER***

1. How does your view of God need to change so that you can worship him more fully?

2. Is there any difference between private worship and worshipping together in a church service? Are both needed? Why?

3. The following list contains things we associate with worship.

Prayer, Scripture reading, preaching, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, singing songs/hymns.

Why are they worship? What is the common link? Are there others?

## ***B. GROUPS/HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS***

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<sup>6</sup> Discipleship Essentials p60

## WHY SHOULD WE FELLOWSHIP?

### 1. ***Because you cannot walk with Jesus on your own.***

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 10:24-25

Jesus surrounded himself with people. One of the first things He did when He started his ministry was go out and call his twelve friends to travel with Him. This model carried on throughout the New Testament. Jesus sent out the disciples in pairs. Paul went on his missionary travels with people like Timothy, Silas and Barnabas. Paul's letters mention more people who helped and partnered with him in a variety of ways.

We were never designed to follow Jesus all alone. We need each other to grow in Christ. We need each other to serve him more effectively.

There are three other principles that build off of this truth:

#### **A. Because Christians belong to each other**

*So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Rom 12:5*

Romans 12 goes on to say that we are dependent and interdependent on each other. Everyone's has different gifts that work TOGETHER to build the body of Christ. We are one body and therefore belong to each other as we belong to Christ.

#### **B. You have things to learn: You need the Church.**

*You need someone to hold you accountable. You need people to encourage you. You need people to teach you things you could not learn or experience on your own. You need to deal with difficult people so God can develop your character. All these things and more, God provides through His Body for your benefit.*

### **C. You have things to teach: The Church needs you.**

*1 Corinthians Chapter 12 talks about how we all, with our unique gifts and struggles and experiences, have a role to play in the body of Christ. You need people to build you up, but you also need to build up people. You have an unique gifting, calling and personality mix, designed by God, that can uniquely benefit others and make a difference for all eternity.*

#### **2. Because you need to know that you are not alone in this life.**

We will address this in detail further down. The basic point is that being alone was not God's design. As human beings we need other people to mature and grow in a healthy way. When struggles come into our lives we often think we are the only one who has experienced such hardships. When others walk with us and beside us, God can often use that to bring strength into our lives.

#### **3. Because it is part of God's plan to reach the world for Jesus.**

*"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17:20-21*

We Christians work in unity it says something about the true nature of God to the world. Unity shows that God is unified, forgiveness shows that God is forgiving. Love shows God is love. You get the picture.

## **HOW SHOULD WE FELLOWSHIP?**

- 1. Small Groups**
- 2. Worship services**
- 3. Serving each other**

Here is a list of the "one anothers" in the Scriptures compiled by Rick Warren.

- Serve one another Gal 5:13
- Accept one another Rom 15:7
- Forgive one another Col 3:13
- Greet one another Rom 16:16

- Bear one another's burdens Gal 6:2
- Be devoted to one another Rom 12:10
- Honor one another Rom 12:10
- Teach one another Rom 15:14
- Submit to one another Eph 5:21
- Encourage one another 1 Thes 5:11

#### 4. Working with each other

##### ***The Importance of small groups***

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47*

Notice that the early church first met at the temple together. This was the aspect of corporate worship but the center of their worship activity was in individual homes- small groups.

According to the Scripture above, small groups are necessary for:

1. **Study** devoted to the apostle's teaching
2. **Relationship building** broke bread and received food
3. **Worship** Praising God
4. **Practical Meeting of Needs** Had all things in common, no needs
5. **Strategic Outreach** The Lord added to their number



## GOD IS CONCERNED WITH OUR RELATIONSHIPS

*So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 1 Thessalonians 2:8*

Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe and spiritual laws that govern the spiritual universe, so are there social laws that govern our relationships with one another. Much of the ill that we see today is the result of violating these social laws.

Healthy relationships are essential for things to work well. Why is that?

- **Relationships are key to understanding a basic reality of creation: Everything is relational.**

1. **God is Eternally Relational** - The Trinity

2. **Man is Relational** – Created in the image of God. “It is not good that the man is alone.”

3. **The Church is Relational** - Christ, is the husband; The Church is His Bride.

4. **Our Bodies are Relational** - All parts need one another to function optimally.

5. **The Universe is Relational** – There are laws and fine-tuning that keep creation functioning.

Relationships are the glue that holds things together.

## **A KEY ASPECT OF RELATIONSHIPS THAT BENEFIT GROWTH IN CHRIST.**

### **1. Modeling**

Modeling is learning by watching and imitating others. Modeling takes place through relationships. Jesus discipled the 12 in the context of ongoing relationships with them. His disciples lived with Him and heard His teaching in the context of the truths lived out in His life. Because of the intimacy of the teacher - student relationship, Jesus said that a student, when he is finished, would be like his teacher

Modeling is very relational. Jesus didn't hold prayer seminars or evangelism seminars. Rather, He did these in front of them and taught them in the process. He didn't say, "sit in my classroom from 2-3, two times a week and I will instruct you on how to be a good disciple."

## **KEY ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS**

### **1. Sacrifice**

*Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Phil 2:3-4*

### **2. Love**

*Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Rom 12:10*

### **3. Partnerships**

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. Ecc 4:9*



*For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. 1 Cor 3:9*

#### **4. Accountability**

*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Gal 6:1-2*

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Jms 5:16*



## **MY PLAN FOR INCORPORATING THE DISCIPLINES OF FELLOWSHIP IN MY LIFE.**



### **FELLOWSHIP THROUGH WORSHIP**

[ ] I commit myself to the discipline of corporate worship on a weekly basis at \_\_\_\_\_ church.

[ ] I commit myself to develop the practice of personal lifestyle worship in the following ways:



### **FELLOWSHIP THROUGH GROUPS:**

[ ] I commit myself to the discipline of a small group.



### **FELLOWSHIP THROUGH PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS:**

[ ] I will seek to have healthy relationships with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

SPECIFICALLY...

I will mend the following broken or damaged relationship(s).

I will establish the following accountability or discipleship relationship(s).

I will put boundaries on the following unhealthy relationship(s). I will list the boundaries.

I will invest in these healthy relationships.



### 3. PRAYER

There has been much written on the topic of prayer. The focus of this section is to touch on the basic points of prayer. Therefore, we are not trying to be comprehensive but to give you a foundation lest your prayer life become bogged down with a bunch of rules and how to's.

#### THE BASICS

1. Prayer is **TALKING TO GOD.**
2. A good conversation consists of **TALKING** and **LISTENING.**

In Matthew 6 the disciples came to Jesus and asked him an important question: How should we pray? He answers them not with theology but with

an example of the key elements of prayer and where the focus should be when we pray.



## **PRAYER PRINCIPLE ONE: KEEP IT SIMPLE**

*"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Matthew 6:7-8*

### **Why pray if God knows already?**

#### **1. Prayer is more than asking for things.**

Far from merely being a means of presenting our daily requests to God, prayer is a means of pursuing a dynamic relationship with him.

#### **2. The process of prayer is just as important as the answers to prayer.**

Hank Hannagraff once said:

*"God ordains not only the ends but the means. Thus, to ask, "Why pray if God already knows what we need?" is akin to asking, "Why get dressed in the morning and go to work?" For that matter if God is going to do what he is going to do anyway, why bother doing anything? God has ordained that the work we do and the prayers we utter both produce results*

#### **3. Our prayers are an acknowledgement of our dependence on him.**



## **PRAYER PRINCIPLE TWO: PRAYER FOCUSES ON GOD NOT ON US**

*Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:9-10*

One of the greatest blessings of consistent prayer is that our heart becomes more like God's. As we pray for His will to be done, we can often see how different his will is than ours.

### **TWO ASPECTS OF GOD FOCUSED PRAYER**

- We Praise God for who he is AND what he's done
- We submit ourselves to doing his will rather than ours



## **PRAYER PRINCIPLE THREE: OUR PRAYER NEEDS SHOULD GO DEEPER THAN THE STUFF WE WANT**

*Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:11-15*

Notice that Jesus says we should ask for our basic needs. Things such as food clothing etc. But the focus is not on those things but on our inner needs.

### **THREE THINGS TO ASK FOR**

- The basic necessities of life
- Protection from being overwhelmed by evil

- The formation of our character to become more like God's character.

## PRAYER SKILLS TO WORK ON

- Personal Prayer-Journaling
- Group Prayer
- Listening and Hearing God
- Fasting



## MY PLAN FOR INCORPORATING THE DISCIPLINES OF PRAYER INTO MY LIFE.



### ENGAGING IN PRAYER

[ ] I commit myself to the practice of daily personal prayer.

I will keep a prayer journal.

I will attend a weekly time of prayer with others.

I will fast on a \_\_\_\_\_ basis



## **LEARNING TO PRAY**

I will read the following book(s) on prayer.

I will memorize the following Scriptures on prayer.

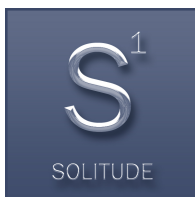


## **THE TARGET OF PRAYER**

I will pray for the following people/groups

- Lost People I know.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Fellow Believers / My Church Family

- My Family
- My Co-workers
- My Government / Those who lead
- My 'Enemies'



## 4. SOLITUDE

### WHAT IS THE DISCIPLINE OF SOLITUDE?

- **Solitude is a discipline of abstinence.**

Solitude makes space — space in our souls and space in our lives — for God to do a deep work inside us and through us in our relationships with others.



## HOW DO YOU DO IT?

The normal way to practice solitude and silence is get alone with God in a quiet place for some hours or days.

- *Walks*
- *Favorite quiet spot*
- *An hour...a week*

*Wherever* but the key is to have all your communication and media devices turned off!

The point of your time in solitude and silence is to do nothing and don't try to make anything happen.

In solitude you're learning to stop doing, stop pleasing people, stop entertaining yourself, stop obsessing, stop... — stop doing anything except to simply be yourself before God and learn to listen to him.

## JESUS' EXAMPLE

### **1. Jesus began his public ministry with 40 days of solitude.**

He was alone, hungry, hot and thirsty, surrounded by wild animals, and tested by Satan. We read this and we feel sorry for Jesus, thinking he was so depleted as to barely survive! But the truth of Jesus' fast is that the Father, the Scriptures, and ministering angels strengthened Jesus! His time alone with God and quietly focused only on him empowered him to resist Satan's temptations (which came at the end of the 40 days) and it focused and prepared him for his public ministry.

### **2. Jesus practiced regular times of solitude.**

Interspersed throughout Jesus' ministry of preaching, healing, and discipling we see him withdraw from the crowds again and again — often getting up very early to do so — in order to be quiet and alone (e.g., Mark 1:35, 3:13, 6:31, 46).



## Principle of the Sabbath

As Christians we do not keep a Sabbath day like ancient Israel did. However, there is a rhythm of life God wants us to understand. Human beings were not designed to work all the time. In fact living on adrenaline for a long time can become harmful to not only our minds but our bodies as well. Studies show that people who don't come down from stress have a much higher incidence of heart disease and the like.

*And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath Mark 2:27*

**We were designed to have a rhythm of life.**

- A balance between work and rest.
- A balance between doing (for God) and being (with God).

Jesus' Rhythm of Life is the secret to how he got renewed in his Father's love and empowered by the Spirit for his life and ministry. In quiet prayer he listened to the Father and received discernment for many things, like picking his 12 Apostles and when to move from one city to the next.

## HOW LONG?

- a. Daily periods of time
- b. A whole day
- c. Extended periods of time:Retreat



## CAUTIONS:

- Solitude can be very uncomfortable: learn to push through the discomfort in order to experience Peace
- Don't use solitude as an excuse to disengage from people. Solitude is a means by which we get reenergized to minister to people. It is not an end to itself.



# MY PLAN FOR INCORPORATING THE DISCIPLINE OF SOLITUDE INTO MY LIFE.



## FINDING SOLITUDE

I will spend daily times of solitude in this quiet place

\_\_\_\_\_.

I will commit to full days of solitude.

- How often: \_\_\_\_\_.

- Possible Locations: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I will find time to have an extended time of retreat \_\_\_\_\_ time per year.



## 5. STEWARDSHIP

### BASIC PRINCIPLES REGARDING OUR STUFF (INCLUDING OUR BODIES).

#### 1. Everything you have is not yours.

- You are a steward of God's Money and Stuff.

*The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. Psalm 24:1*

*The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts.*  
Haggai 2:8

*You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Deut 8:18*

#### 2. Everything you have is temporary.

- God wants us to focus on things that are not temporary.

*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matthew 6:19-21*

- Don't make the mistake of trading the temporary for the eternal.

*"You can't take it with you but you can send it on ahead"*  
Randy Alcorn

#### 3. Where you invest your money and stuff shows where your heart really is.

*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:21*

- God is not so much interested in your money but in your heart.

4. True satisfaction in life does not come from indulging ourselves but from sacrificing for others.



## FINANCES

### *TO TITHE OR NOT TO TITHE?*

#### **a. Old Testament Tithe**

Tithing is an Old Testament concept. The tithe was a requirement of the law in which all Israelites were to give 10 percent of everything they earned and grew to the Tabernacle/Temple.

*Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord. Lev 27:30*

In fact, the Old Testament Law required multiple tithes which would have pushed the total to around 23.3 percent, not the 10 percent which is generally considered the tithe amount today. Some understand the Old Testament tithe as a method of taxation to provide for the needs of the priests and Levites in the sacrificial system.

#### **b. New Testament Standard**

The New Testament nowhere commands, or even recommends, that Christians submit to a legalistic tithe system.

## **So how should Christians give?**

### **1. Christians should set aside a pre-planned portion of their income in order to support the church.**

*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 1 Cor 16:2*

- The New Testament nowhere designates a percentage of income a person should set aside, but only says it is to be “in keeping with income,”
- For some 10% may be a great sacrifice while for others 30 or 40% would be no sacrifice at all.

### **2. Christians should give cheerfully as an act of worship.**

*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Cor 9:7*

### **3. When it comes to giving, Christians should not ask “What can I afford?” but “What can I sacrifice?”**

*And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own.*

2 Cor 8:1-3

### **4. Christians give because it is a privilege not a duty.**

*they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 2 Cor 8:4*

## **LIFE MISSION**

## Calling (capital c)

In Galatians, when Paul seeks to explain to the Galatians the radical change that transformed him from his vocation as a Pharisee to that of an apostle of Christ, it is the word *kaleo* that he uses. Paul says, *"But then something happened! For it pleased God in his kindness to choose me and call (kaleo) me, even before I was born."* Gal 1:15

In Ephesians 4, as Paul writes to encourage these believers who were immersed in a incredibly pagan and secular culture, he reminds them of their vocation as Christians. Paul implores the Ephesians to *"lead a life worthy of your calling (kaleo), for you have been called (kaleo) by God."* Eph 4:1 Yet again, a few sentences later, Paul writes, *"we are all one body, we have the same spirit, and we have all been called (kaleo) to the same glorious future"* (v.4)

- For the apostle Paul there was only one Calling for those who proclaim the name of Christ – and that was the transcendent, metaphysical reality that all who profess faith in Christ are first and foremost children of God.

Christians have but one vocation, or Calling, in this life and that is as members of the same universal body of Jesus Christ. As Christians we are all called to the same glorious future – ministering as a means to the same end. We have been called to be citizens of a different kingdom (Phil3;20). The apostle Peter clearly concurs with Paul's understanding of our vocation as Christians when he writes,

*But you are not like that [people without a sense of purpose or being] , for you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, and his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.* 1 Peter 2:9

Again and again, throughout the pages of Scripture, we are reminded that our Calling as his people far exceeds in importance and purpose any possible job or career in which we might engage, regardless of the status given to it by our particular culture. Our vocation as Christians is to be a holy nation, a royal priesthood, God's own special possession. Our Calling is to be reflectors of the wonderful light of God so that it will illumine the path of others and guide them to hear, understand, and respond to the Calling that God may be issuing to them as well.

- It is only as we connect with our Calling, or true vocation, that we can find meaning and transcendent fulfillment and in our calling.



## Calling (lowercase c)

- The calling refers to our avocation, which as Webster describes it is a "subordinate occupation pursued in addition to one's vocation."

**The calling should always be subordinate to the Calling – the one true transcendent Calling in life that is the reason why we ultimately were born.** When we connect with life's true Calling, we can exercise meaningful, purposeful ministry regardless of the occupation in which we work. (i.e. Paul as a tent maker).



## **MY PLAN FOR INCORPORATING THE DISCIPLINE OF STEWARDSHIP INTO MY LIFE.**



### **GENEROUS GIVING**

In Randy Alcorn’s book “The Treasure Principle” he presents a covenant that captures the heart of giving. The first five points are below. Sign at the bottom if this is where God has you but do not sign lightly.

#### **My Giving Covenant**

1. I affirm God’s full ownership of me and everything entrusted to me.
2. I set aside the firstfruits –at least 10 percent—of every wage and gift I receive as holy and belonging exclusively to the Lord.
3. Out of the remaining treasures God entrusts to me, I seek to make generous freewill gifts.
4. I ask God to teach me to give sacrificially to His purposes, including helping the poor and reaching the lost.
5. Recognizing that I cannot take earthly treasures from this world, I determine to lay them up as heavenly treasures—for Christ’s glory and the eternal good of others and myself.<sup>7</sup>

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>7</sup> Alcorn Randy. The Treasure Principle, p 96

[ ] My firstfruits will go to my home church.

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[ ] Additional offerings will go to these following ministries.

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## **LIFE CALLING**

To the best of your ability, write down what you believe your SPECIFIC calling may be. For example: "My life's calling is to partner with God in the transformation of lives."

I believe the following is my life calling



## 6. SERVICE

The topic of service covers a wide range of things in the Christian life. In this seminar we will focus on two aspects: our witness and our ministry

### WITNESS

*... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

- **A witness is a person who declares on the basis of his personal experience what he knows to be true about Jesus.**
- **To be a witness you do not have to know everything but you must declare what you know.**

1. What might be the nature of the “power” you will receive according to the passage in Acts above?

### **NOT IN THIS ALONE**

We have a great responsibility and privilege to share what we know about Jesus. Lives are on the line.

*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? Rom 10:14*

However, it is never our job to convert someone (Only God can change a heart). We share our experience of Jesus and the truth of the gospel in the hope that God will use us. It is not only up to us. We may be only one

influence among many others that God orchestrated in a person's life. The key is to be faithful to speak when God presents us with an opportunity to preach the Gospel.

*"Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter."* Charles Spurgeon

2. Write in your own words what you think Spurgeon meant by the quote above?

## MINISTRY

### ***YOU ARE NOT OFF THE HOOK!***

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Eph 4:11-13*

- **It is not the pastor's job to do all the ministry of the church.**
- **The Holy Spirit has given every Christian a spiritual gift(s), in addition to our natural talents, in order to build up the Church and expand God's kingdom all over the world.**
- **Therefore, it is your responsibility to discover those gifts and maximize their use.**

This is key to understanding the life calling we talked about in the previous section.

- **Finding the ministry(s) that we were designed for is a vital component in experiencing joy and a life full of real meaning.**



## **MY PLAN FOR INCORPORATING THE DISCIPLINE OF SERVICE INTO MY LIFE.**



### **EVANGELISM**

Through prayer, I will seek to be more aware of the opportunities to share my faith with those that God places before me.

I will seek training to effectively share the Gospel. (We offer a training seminar at WDCC on this very skill)

I will pray for the following lost people that God may open their hearts and present me with the opportunity to share Jesus.



### **MINISTRY**

I will take the spiritual gifts seminar (P.L.A.C.E.) in order to discover my unique place in the church.

I will seek to serve in that ministry area after I complete the course. I will not hesitate to be faithful with what I learn.



## THE DANGER OF IT ALL

This seminar has focused on a variety of disciplines the follower of Jesus should incorporate into his or her life. As we practice these disciplines, God works in and through them to bring about transformation in our lives.

### **BUT THERE IS A DANGER.**

We can get so caught up in doing things – going through the motions – that we forget that our faith is primarily about knowing Jesus not just doing things for Jesus.

Paul said this:

*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*  
Phil 3:10

**So practice the disciplines and watch God  
grow you to be more like Jesus.  
But never forget that it was a person,  
Jesus the Messiah, that saved you, not a  
practice.**