

## Suggestions for Developing a Spiritual Growth Plan

Making a commitment to growth is the second step in our New Hope disciple making process. As part of your commitment, we ask that you make a spiritual growth plan. This plan does not need to be complicated, but it should be thoughtfully constructed taking into account who God is, who he has called you to be, and what he desires for you to do. This growth plan is not primarily designed for accountability, but is a tool to assist in personal reflection. The goal of the Christian faith is to be like Jesus. This requires us to trust and follow him.

In order to effectively navigate with a compass, it is important to know where you are and where you are going (your destination) before plotting a course. The following questions are designed to help assess where you are in your faith journey and what spiritual maturity looks like.

- Where are you?
  - o Have you accepted Jesus as Lord and savior of your life? Have you committed to following Jesus, the good shepherd, or are you going your own way?
  - o What words would you use to describe your faith? Are you more or less enthusiastic about faith now compared with six months ago?
  - o What positive and negative forces have been influencing your faith recently?
  - o How has the Lord been working in your life? In what ways has God been challenging you?
  - o Are there sins for which you need to repent? What sins are complicating your life or stealing your joy?
  - o The Bible tells us to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16). Do you have a close friend who you can talk to about your struggles and who will pray with you?
  
- What does spiritual maturity look like? Here are a few verses to consider. After reading each verse ask, "How does this scripture text relate to spiritual maturity?"
  - o James 1:22-25
  - o Galatians 5:22-23
  - o Romans 12:1-2
  - o 1 Timothy 4:16
  - o Matthew 22:36-40
  - o Philippians 4:6
  - o John 13:34 -35
  - o Matthew 28:19-20
  - o Philippians 4:8
  
- Prayerfully plotting a course.
  - o Three observations about spiritual growth.
  - o Observation 1 --- Jesus is better than anything this world has to offer.
    - If you do not accept and internalize this truth, you will constantly be enticed by things in this world and have difficulty avoiding sin.
    - Please read Philippians 3:8-9
  - o Observation 2 --- Spiritual growth is a process that requires effort.
    - Spiritual growth is a process
      - Philippians 1:25
      - 1 Timothy 4:15
    - Spiritual growth is difficult because we are sinful.

- 1 Corinthians 9:26-27
  - Hebrews 12:1
  - 1 Timothy 4:7-8
- o Observation 3 --- God is the one who produces growth.
- Just as salvation is by grace, sanctification also requires grace.
  - If you seek to become like Jesus through your own creativity, intelligence or will, you will be susceptible to pride and inevitably fail. For, we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. We need the Holy Spirit to work in our lives.
  - 1 Corinthians 3:5-7
  - John 15:5
- o Questions:
- What would it look like to grow in your faith over the next few months?
  - Are there spiritual disciplines you would like to try? (Bible memorization, intercessory prayer, journaling, fasting, reading, solitude, silence)
  - Are you going to get involved in a small group Bible study or 1 on 1 discipleship?
  - How much time are you planning to spend in scripture a day or a week?
- o Some spiritual disciplines to consider:
- Nothing has been more helpful for my personal spiritual growth than Bible reading. God's word is powerful and effective. It is the truth.
  - Prayer is communing, talking, with the Lord.
  - Scripture memory.
  - Reading books about faith. Some books are great others are not. It is wise to seek counsel. I have found Christian classics to be particularly beneficial.
  - Fasting from food is helpful for dealing with selfishness and sin.
  - Fasting from things like social media, stylish clothing, late nights, getting the last word or some form of entertainment can be beneficial when thoughtfully applied.
  - Community is a joy, but also a calling. It is a discipline in that it requires intentional effort and at times sacrifice. Your participation in the lives of others influences not only yourself, but also the rest of the body of Christ.
  - A commitment to Sabbath rest is helpful for busy people at risk of gaining their identity from work.
  - For those inclined toward an academic intellectual faith, it is often helpful to seek to experience more of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord to give you spiritual gifts for the edification of his church.
  - Consider making a commitment to be early. This could be an expression of placing others ahead of self.
  - Consider spending a day fasting from unnecessary words it might be good to let someone else have the last word for a change. Consider making an effort to only say what is necessary and helpful for building others up.
  - Commitment to evangelism and/or neighboring.
  - Participate in leading others for God's glory. God gives unique blessings to those who lead. Consider leading a small group bible study, prayer group, family prayer time, or neighboring initiative.

- If you are interested in more information about spiritual disciplines a good place to start “Celebration of Discipline” by Richard Foster or “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life” by Donald S. Whitney.

➤ **Suggestion for creating a personalized plan**

- o Write out a paragraph or a few bullet points about where you are and how you would like to grow.
- o Your plan can be as simple or complex as you feel is helpful.
- o Consider making your goals specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART).
- o Share and discuss your thoughts with a close friend. Ask for their help, insights, and perhaps accountability.

➤ **Example of a spiritual growth plan:**

Spiritual growth plan for fall 2021

This year I am struggling with trusting the Lord in loss, trials, and disappointments. I know that the Lord is working in my life, yet I frequently find myself feeling anxious or discouraged. In response to this temptation I have endeavored to be vulnerable with others, spend more time in God’s word, practice the spiritual disciplines of ceasing and rest, and engage the battlefield of my mind endeavoring not to indulge sinful thoughts. I reaffirm my commitment to follow Jesus regardless of where he leads. Jesus, your kingdom come, your will be done.

- o This fall I will strive to spend time daily alone with Jesus in prayer and scripture study. (you could specify a specific amount of time like 10 minutes or 1 hour)
- o I will endeavor to pray daily for my family, church, and close friends.
- o I will participate in a small group.
- o I will continue to work on memorizing the book of James. (Or you could specify a few of your favorite verses)
- o I will take a day of rest once a week.
- o I will practice the spiritual discipline of generous giving.
- o I will fast and pray one day a month.