

A Biblical Foundation for a Jesus Follower

Focus on Discipleship

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Discipleship Definitions:

Disciple – *someone who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and is committed to the mission of Jesus (Matt. 4:19).*

Disciple making – *entering into relationships to help people trust and follow Jesus (Matt. 28:18–20), which includes the whole process from conversion through maturation and multiplication.*

Disciple maker – *a disciple of Jesus who enters into relationships with people to help them trust and follow Jesus.*

Discipleship – *the state of being and making a disciple.*

The foundation of biblical discipleship

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

There is not just one “right” way to fulfill the command of Jesus to make disciples. There are many ways to walk this mission out. One common denominator for all effective discipleship is that it must be personal and consistent. The process of discipleship is rooted in relationship. Discipleship is more than assigning a fill-in-the-blank Bible study to an individual or going to church services. It is the impartation of life, the transference of principles, and leading by example.

Obedience to the truth of the Bible must be at the center of discipleship. Discipleship is the building of a biblical foundation in an individual’s life so that they are changed by the Holy Spirit from the inside out.

The goal of discipleship is to nurture growth in one's relationship with God, resulting in Christ like-character, which is based on a solid Biblical foundation, the work of the Holy Spirit and the personal, practical, obedient application of biblical truth.

While there are many useful tools available that can be used for discipleship, it's important to remember that the goal of discipleship is not to get through as many studies as possible. True discipleship is not the accumulation of biblical information

but the development of biblical character. We must have an idea of the outcomes we want to see in the lives of those we disciple, or we may find ourselves drifting aimlessly in our desire to help others.

One of the easiest ways to envision what this looks like is to ask the question, "What does a Jesus Follower look like?" Not an outward description of their appearance or public behavior but a snapshot of their character, motives, attitudes, core beliefs, and their Christ-like/Spirit-led behavior.

In a nutshell:

"Why do I do the things that I do and who do I do them for?"

The honest answer to that question reveals the core values/beliefs that motivate you. It exposes your actual worldview. If we are disciples/followers of Jesus, obedience to His word/principles/truth motivates us as we live to serve Him.

A definition of a disciple, from the words of Jesus

A disciple is one who:

1. Puts Christ first before relationships, self, possessions, and convenience

Luke 14:26,27;33 If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life-- he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple... In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

2. Abides in and obeys the Word

John 8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

3. Loves one another

John 13:34,35 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, if you love one another.

4. Bears fruit (Christ-like character and ministry)

John 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

This prayer from Paul summarizes his thoughts concerning what a disciple should “look like”:

Colossians 1:9-12 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Since we see discipleship as a process that is more than acquiring biblical information, we choose to “measure” the growth of a disciple by the fruit produced in their lives as they desire to follow Jesus and obey His teachings. It is a journey of applying the truth of God’s word to our life so that we are changed from the inside out in such a way that it transforms our worldview and alters our behavior.

This resource looks at some of the fruit that should be produced in the life of someone who has decided to follow Jesus. This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it to be used as a performance-oriented report card.

Think of it as more of a road map on the journey of maturity; identifying some of the mile markers along the way.

The growing fruitfulness in the life of a transformed Jesus Follower can be recognized as a person continues to grow in Christ.

We will never achieve perfect “Christ-likeness” in our lifetime, but our desire should be to continually move towards being more like Him.

Let’s explore some ways that we can grow in our relationship with Him.

The growing fruitfulness in the life of a transformed Jesus Follower is demonstrated in these following ways...

A growing and maturing biblical worldview

1 Chronicles 12:32; Psalm 119:104; Proverbs 2:11; Proverbs 3:5,6; Proverbs 17:27; 2 Corinthians 5:7

Each person has a worldview whether they realize it or not. Our worldview determines the way we view life. A worldview is like a set of filters that affect the

way we perceive things, people, ideas and the world around us. Our worldview can be formed by many things: our upbringing, our environment, our education, our experiences, the culture we are a part of, what we read, watch and partake of in the media. Just about any stimuli that we receive can play a part in shaping our worldview. Unfortunately, many people are not strategic in developing and managing their worldview. Too often a person's worldview is a result of a patchwork of beliefs that are formed more by default and osmosis rather than purposefully and intentionally. Biblical discipleship teaches a person to use God's word as the source of their worldview.

1 Chronicles 12:32 men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do...

To be truly effective as Jesus Followers, we should be able to understand the times in which we live and know how to apply God's word and principles to our culture.

Psalms 119:104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

The filters through which we view the world around us should come from God's word. Many things form the "understanding" of an individual, but we must allow God's principles to supersede any other input that we have in our lives.

Proverbs 2:11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

Having a biblical worldview will provide protection for us because only God knows the best path through life. There are many choices that we must make in life. The decisions made in conjunction with God's principles are the most secure.

Proverbs 3:5,6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

If we try to guide our lives by cultural norms, "common sense" or any form of our own understanding we are potentially walking into a maze of confusion, heartache, and destruction. Only God's principles can guide us through the labyrinth of life successfully.

Proverbs 17:27 A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.

A biblical worldview, which develops knowledge and understanding in our lives, not only will help us alter our attitudes and actions but will help us develop more Godly speech and temper our anger. James 1:19,20 says, "My dear brothers, take note of

this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”

2 Corinthians 5:7 We live by faith, not by sight.

To develop a biblical world view you must choose to walk by faith because often God's principles don't fit into our “common sense” or societal norms. (Isaiah 55:9 As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.)

A growing understanding and depth of spiritual maturity

Hosea 6:3; Romans 12:1,2; Ephesians 3:16-19; Colossians 1:10; Hebrews 13:20-21

Spiritual maturity is not a destination but a journey. We will never become fully “mature” on this earth. We should always be on a journey of spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is not something that happens by osmosis. The path of maturity is not like the military or a union where time in service is credited toward advancement. If we don't take steps to grow in our relationship with the Lord, we won't develop automatically. Biblical discipleship encourages people to take the necessary steps to mature and grow.

Hosea 6:3 (NLT) Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know him! Then he will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring.

To grow in our knowledge of God and to mature in Him we must choose to press in. When we make a move toward God He will respond. If we do nothing, we will stagnate and suffer from our immaturity.

Romans 12:1,2 (Msg) So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Spiritual maturity doesn't occur in a vacuum. It happens as we invite God into our everyday, ordinary life. If we keep God locked up in our "church life" box and never let Him loose in the rest of our lives, we are in danger of being dragged down in immaturity instead of being built up in maturity.

Ephesians 3:16,17 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Growing in spiritual maturity is a unique adventure; first, we must take the initiative to press into God, but we must realize that in our own strength and ability we have no power to properly grow in Him. God, out of His glorious riches, strengthens us through His Spirit. As we grow and mature in Christ, it becomes evident that we can't do it alone. God's love is too broad and long and high and deep for us to fully comprehend it by ourselves. Spiritual maturity is nurtured in the Body of Christ.

Colossians 1:10...live a life worthy of the Lord...bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...

As Christians, we have a responsibility to live a life that is growing in the Lord. God uses organic symbolism often as He talks about our journey with Him. Healthy organisms continue to grow and bear fruit.

Hebrews 13:20,21 May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

God wants us to grow in Him. His will is for us to mature in our faith. At times it seems very difficult to continue to grow in Him. It's encouraging to know God will equip us to grow and develop.

A growing and maturing understanding of God's purpose for their life

Acts 13:36; Acts 20:24; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 3:14; 2 Timothy 1:9; James 4:13-15; 1 John 2:17

Each of us is placed on earth by God to serve a specific purpose. As we discover and walk out God's purpose for our lives, we can be truly effective. Too often Christians live with no purpose. We take life as it comes and hope for the best. Some Christians settle for the general and generic principles that apply to the whole Body of Christ and believe that there are no specific purposes that God has for them. Biblical discipleship encourages people to discover God's specific and unique

purpose for placing them on the planet and then to live a life that seeks to fulfill that purpose.

Acts 13:36 For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep...

God does have general and generic purposes for all Christians, but He also has a specific and unique destiny for each of us. His purpose for our life is integrated with how he "wired" us, and He has placed us in a particular time and place in history to fulfill that purpose.

Acts 20:24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

The task that God gave Paul was testifying to the gospel of God's grace. His goal was to fulfill that task. We need to discover what task the Lord has given us and make that the foundation of our life's purpose.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

As we live a life that is being transformed by God's principles, we are in a position to discern God's will for our life. (The Greek word used for "test and approve" is "dokimazo" which can be translated "discern.")

1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

As followers of Jesus, we need to run everything we do, even the "mundane" things, through the filter of God's design for our life. As we live according to His will, we bring glory to Him. (John 17:4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.)

Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Each of us has a responsibility to live our lives in a way that honors God's purpose for our existence. To effectively accomplish this we must, at least, have a fundamental understanding of His purpose for our life.

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of

me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul realized that Jesus “took hold” of him for a purpose. His life was focused on pursuing that purpose. He chose to not let his disobedient past stop him from moving forward.

2 Timothy 1:8,9 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life--not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace...

God has a purpose for every aspect of His creation. His purpose is not determinate on anything we do. His purpose is consistent. The variable in the equation is us...we must make a choice to serve His purpose.

James 4:13-15 Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

We need to develop the habit of lining up our plans, dreams, and desires with God's will (purpose). Too often we live our lives independent of His guidance in the "small" things of life and only look for His will in the "big" things or in times of chaos and crisis.

1 John 2:17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

To understand and obey God's will provides for us a foundation of stability and security.

A growing and maturing awareness of becoming more like Jesus in the way they relate to God and people

Matthew 20:26-28; Luke 5:16; Luke 22:42; John 12:49; Romans 15:7; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:5-7; 1 John 2:6

WWJD has become a trendy acronym in the church; we see it on necklaces, rings, bracelets, shirts, etc. It stands for, "What Would Jesus Do." As Jesus Followers, we need to take time to think about our attitudes and actions from God's perspective.

We need to live our lives through God's filters. As disciples of Christ, we need to go beyond theoretical concepts of who Jesus was and how He lived and progress to the place that we are choosing to act like Jesus in our attitudes and actions. Biblical discipleship teaches people the principles of Jesus so that they can adjust the procedures of their life to line up with them.

Matthew 20:26-28 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The whole foundation of Jesus' life was servant-hood. He served God obediently and therefore served others as a result. We can't live like Christ if we don't serve.

Luke 5:16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Jesus made the time to connect with God. Life can get very busy and alone time with God can get squeezed out by many things. We must make the time to connect with the Father like Jesus did.

Luke 22:42 Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

When Jesus prayed this prayer, He was facing His arrest, torture, and crucifixion. Even in the face of incredible turmoil and inevitable pain, He chose God's will over His will. We need to embrace God's will over our own convenience and comfort.

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

As Jesus was hanging on the cross, He forgave those who were crucifying Him. Those people didn't deserve to be forgiven, and most of them didn't want to be forgiven. Jesus showed us what true forgiveness is.

John 12:49 For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it.

Jesus ran His speech and His actions through God's filters. We need to take the time to allow God to approve of what we say and how we say it before we let it come out of our mouths.

Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Just as Christ has accepted us amid our imperfections, we need to accept others. Acceptance of a person doesn't mean you condone their behavior. Jesus received people that others had pushed away because He could see them through God's eyes.

Ephesians 5:2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Christ lived a life of love. Not just a love that was a warm fuzzy emotion but a love that expressed itself through His actions. We need to love like Christ... love that is sacrificial.

Philippians 2:5-7 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Jesus had the "right" to take up a position of authority. He could have demanded others to serve Him. He could have walked in arrogant pride, but He chose to be a servant.

1 John 2:6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did

Striving to become more like Jesus in how we relate to God and people should be a byproduct of our relationship with Him. As a Jesus Follower, it is not an option but a command.

A growing and maturing cooperation with the Holy Spirit's work in their life

Psalms 143:10; Ezekiel 36:27; John 14:16,17; Romans 8:9; Galatians 5:16; 2 Timothy 1:14; 1 John 2:27

We all know that life is hard. There are many challenges that we face. The good news is that God has not left us here to figure it all out on our own. We don't have to navigate this life alone. We don't have to rely on our own resources and intelligence. We don't have to hope for the "lucky breaks." He has given us the Holy Spirit as a helper along the journey. At times it may seem like the path ahead is bleak or impassable, but God has made a way...through His Spirit. Biblical discipleship helps people understand the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives and teaches them how to cooperate with Him.

Psalms 143:10 Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

There are times when we know the right thing to do, but we still need help to do the right thing. The Holy Spirit will lead us if we give Him permission.

Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

The Holy Spirit not only helps us follow God's principles, but He will actually help motivate us to do God's will if we allow him an active role in our life.

John 14:16,17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

The Holy Spirit is always there for us, 24/7. He is there in the good times and the bad times.

Romans 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

As we allow the Spirit to work in our life, He will help us in the battle of the flesh. As Christians, we have the Spirit of Christ, and we need to allow Him to work in us. Too often we try to fight battles on our own, and we can be defeated that way. If we let the Spirit of God lead us in our battles, we can walk in victory. (1 John 4:4 You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.)

Galatians 5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

The sinful nature seems to scream out for gratification. Sometimes the pull from that nature can be overwhelming. If we try to combat this with our own strength and wisdom, we will be on a roller coaster ride, but if we live by the Spirit's power, we don't have to gratify our sinful nature.

2 Timothy 1:14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you--guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

God has made quite an investment in us. He has deposited His grace gifts in us so that we can serve others. (1 Peter 4:10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.) When we live a selfish and disobedient lifestyle, that deposit is not built upon and

not only do we suffer but so do others. The Holy Spirit will help us guard and develop what God has deposited in us.

1 John 2:27 As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit--just as it has taught you, remain in him.

It's easy to feel like we are at a disadvantage if we haven't been able to have access to "great" teachers of the Word. We could feel like we are hampered because we don't go to church that has one of the country's "super" teachers. While it is true that some individuals have a gift of teaching and it is a real blessing to listen to them speak, the ultimate teacher is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes God's word alive to us whether we are reading it alone or are listening to a pastor, small group leader, etc. With God's Spirit in our lives, every day can become a learning experience as we walk with Him.

A growing and maturing ability to listen to and obey God as the result of His enabling Grace

1 Corinthians 15:10; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2 Corinthians 6:1; Titus 2:11,12; Hebrews 12:15

The real power of our Christian life comes as we obey God's will. Often God's will is clearly stated in His word and very obvious. Sometimes it's a challenge to know God's will. Other times, we know His will but are hesitant to obey it. How do we learn to discern His will and obey Him? God gives us His grace to help. There are many definitions of grace; one is, "Anything God uses in our lives to get us from point A to point B," another one is, "The power to know and obey God's will." Biblical discipleship equips people to understand how God's grace helps us to obey Him.

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

God's grace is an intricate part of His will for our lives. We are nothing without His grace. We have no purpose without His grace. His grace has a deep and lasting effect on our lives. Paul understands the delicate balance of our responsibility as Christians to work hard at obeying God's will for our lives while realizing that our hard work and faithfulness is nothing without God's grace.

2 Corinthians 1:12 Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the

holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.

As we walk along the path of life, we occasionally find it challenging to walk in sincerity and holiness. Circumstances can arise at work, in our families and friends that can put us in awkward situations. Sometimes there are occasions when we have to make split-second decisions concerning the "gray areas" of life. If we rely on worldly wisdom, we will grow more confused and frustrated. As we live through God's grace even the "gray areas" will become clearer and more focused.

2 Corinthians 6:1 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.

If we walk in ignorance, rebellion and/or disobedience, we are not taking advantage of the grace God has given us to be victorious in Him. We all receive God's grace, but if we don't take advantage of it, we have received it in vain.

Titus 2:11,12 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

As we mature in the Lord, we desire to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives. There are many ways that people try to achieve this goal. If we attempt to accomplish this goal in our own strength and understanding, exercising our own will-power and self-discipline, we can become legalistic and like those Paul described to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:2-5—having a form of godliness but denying it's power. If we strive to meet this goal with God's grace as our motivating force, we can overcome sin and obey Him.

Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Even though God's grace is available to us, we can still miss it if we walk in selfishness and disobedience. God's grace is available to us in any and every situation we face (2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.") but if we miss it then we can't take advantage of His amazing grace.

A growing desire to study and apply the Scriptures in such a way that transforms beliefs, values, and behaviors

Psalms 119:9; Psalm 119:11; John 8:31,32; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; James 1:22; 1 Peter 1:22

People try many ways to improve their lives. God's word is the best way to transform every aspect of your life. Just reading or hearing God's word is not where the true power is—putting His word into practice and obeying what the Bible teaches is where the real power is located. Understanding and applying God's word to our lives can change us from the inside out—not only our behavior but our motives. Biblical discipleship teaches people how to understand God's word but more importantly how to practically apply it to their everyday life.

Psalm 119:9;11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

In this day and age, many temptations are out there to draw us off the right path. With the explosion of technology, there has also been an explosion of opportunities to disobey God's principles. We are faced with more ways to sin than ever before. The culture we live in embraces sinful behavior as the norm. Things that used to be frowned upon, even by non-Christians, are now tolerated and applauded—even in some churches. God's word needs to remain our anchor. As we hide His word in our hearts and apply it to our lives, we can live an upright life in this wicked and perverse generation.

John 8:31,32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

We often hear verse 32 quoted, "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" without it being put in the proper context. Freedom comes as we obey God's word, and then we know the truth, and the truth will set us free. Just hearing or "knowing" the truth does nothing more than give you head knowledge.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

As God's word takes up residence in us, we are then able to reach out to others and practically help them. Without a proper foundation and continually refilled reservoir of His word we can't help others with the powerful wisdom of His principles.

2 Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

It is our responsibility to press in and learn God's word. Not just learn the facts and information of His word but how to handle His word in a way that we can apply it as we build our lives. This doesn't just happen by going to church or hearing

sermons and teachings on the Bible. We must take the initiative and take steps to accomplish this through personal study of the Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 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.

The Bible is God's word for mankind. It's not just a book of beautiful prose and inspirational ideas. As we learn His word and apply it to our lives, it will prepare us for everything we will face in life. There is not an area of life that God's word will not help us deal with in a way that will allow us to make the best decisions, according to His plan and purpose for our lives.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

The real power of God's word is released when we obey what it says. If we think that hearing His word without putting into practice what we hear is going to help us become the people that He desires, we are only deceiving ourselves.

1 Peter 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

As we obey God's word, it literally will purify us from the inside out. The most effective changes in our lives come from within. When our motives and attitudes are transformed by God's word, we find that the outward actions and behavior begins to reflect the inward change.

A growing and maturing lifestyle of flexibility and thankfulness

Psalms 110:4; Romans 8:28; 2 Corinthians 4:7-9; Ephesians 1:11; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 2:14; Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

One thing can be said of life, "Constant change is here to stay." The fluid nature of life can throw a wrench in our plans and intentions. When things don't turn out the way we want we can become disillusioned, angry, and bitter if we haven't learned to be flexible because of a foundation of thankfulness in our hearts. When we have a biblical perspective of life, we can go with the flow with an attitude of thankfulness because we understand that God is ultimately in control of everything. Biblical discipleship equips people to see things through God's perspective and build a foundation of thankfulness that breeds flexibility.

Psalms 110:4 The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind...

We can take anything life throws us in stride because we know that God is in control and He is not fickle like we are. If things don't make sense to us, we can be thankful that He knows what is happening.

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

We can embrace the challenges of life with a thankful heart when we realize that God is working for us and watching over us as we walk in His love.

2 Corinthians 4:7-9 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

If we try to handle all of the challenges of life in our own power we will be crushed, despairing, abandoned and destroyed. If we allow God's power to work in us no matter what happens, we can be victorious.

Ephesians 1:11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will

We can be thankful no matter what happens in our lives because we serve a God who is not bound by circumstances. Even when the most horrible and unjust things happen in our lives, we can turn to the One who has the power to conform everything to the purpose of His will.

Philippians 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

As Jesus Followers, we have a responsibility to respond biblically to any situation that arises. Many Christians act as if they have the option to respond to life however they see fit. If we are having a good day, then we respond in a Christ-like manner, but if things aren't going our way, we respond in whatever way is convenient. God wants us to mature in a way that our default setting is one of obedience.

Philippians 2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing,

In our democrat society, we have the privilege to debate and voice our opposition to many things. Unfortunately, this has crept into the body of Christ, and many feel that they have the right to violate God's word through their attitudes and speech. Jesus Followers live by a different set of laws.

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

The true key to thankfulness is a matter of the heart. If our hearts are consumed by this world and the concerns of this world, it will be challenging to be thankful. If our hearts are consumed by Christ and ruled by His peace, then thankfulness becomes a natural byproduct.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

A growing and maturing ability to work with others, especially those different than themselves

Romans 12:18; Romans 14:1; Romans 14:19; Romans 15:1; Romans 15:7; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13; Colossians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:11,12; 1 Timothy 3:7; Titus 3:1,2; Hebrews 12:14

There are many different kinds of people in this world. Some are easy to get along with, and others seem to grate on our nerves no matter what. This is even true in the body of Christ. As Christians, we have a responsibility to humble ourselves so that we can interact with and cooperate with many different kinds of people. Biblical discipleship helps equip people to see others through God's eyes and treat others as Christ treats them.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Of course, some people are incredibly challenging to live in peace with. When we come across those people, we can't just ignore them or justify our rudeness because they are so difficult. Before God, we have a responsibility to respond in a Christ-like manner toward them.

Romans 14:1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

It's easier to work with and accept others when they are like us when they have the same beliefs as we do. Occasionally we even feel justified to ignore or ridicule those who are not "living up to our standards." God wants us to reach out to those types of individuals without passing judgment on them.

Romans 14:19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Sometimes certain people are so difficult to get along with that it's easy to justify why we shouldn't even waste our time trying. God desires that we take the time to make an effort.

Romans 15:1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

Often our rejection of others is because we feel superior to them. "Why should we have to put up with the weak?" is a very prevalent mentality. One of the primary roots of this attitude is selfishness. We are called to bear with the failings of those around us who are weaker than we are.

Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

God has given us the perfect example of what it means to accept those who are different than we are—His name is Jesus. We see Jesus working with all different types of people. All you have to do to see how far God will go to accept a totally messed up person is to look in the mirror. At whatever point Jesus has not accepted you, then you are free to not accept another person. Of course, we know that Jesus has always reached out to us with love, acceptance, and forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

We can't work with others well if we don't humble ourselves and see everything through God's perspective. Once we see things through God's filters, then we are more motivated to humble ourselves and love others.

Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Forgiveness can be difficult because it deals with such deep emotional issues. We can't allow grievances to pile up and affect our relationships with others. People not only do this with individuals but also with groups and races. As Christians, we have a responsibility to forgive others like we have been forgiven—thoroughly and without strings attached.

Colossians 4:5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

As Christians, we can do quite a bit to damage the testimony of Christ if we don't learn to work well with those outside of the Body of Christ. Every time we engage those outside of God's church, we have an opportunity—an opportunity to represent

Christ well or represent Him poorly. We need to make the most of every opportunity.

1 Thessalonians 4:11,12 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Unfortunately, in today's culture, Christianity doesn't have the best of reputations. This can change if we, as individual Christians, live lives of servanthood that wins respect instead of selfish lives that lose the respect of others.

1 Timothy 3:7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Too often Christians are more concerned about their reputation and relationship in the church than they are with their reputations and relationships in the world. If we treat non-Christians with disrespect and rudeness, we have become snared by the enemy's strategy, and we may end up doing more harm than good for the Kingdom.

Titus 3:1,2 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.

The best way to work with others, especially those who are different than you, is to enter into the relationship with humility.

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

The only one who is truly holy is God. God is pure and righteous and is justified if He chose to turn His back on those who don't agree with Him. God's holiness didn't cause Him to turn from us, it caused Him to turn to us. Shunning those who are different, ridiculing those who are lost, judging those who are immature—these are not acts of holiness, they are acts of pride and selfishness.

A growing and maturing lifestyle of servanthood

Matthew 16:24,25; Matthew 20:26,27; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:3,4

The topic of servanthood could be one of the primary concepts that confuse non-Christians the most. The world tells us to look out for number one, to do what you must to get ahead regardless of who you step on along the way. Watch "reality" TV, and you get a lesson in selfishness. Manipulative and cunning people are applauded

in our society as long as they don't "hurt" anyone in the process. Amid a selfish society, the servant principles of Jesus stand out in stark contrast to the cultural norms. As a Jesus Follower, it is a never-ending battle to combat our selfish tendencies. Biblical discipleship not only helps foster a foundation of servanthood in the lives of others but models it.

Matthew 16:24,25 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

To be a follower of Jesus means you are expected to be a servant. In His economy, we gain when we choose to be a servant. If we insist on holding on to our "rights" and operate in selfishness, we will slowly sap the supernatural power of God from our lives. Even though the world doesn't work like this, we belong to God's kingdom, and we need to follow His ways.

Matthew 20:26,27 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave

A sign of success in our society is to have others serve you. The more successful you are, the less you need to do for others. The power of Christianity is the power of servanthood. When we are able to die to our selfishness, we are able to rise to true Kingdom "greatness".

1 Corinthians 10:24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

To develop into the kind of people God wants us to be, we need to put on different filters with which to view life. We need to adjust the way we perceive our role on this planet. We need to understand that God placed us on the earth to serve Him and therefore others.

Philippians 2:3,4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

For most of us, if we are able to raise people up to our level, we are doing an extraordinary thing. We have accomplished a noble act by looking at others as equals to ourselves. God says that He wants us to take a step beyond that and consider others better than us...something that can only be done by the grace of God through the power of His Spirit.

A growing ability to share the gospel in a practical, articulate, confident and compassionate manner

Ezekiel 33:7-9; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16; Romans 10:14; 2 Corinthians 5:20

The Bible says that we are ambassadors of Christ. He relies on His children to be able to represent Him accurately and share with others the message of the gospel. Biblical discipleship equips people to share the gospel in a way that is not only practical and articulate but also genuine and compassionate.

Ezekiel 33:7-9 Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.

God brings us in contact with people who need to hear the message of the gospel. Our responsibility is to share it, we aren't responsible for what they chose to do with the gospel. Often times Christians don't want to share because they feel that the person, they would be speaking to, will reject the message. If they refuse the message, that is on them. God just wants us to be faithful to communicate the Message.

Acts 1:8 But 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."

We don't need to be afraid when it comes to sharing our faith because God gives us the power to do it. We need to allow His Spirit to lead and guide us as we witness for Christ.

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

This world tries to make us ashamed of being Christians and embarrassed about our beliefs. There is no need to be ashamed because the only answer for mankind is contained in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:14 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?

"Don't preach at me" is a common response we hear today. If we are insensitive, pushy or rude, perhaps our "preaching" is offensive and inappropriate. If we share the gospel with a heart of love and compassion, our "preaching" can be the vehicle

through which God sets a person free. Our culture's disdain for the gospel being shared shouldn't keep us from lovingly sharing it when God leads us to.

2 Corinthians 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

God can and has in the past personally confronted people with the fact they need to turn to Him and receive Christ. (Acts 9:1-6 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.") But, more often than not, the method God uses is one person sharing with another person the message of hope, forgiveness, and love through Jesus Christ. If we aren't open to God using us to meet the divine appointments that He has arranged for us, then we are missing out on the blessings that God has for us and others.

A growing and maturing commitment to continue to be involved in God's work through the local church

Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Ephesians 3:10, 11; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 10:25

Over the years, as life has become busier and busier, the church has become less and less important in the lives of many people. The church can be perceived as just another activity rather than the powerful force that God intended it to be. Going to church should be more than just punching a timecard to appease God. He designed the church to be an intrinsic part of His plan and purpose for planet earth. Biblical discipleship teaches us the importance and role of the church and shows us how to get involved in the local church.

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

In the early days of Christianity, there wasn't a western, market-driven idea of what the church should be. There was just the church, boiled down to the raw ingredients and practices. Today, though the cultural context is very different, the same foundational components and expressions should still be evident:

1) Commitment to solid, biblical, balanced teaching. (Apostle's teaching)

2) Commitment to the family of God on a deeper level than just going to the same building for an hour a week. (The fellowship [koinonia- partnership, i.e., participation, or communion, fellowship])

3) Commitment to hanging out together and sharing life. (Breaking of bread)

4) A lifestyle of individual and corporate reliance on and dialogue with God (Prayer)

These foundation principles were what the early church devoted themselves to as a community of believers.

1 Corinthians 14:12 So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church.

As we mature in the Lord and develop the gifts He's given us, our goal should be to use those gifts in the church for the building up of the church.

Ephesians 3:10, 11 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The church is not an afterthought of God's plan. It is a part of His eternal purpose, and the church is on display to the heavenly realms as a testimony of His manifold wisdom. Each individual believer has a role to play in this cosmic production, and the only way we can fully realize our potential in Him is through the church.

1 Timothy 3:15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

The church is not only God's household, but it is the very pillar and foundation of truth. Because of its importance to the big picture of God's kingdom we should take our involvement with the church very seriously.

Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The church is a place for encouragement and support. As we move further into the last days, it is an essential shelter for those who call upon the name of Jesus.

A growing and maturing lifestyle of worship, prayer, and spiritual warfare

1 Chronicles 16:11; Matthew 26:41; Romans 12:1; Romans 12:12; 2 Corinthians 10:4,5; Ephesians 6:10-18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17

We will face many challenges in life. Some challenges are with other people and circumstances, while others have more “spiritual” roots. The Bible teaches us that the devil is on a constant mission to destroy God’s work on this planet. (John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...) Because we are a big part of God's plan and purpose, the devil wants to do all he can to distract us and cause us to be ineffective in our lives as Christians. To some, this may seem like a sad situation, but God has provided a strategy for us to be victorious in the battles that arise. We need to understand that living a victorious Christian life is only possible by putting into practice spiritual principles taught by God's word. If we try to live according to our own intellect, wisdom, and understanding, we will not be able to win the spiritual battles because human weapons are no good in spiritual battles. Biblical discipleship teaches people the importance of spiritual warfare, the components of spiritual warfare and how to walk in proper balance as they engage in spiritual warfare.

1 Chronicles 16:11 Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

To be victorious in the spiritual battles of life, we must be consistent in our relationship with God. We must always look to Him and His strength and always seek His answers.

Matthew 26:41 Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Most Christians want to do the right things, but our flesh is weak. We can try all kinds of “tricks” to combat the flesh, exercise all the self-control and self-discipline we can muster, but the best place to start is with prayer.

Romans 12:1,2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Living life in obedience to God's word is a form of worship to Him.

2 Corinthians 10:4,5 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

The weapons of this world consist of those things that man can do on his own and with his own ability. The weapons that we need to use to fight the spiritual battles of life find their place in God. They not only help us walk victoriously, but they literally demolish the strongholds that wage war in our lives.

Ephesians 6:10-18 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

The battles we fight, regardless of their origin or combatants, are not against other people but ultimately against spiritual forces. This is why we need to fight our battles with spiritual weapons, in a spiritual context. We can't rely on our armor. Our armor consists of man's answers, man's intellect, and man's wisdom. God's armor is all about His wisdom, power, and glory. In Romans 13:14 Paul tells us that one way to fight the battles of temptation is to clothe ourselves with Christ. (Romans 13:14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.)

When we put on the armor of God, we are putting on Jesus:

Belt of truth -- Jesus is the truth:

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Breastplate of righteousness -- Jesus is our righteousness:

Romans 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace – Jesus is the Gospel and Peace

2 Timothy 2:8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Shield of faith – Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Helmet of salvation – Jesus is our salvation

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God – Jesus is the Word of God

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

There are many reasons to be anxious in life. Inevitably things happen that can cause stress. God has given us a way to deal with the stress and anxiety of life — prayer.

Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

We need to be purposeful about prayer. We need to be strategic in our prayers. We need to make prayer a priority.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 pray continually

Praying should become a part of the fabric of our lives, not a ceremony or ritual that is disconnected with the rest of our existence.

A growing and maturing character through the fruit of the Spirit

John 15:16; 2 Corinthians 8:7; Galatians 5:22,23; Colossians 1:10; 2 Peter 1:5-8

When God chose us as His children, He had a grand plan for us. His plan included a maturation process that would develop Godly character in our lives. To be a productive part of God's kingdom we need to make a commitment to develop the character that reflects Christ in our lives. You've heard the saying, "God loves you just the way you are." That is true, but He loves you so much He doesn't want you to stay the way you are. Biblical discipleship has at its heart the development of Godly character. Without moving toward developing Christ-like character in an individual's life, we really don't have authentic discipleship.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

From God's perspective, a natural part of our salvation is the development of godly character in our lives. When He chose us, He had that outcome in mind.

2 Corinthians 8:7 But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

Christianity is not passive. Growing, vibrant and effective Christians are excelling in those things that bring glory to God.

Galatians 5:22,23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.

There are many ways that people define "fruit" in the context of the Christian life. The fruit of the Spirit has to do with our character. As maturing Jesus Followers, we must deal with the character issues in our lives. The society we live in, our culture, and our own sinful nature fight against true Godly character. If we are

unintentional about developing Godly character in our life, it most likely will not happen.

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

The Bible makes it clear that the healthy growth of a Christian involves producing good fruit and growing in our knowledge of God. As we mature in Christ, our lives should be altered by His presence in us.

2 Peter 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 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.

From the context of what Peter is saying it seems as if we have a choice to make. We can choose to develop Godly character, or we can avoid it. We are free to make our choices, but we are not free to choose the consequences of our choices. If we are growing in character, in increasing measure, then we will be effective and productive in our Christian walk. If we chose to take the path of least resistance and opt for convenience, comfort, and selfishness, then we will flounder in an ineffective and unproductive Christian life.

A growing and maturing lifestyle of Scripture memorization

Psalms 37:31; Psalm 40:8; Psalm 119:11

God's word is a powerful force in our lives. It is very effective when we are able to commit it to memory and store it deep within us. When we have scripture memorized, we are able to call upon it at any time. We are not restricted to having a Bible in our possession or notes we can look at. We are able to respond to divine appointments at a moment's notice if His word is in our heart. Biblical discipleship not only stresses the importance of scripture memorization but also teaches others how to accomplish it.

Psalms 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.

When God's word is in our heart, it provides positive spiritual traction that helps us keep from slipping. If His word is in us, the Holy Spirit can draw upon it in our times of temptation.

Psalm 40:8 I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.

When we store God's word in our hearts, it helps us in our desire to do what is right. If His word is planted in our lives the roots of His word go deep and begin to alter us from the inside out.

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

When we are tempted God says that He will provide an escape route for us. (1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.) One of the ways He does this is by bringing His word to the forefront of our minds to steer us in the right direction. We can't underestimate the power of His word as it grows in our lives.

A growing and maturing lifestyle of discernment

Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 10:23; Ephesians 5:15; Philippians 1:9,10

Many people question what God's will for their life is. A lot of time and money is spent trying to figure out God's will. Whatever God's ultimate and specific will is for your life, the foundation of His will for you is actually pretty simple: be joyful, pray and give thanks no matter what happens.

As we grow in the Lord, we need to grow in our biblical discernment. Discernment enables us to make the right choices in life. There are times when we need to make choices that are difficult. There are times when it seems like we need the wisdom of Solomon to know what the right decision is. As we understand God's character and get to know Him more intimately, then we will be able to make decisions based on principle instead of passion. Biblical discipleship trains people on how to develop discernment in their lives based on God's word.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Many people want to know God's will first then they feel they would have the power to obey. When we obey God first, and our minds become transformed we will then be able to enjoy the discernment that comes as we mature in Him.

1 Corinthians 6:12 Everything is permissible for me"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"--but I will not be mastered by anything.

Just because certain things are “legal” or allowable doesn’t mean they are beneficial to our lives. Discernment allows us to let Jesus be our master instead of other things.

1 Corinthians 10:23 Everything is permissible"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive.

Discernment lets us see the big picture. Without biblical insight we just live according to the moment, not always realizing how decisions today may affect tomorrow. As we walk in discernment, we can look further down the path and see how our actions have long term consequences.

Ephesians 5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise

There are times that decisions we make may not involve "right" and "wrong" but "wise" and "unwise." Those kinds of decisions can only be rendered correctly with biblical discernment.

Philippians 1:9,10 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ...

As we grow in Christ, we have the opportunity to grow in our discernment. We can walk in purity and victory, as we are able to discern what is best.

A growing and maturing commitment to walk in forgiveness

Matthew 6:12;14-15; Matthew 18:21-35; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:37; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13

Christianity revolves around forgiveness. God did the most extreme thing so that He could forgive rebellious mankind—He sent His own son to be framed, tortured and murdered. Forgiveness cost God everything. He has set the pace for us in forgiveness. He demonstrated that forgiveness is not about emotion, convenience or the offending party’s humility or repentance. He has shown us that forgiveness is an act of the will that may be disregarded by those we seek to forgive. He expects us to also forgive. Forgiveness is not an option for those who have been forgiven by Christ. Biblical discipleship helps us realize the sobriety of forgiveness and our mandate from God to walk in forgiveness. It helps us experience the freedom of taking people off our hooks and putting them on God’s hook.

Matthew 6:12;14-15 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

God takes forgiveness very seriously. To forgive us Jesus gave His life, even while we were His enemies. (Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!) God expects us to forgive others.

Matthew 18:21-35 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents b was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

When we compare how much God has forgiven us, compared to what we need to forgive others for, it is way out of proportion. God has forgiven us for a lifetime of sin; if translated into money it would be millions of dollars (maybe more). What we need to forgive others for is small in comparison.

Mark 11:25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

When we choose not to forgive others, we are creating a barrier between God and ourselves.

Luke 6:37 Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

The biblical principle of the law of the harvest (Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows) applies to this area of forgiveness. When we choose not to forgive, we are hurting ourselves not just those we think we are hurting by not forgiving them.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Occasionally people are hurt deeply by others. They feel that the depth of the pain and the severity of the injustice excuse them from not forgiving. The plumb line that God uses to determine whether we are obligated to forgive others is not the emotion connected with the offense. He uses Jesus as His standard. If Jesus wouldn't forgive you for a particular sin, then you are not obligated to forgive anyone who commits that sin against you. If Jesus would forgive you, then you are obligated to forgive also.

Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Forgiveness isn't always easy. It takes real commitment. We not only need to be committed to the Lord, but we must be committed to one another. If we are committed to bearing with one another, then we need to walk in forgiveness so that the grievances that inevitably occur in relationships won't accumulate and give way to bitterness and hatred. When people are estranged, forgiveness is the first step towards reconciliation.

A growing and maturing desire to disciple others

Matthew 28:19,20; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Colossians 1:28,29; 2 Timothy 2:2

In the human body each individual cell has two purposes: sustain its life and sustain the life of the body. In the Body of Christ each individual Christian has two purposes: sustain their life--through growing in their walk with God and staying connected with Him—and sustain the life of the body—through using their gifts to strengthen the body and by discipling others. Many people are intimidated when they think about discipling another person because they don't think they are spiritual enough or knowledgeable enough. To effectively disciple someone you don't have to be a Bible scholar or minister, all you need to do is share with someone the things God has taught you. Each of us is at least a few steps ahead of someone else and can help them on the journey. Biblical discipleship equips people to turn around and start discipling others.

Matthew 28:19,20 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

These verses are often called the "Great Commission" and are used to encourage people to witness and evangelize. Witnessing and evangelism are good, but the emphasis in these verses is discipleship. Each of us has a responsibility before God to make disciples.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Discipling others is not just about conveying "book knowledge." It is about imparting life. The old adage is true, "More is caught than taught." To be an effective disciple maker, we must have the courage, like Paul in this verse, to say, "Watch me."

Colossians 1:28,29 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

As we disciple others, we have the assurance that God is the one working in us in a mighty way if we allow Him to.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Discipleship should be self-perpetuating. We are being disciplined—we disciple others—they disciple others and so on. Part of the power of the early church was the commitment they had to make disciples, not just accumulating converts.

Components to assist in our spiritual development:

An intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ

Having relationships that are built on open and honest accountability

Regular dialogue with God

Systematic Bible study

Scripture memorization

Commitment to a community of believers Involvement in practical ministry

Involvement in making disciples

Opportunities for outreach and evangelism

In the book, “Banding Together - A Practical Guide for Disciple Makers” by John Wiest, is a list of 5 convictions that a framework for effective discipleship is built upon:

- Conviction #1: The Process Is Simple
- Conviction #2: The Curriculum Is the Bible
- Conviction #3: The Teacher Is the Holy Spirit
- Conviction #4: The Focus Is Obedience
- Conviction #5: The Result Is Multiplication

In our ministry, we encourage people to gather in groups of 3 to 5 people to discover who Jesus is and how He wants to interact with us regularly. Our goal is to follow Christ together and become the people that God envisions us to be. We will do this by encouraging each other to hear and obey what Jesus taught (Matthew 7:24). Through mutual accountability and encouragement, we will strive to inspire each other to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24).

We have developed this covenant for those committing to a journey of intentional discipleship through these Discovery Groups (D-Groups):

OUR COVENANT

I will seek to grow as a person who follows Christ by engaging in the following spiritual disciplines:

Consistently Reading the Bible, meditating on what I have read, and learning to practice what it teaches.

Trusting God to help me align my life to His ways and depending on His power to help me walk in victory and obedience.

Regularly Journaling with the L.I.F.E. Application Sheet format to record what I am learning as I read the Bible.

Being Honest when I share my insights, thoughts, struggles, and victories with the group.

Frequently Praying for those I know who need to know and follow Jesus and His ways.

Sharing the story of God's work in my life and the story of God's love in Christ with others as God gives me an opportunity.

We have created a D-Group Journal to help facilitate the process of making disciples. Contact us through www.kalaheomissionary.com to find out more info and download an electronic copy of the journal.