

Discovery Group (D-Group)

Facilitator's Guide



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Intentional and Organic Discipleship Strategy

We believe that the Father has given us a strategy to help lead people to obey the commandment of Jesus to make disciples and teach them to obey all that He has commanded.

We have created a framework and tool to help people make disciples who make disciples.

This tool is based on a strategy that is working all over the world.

Some of the wording comes from what the Wesley brothers started using in the late 1700's and within 50 years impacted over 6 million people who became born-again and disciplined. The book, "Banding Together - A Practical Guide for Disciple Makers" by John Wiest is the resource that provides the foundational principles for our strategy.

Some of this wording comes from our ministry partners at NOVO.org and our partners at kcunderground.org

Most of it is the accumulation of what the Father has been doing in my life for decades.

Here are the 5 principles that this framework is built upon:

Principle #1: The Process Is Simple

Principle #2: The Curriculum Is the Bible

Principle #3: The Teacher Is the Holy Spirit

Principle #4: The Focus Is Obedience

Principle #5: The Result Is Multiplication

Our strategy involves creating groups of 3-5 people, called Discovery or D-Groups, that will meet weekly for 1-1.5 hours. Each group has a facilitator who will help lead people in the foundational aspects of regularly reading, meditating, and applying God's word to their lives, sharing what they are learning with others, and praying for the people they know who need to relinquish control of their lives to Christ.

The goal is for each person in the D-Group to eventually identify 3-5 people in their oikos (sphere of influence) who are spiritually curious and start a D-Group with them and then for those 3-5 to do the same, etc.

We are providing tools to help everyone involved to stay focused and consistent.

These tools include topics to discuss, journaling options, and accountability questions that can be discussed each week as well as some practical tips on prayer and a G.R.O.W.T.H. Sheet that helps a person record what they are learning.

We will have regular meetings for all D-Group leaders for ongoing encouragement, equipping, etc.

WHAT IS A DISCOVERY GROUP (D-Group)

A safe place to embark on a spiritual journey to discover what the Bible teaches us about Jesus and His ways.

WHY WE ARE HERE

We are gathered together for one purpose, to discover who Jesus is and how He wants to interact with us on a regular basis. 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).

WHAT IS SHARED HERE AT D-GROUP STAYS AT D-GROUP

Everything we say in this group is to be held in strict confidence. We promise to guard one another's trust by not sharing anything said in this group with our spouses, friends, or others. Our hopes and dreams, fears and failures, even our joys and successes, are to stay within the D-Group.

OUR COVENANT (This is for people who decide it's time to invest in meeting weekly for 6-12 months to grow deeper in Christ. This covenant isn't for those

who are “pre-Christian” and we are going through a journey of initial discovery of the Kingdom.)

- *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 G.R.O.W.T.H. 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 opportunity.*

D-Group Questions

The H.O.P.E. Questions are for all groups – the accountability questions are a resource to draw from to dive deeper with people you are discipling. You don’t have to ask all of the Accountability Questions every time, but these are examples of questions we can ask as the Spirit leads during a D-Group.

Opening (Ice Breaker Questions)

What are you thankful for?

What’s a challenge in your life right now?

H.O.P.E Questions

Hear from God

Read the passage.

Have someone retell it in their own words.

Observe what He said

What stands out to you?

What do you learn about God/Jesus?

What do you learn about people?

Put it into practice

How can you put into action what God is showing you in this text? Everyone creates an "I will _____" statement.

Encourage someone

Who are you going to tell about what you discovered in this text this week?

Accountability Questions

These are to be implemented as someone is going deeper in their relationship with Jesus

Bible Reading

Pick one or more questions to share with the group

How did you do on your Bible Reading Plan and Journaling this past week?

In what ways has God spoken to you from the Bible since our last meeting?

How did God instruct and shape you in your time of reading and meditating on the Bible?

What difficulties or frustrations did you encounter at staying consistent with your reading?

How did your time in God's meditating on what you read in the Bible bring joy to your life?

Do you have any questions on what you read?

Everyone answers this question when it's their turn

Share one of your G.R.O.W.T.H. Sheet Journal entries

Personal Accountability

Pick one or more questions to share with the group

What temptations have you faced since our last meeting? How did you respond? How did the Holy Spirit help you to overcome temptation this week?

What have you learned from failing to overcome temptation this week? How could you have relied on the Holy Spirit to help you resist the temptation? Have you asked forgiveness for your sin?

Has there been anything you have done or thought this week that you wondered of it was a sin?

Has anyone wronged or offended you this week? How did you respond? Have you forgiven that person or people?

Have you sensed the influence or work of the Holy Spirit in your life since we met last? What spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit helping you to use? What was the outcome?

What fruit of the Spirit did you recognize in your life this week?

What opportunities has God given you to serve others? How did you respond?

With whom did you share your story of God's work in your life or the story of God's love in Christ?

Describe any opportunities you missed this week to serve others or share God's story in your life.

Prayer Accountability

Pick one or more questions to share with the group

What special burdens of prayer have you carried in recent days? For whom or for what do you find yourself interceding to God in prayer for since our last meeting?

Who are you praying for to relinquish control of their life to Christ and become Born-again?

Moving Forward

Pick one or more questions to share with the group

Which area or areas do you want to focus on in the next week?

Which spiritual practices do you want to work on in the coming days?

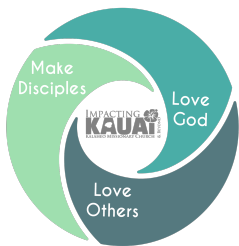
What is something that you would like the group to pray for you this coming week?

Prayer Lists

People to pray for to relinquish their lives to Jesus:

Various Prayer Requests:

D-Group Meeting Notes



G.R.O.W.T.H. SHEET. Spend some time this week meditating on one or more of the Scriptures we talked about. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about the Scripture and meditate on what it is saying. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you focus on how to apply it to your life. Then write out a prayer to the Father expressing your commitment to be obedient to His word. Close out your time by listening for Him to speak to you.

GO to His word

Choose a passage to read and reflect on. Write the Scripture references down

READ it out loud

There is something about reading the Scripture out loud that helps it stick with us

OBSERVE what it's saying

As the Father for insight as to what He is saying to you through the passage that you have read

WRITE down what the Father impresses upon your heart

It's very common to have an "AHA Moment" in the Scripture and forget about it later

TELL the Father, through prayer how you want to respond to His word

We want to commit ourselves to not just learn His word, hear His word, and study His word – we want to obey His word. Write out your prayer for future reference

HEAR the Father's response to you

Don't rush off to other things. Take a few moments to sit in silence to hear His heart for you. Write down anything you sense He is speaking to you.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS YOU MAY WANT TO USE

An example of a reading schedule to go through the whole New Testament in one year, reading 5 days a week

WEEK 1

Luke 1
Luke 2
Luke 3
Luke 4
Luke 5

Memorize:
Matthew 5:1-2

WEEK 2

Luke 6
Luke 7
Luke 8
Luke 9
Luke 10

Memorize:
Matthew 5:3-4

WEEK 3

Luke 11
Luke 12
Luke 13
Luke 14
Luke 15

Memorize:
Matthew 5:5-6

WEEK 4

Luke 16
Luke 17
Luke 18
Luke 19
Luke 20

Memorize:
Matthew 5:7-8

WEEK 5

Luke 21
Luke 22
Luke 23
Luke 24
Acts 1

Memorize:
Matthew 5:9-10

WEEK 6

Acts 2
Acts 3
Acts 4
Acts 5
Acts 6

Memorize:
Matthew 5:11-12

WEEK 7

Acts 7
Acts 8
Acts 9
Acts 10
Acts 11

Memorize:
Matthew 5:13-14

WEEK 8

Acts 12
Acts 13
Acts 14
James 1
James 2

Memorize:
Matthew 5:15-16

WEEK 9

James 3
James 4
James 5
Acts 15
Acts 16

Memorize:
Matthew 5:17-18

WEEK 10

Galatians 1
Galatians 2
Galatians 3
Galatians 4
Galatians 5

Memorize:
Matthew 5:19-20

WEEK 11

Galatians 6
Acts 17
Acts 18
1 Thessalonians 1
1 Thessalonians 2

Memorize:
Matthew 5:21-22

WEEK 12

1 Thessalonians 3
1 Thessalonians 4
1 Thessalonians 5
2 Thessalonians 1
2 Thessalonians 2

Memorize:
Matthew 5:23-24

WEEK 13

2 Thessalonians 3
Acts 19
1 Corinthians 1
1 Corinthians 2
1 Corinthians 3

Memorize:
Matthew 5:25-26

WEEK 18

2 Corinthians 8
2 Corinthians 9
2 Corinthians 10
2 Corinthians 11
2 Corinthians 12

Memorize:
Matthew 5:36-37

WEEK 23

Romans 4
Romans 5
Romans 6
Romans 7
Romans 8

Memorize:
Matthew 5:47-48

WEEK 14

1 Corinthians 4
1 Corinthians 5
1 Corinthians 6
1 Corinthians 7
1 Corinthians 8

Memorize:
Matthew 5:27-28

WEEK 19

2 Corinthians 13
Mark 1
Mark 2
Mark 3
Mark 4

Memorize:
Matthew 5:38-39

WEEK 24

Romans 9
Romans 10
Romans 11
Romans 12
Romans 13

Memorize:
Matthew 6:1-2

WEEK 15

1 Corinthians 9
1 Corinthians 10
1 Corinthians 11
1 Corinthians 12
1 Corinthians 13

Memorize:
Matthew 5:29-30

WEEK 20

Mark 5
Mark 6
Mark 7
Mark 8
Mark 9

Memorize:
Matthew 5:40-42

WEEK 25

Romans 14
Romans 15
Romans 16
Acts 20
Acts 21

Memorize:
Matthew 6:3-4

WEEK 16

1 Corinthians 14
1 Corinthians 15
1 Corinthians 16
2 Corinthians 1
2 Corinthians 2

Memorize:
Matthew 5:31-32

WEEK 21

Mark 10
Mark 11
Mark 12
Mark 13
Mark 14

Memorize:
Matthew 5:43-44

WEEK 26

Acts 22
Acts 23
Acts 24
Acts 25
Acts 26

Memorize:
Matthew 6:5-6

WEEK 17

2 Corinthians 3
2 Corinthians 4
2 Corinthians 5
2 Corinthians 6
2 Corinthians 7

Memorize:
Matthew 5:33-35

WEEK 22

Mark 15
Mark 16
Romans 1
Romans 2
Romans 3

Memorize:
Matthew 5:45-46

WEEK 27

Acts 27
Acts 28
Colossians 1
Colossians 2
Colossians 3

Memorize:
Matthew 6:7-8

WEEK 28

Colossians 4
Ephesians 1
Ephesians 2
Ephesians 3
Ephesians 4

Memorize:
Matthew 6:9-11

WEEK 29

Ephesians 5
Ephesians 6
Philippians 1
Philippians 2
Philippians 3

Memorize:
Matthew 6:12-13

WEEK 30

Philippians 4
Philemon
Hebrews 1
Hebrews 2
Hebrews 3

Memorize:
Matthew 6:14-15

WEEK 31

Hebrews 4
Hebrews 5
Hebrews 6
Hebrews 7
Hebrews 8

Memorize:
Matthew 6:16-18

WEEK 32

Hebrews 9
Hebrews 10
Hebrews 11
Hebrews 12
Hebrews 13

Memorize:
Matthew 6:19-21

WEEK 33

1 Timothy 1
1 Timothy 2
1 Timothy 3
1 Timothy 4
1 Timothy 5

Memorize:
Matthew 6:22-24

WEEK 34

1 Timothy 6
2 Timothy 1
2 Timothy 2
2 Timothy 3
2 Timothy 4

Memorize:
Matthew 6:25-26

WEEK 35

Titus 1
Titus 2
Titus 3
1 Peter 1
1 Peter 2

Memorize:
Matthew 6:27-28

WEEK 36

1 Peter 3
1 Peter 4
1 Peter 5
2 Peter 1
2 Peter 2

Memorize:
Matthew 6:29-30

WEEK 37

2 Peter 3
John 1
John 2
John 3
John 4

Memorize:
Matthew 6:31-32

WEEK 38

John 5
John 6
John 7
John 8
John 9

Memorize:
Matthew 6:33-34

WEEK 39

John 10
John 11
John 12
John 13
John 14

Memorize:
Matthew 7:1-2

WEEK 40

John 15
John 16
John 17
John 18
John 19

Memorize:
Matthew 7:3-4

WEEK 41

John 20
John 21
1 John 1
1 John 2
1 John 3

Memorize:
Matthew 7:5-6

WEEK 42

1 John 4
1 John 5
2 John
3 John
Jude

Memorize:
Matthew 7:7-8

WEEK 43

Revelation 1
Revelation 2
Revelation 3
Revelation 4
Revelation 5

Memorize: Matthew 7:9-10

WEEK 50

Matthew 14
Matthew 15
Matthew 16
Matthew 17
Matthew 18

Memorize: Matthew 7:24-25

WEEK 44

Revelation 6
Revelation 7
Revelation 8
Revelation 9
Revelation 10

Memorize: Matthew 7:11-12

WEEK 51

Matthew 19
Matthew 20
Matthew 21
Matthew 22
Matthew 23

Memorize: Matthew 7:26-27

WEEK 45

Revelation 11
Revelation 12
Revelation 13
Revelation 14
Revelation 15

Memorize: Matthew 7:13-14

WEEK 52

Matthew 24
Matthew 25
Matthew 26
Matthew 27
Matthew 28

Memorize: Matthew 7:28-29

WEEK 46

Revelation 16
Revelation 17
Revelation 18
Revelation 19
Revelation 20

Memorize: Matthew 7:15-16

WEEK 47

Revelation 21
Revelation 22
Matthew 1
Matthew 2
Matthew 3

Memorize: Matthew 7:17-18

WEEK 48

Matthew 4
Matthew 5
Matthew 6
Matthew 7
Matthew 8

Memorize: Matthew 7:19-20

WEEK 49

Matthew 9
Matthew 10
Matthew 11
Matthew 12
Matthew 13

Memorize: Matthew 7:21-23

TIPS ON A CONSISTENT DAILY PRAYER LIFE

In Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus shared a powerful framework for prayer. It wasn't a ritualized prayer that He gave us to mindlessly repeat, but an outline of principles to guide us in our dialogue with the Father.

"Our Father in heaven"

We need to always acknowledge first and foremost who we are talking to. He (God) is our heavenly Father. He is the only true God who created all things in this universe, including ourselves. He loves us and we need to show our love for Him.

"Hallowed be your name"

We must see Him as being holy, sanctified, consecrated; worthy of praise, honor and glory! The Old Testament shares many of the names used to express the character of God. Here are a few:

JEHOVAH JIREH (The Lord Will Provide) Genesis 22:13-14

JEHOVAH NISSI (The Lord My Banner) Exodus 17:15

JEHOVAH RAAH (The Lord My Shepherd) Psalm 23:1

JEHOVAH RAPHA (The Lord My Healer) Exodus 15:26

JEHOVAH TSIDKENU (The Lord Our Righteousness) Jeremiah 23:6

JEHOVAH M'KADDESH (The Lord Who Sanctifies You) Leviticus 20:8

JEHOVAH SHALOM (The Lord is Peace) Judges 6:24

JEHOVAH SHAMMAH (The Lord is There, He is Present) Ezekiel 48:35

"Your kingdom come"

We acknowledge His coming kingdom. We pray that Christ will soon return and establish His earthly kingdom where we will reign with Him for eternity. His Kingdom has come to earth through Jesus and we are Ambassadors of His Kingdom.

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

We need to be praying for His will to be done in our lives, so that we might bring glory to Him here on earth as He is also glorified in heaven. We need to do things His way, instead of selfishly doing our own things to satisfy our own desires.

"Give us today our daily bread"

We should ask our Father each day to provide for our needs, just as He promised in His Holy Word. His Word says that we don't have, because we don't ask. Jesus said man does not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Our daily bread is also daily exposure to God's word through reading, study, and meditation.

"Forgive us our debts (or transgressions) as we also have forgiven our debtors (transgressors)"

This speaks about forgiveness among our associates, neighbors, friends, family and loved ones. Any and all persons in our lives that we come in contact with in social or business situations are included as well.

"Lead us not into temptation"

We need to ask our heavenly Father to help us recognize every evil thing, every temptation before us. We need help to stay focused on our Father and see the evil that we might fall into, for what it is really is, a trap set by Satan to bring us down to his level.

"But deliver us from the evil one"

We should daily be aware of the spiritual warfare around us and prepare ourselves biblically for the potential challenges before us. See the next section for some direction in this area.

*Some versions of the Bible have these words as the end of the Lord's Prayer: **"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever"***

We can end our time of focused prayer with the Father as we started, a time of praise and worship.

LIVING VICTORIOUS THROUGH PRAYERFUL SPIRITUAL WARFARE

We will face many challenges in life. Some challenges are with other people, circumstances and situations that surround us, 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 Jesus Followers. To some, this may seem like a discouraging 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. God's word teaches the importance of spiritual warfare, the components of spiritual warfare and how to walk in balance as we engage in spiritual warfare.

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

In order 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 a 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 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, 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 life, not a ceremony or ritual that is disconnected with the rest of our existence.

TRUTHS CONCERNING WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST

I am accepted...

I am God's child.

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name

In the Greek, the word "right" is exousia. It means the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege). In some translations it is translated "power". The word believe, in the Greek is pisteuo. That is the word used often for "faith". It means "all in", like in Romans 10:9,10 – "If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead we shall be saved." When we believe, we are given the right and power to be His children. We can't earn this title, it is something we receive by grace. Jesus said in John 6 that we can only come to Him if the Father draws us. We become His children because He orchestrated it. Our relationship wasn't initiated nor is it sustained based on us. We are His children by Grace and Grace alone. I encourage you to lean into this relationship. You are His child. He initiated the relationship. He loves you much more than an earthly father can love their children. It is a powerful thing to be given the right to become a child of God.

PRAYER:

Father, thank you for giving me the right and power to be your child. I pray that I can understand more and more what that means. Help me to trust you like a child, looking to you as my source and sufficiency. Help me to lay aside the tendency to try to earn good standing with you by my performance. May I be secure in your Father's love toward me. In Jesus' Name, amen.

As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.

John 15:15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

One of the dichotomies of the Kingdom is how we are simultaneously slaves to the Father and friends of Jesus. Paul describes this unique situation with the word bondservant. The willing submission of one to another. What differentiates us from a technical bondservant is the fact that Jesus desires to fill us in on the Father's plans and purposes. Even though He reveals things according to His divine timing, His desire is to illuminate aspects of His will for us as needed. We can rest assured that His desire is that we are not floundering about, aimlessly wandering in the midst of confusion. If we feel that way, the best thing we can do is move back into a place of friendship and intimacy with Him.

PRAYER:

Father, thank you for allowing me to walk in an intimate friendship with you. I pray that I won't shrink back from the friendship you desire to have with me. Help me to have the courage to become intimate with you. In Jesus' Name, amen.

I have been justified.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

Often, we think peace comes from doing, saying, and thinking all the right things. It doesn't take long to realize that true, lasting peace doesn't come from the grades we receive from ourselves or others based on our performance. Deep peace can only come from something, Someone much deeper than us. When we become children of God, we are justified by Him. Justified is a legal term meaning that we stand as if we never committed whatever transgressions stand before us. It's as if we received a Presidential Pardon – our crime, technically, was never committed. Grace justifies us. When we understand the depth and breadth of Grace, we can truly be at peace. Not a cheap peace, knowing we "got away" with something, but a deep peace, knowing that we didn't get away with anything, but our crimes were paid for. For some of us, this is a hard truth to accept. We feel that since we "did the crime" we need to "do the time". When it comes to our sin, we have no ability to make it right before God. That's where faith comes in – we need to receive His very uncomfortable Grace by faith. Then we can live with peace because Jesus paid the price already. Isaiah 53:5 says that the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.

PRAYER:

Father, thank you for the deep peace you have made available for me through Jesus. I pray that I can receive the price that Jesus paid for my sin and walk by faith in the power of justification. May I quit trying to fix things myself or punishing myself and others for my actions. I receive, by faith, the fact that the punishment that will bring me peace was upon Him. In Jesus' Name, amen.

I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

When we become children of God, we know that it's initiated by Him. In John 15:16 Jesus said that we didn't choose Him, but He chose us. When we respond to that, we are joined with Him and the Spirit of God dwells in us. That's why over and over in the Bible He declares His presence and commitment to us. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

*As David said in Psalm 139:7-12 Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?*

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, You are there;

If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the dawn,

*If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, ¹⁰ Even
there Your hand will lead me,*

And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

*¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night," ¹² Even
the darkness is not dark to You, And the night
is as bright as the day.*

Darkness and light are alike to You.

In our darkest times, in our most unfaithful times, He has not abandoned us – He is faithful and present.

Our tendency is to run from God when we get discouraged, despondent, and/or depressed. We want to do what Adam and Eve did when they sinned – hide from God.

Just as in the garden, God seeks us out when we sin. He wants us to run to Him in the dark times.

We are one with Him in Spirit and He desires us.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for being faithful when I have been unfaithful. Thank you for not denying your commitment to me when I have run from you. I pray that I can have the courage to run to you in the dark times because you are not affected by the darkness as I am. I pray that you will “lay hold of me” and lead me back to a place of security and safety in you. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

I have been bought with a price and I belong to God.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

One of the tactics of the enemy is to try to devalue us. He tries to convince us that we have no worth or value. We can start to see ourselves through those filters and the domino effect can be debilitating. Of course, we have seen people over compensate on the “positive self-image” side of things and get out of balance on the other extreme of self-perception. In the middle of this pendulum swing is the truth that our value runs deep, but it not because of us or our “performance”, gifts, talents, etc. Our value comes from the cost that was paid for us – we were bought with a price, a very high price. The value of something is determined by the price someone is willing to pay for it. We could look at something and it may not seem that impressive to us, but we are amazed at what people are willing to pay to obtain it – like antiques, coins, stamps, art, etc.

We can look in the mirror and may not be that impressed with what we see. We can take an inventory of our life and fail to see value. But if we look at the price God was willing to pay for us, then our true value is revealed.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for seeing value in me when I did not. Thank you seeing value in me when others did not. Thank you for paying the ultimate price to purchase me and make me your own. I pray that I could begin to view who I am through you filters and walk in the truth and power that I am not my own, I was bought with a price. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

I am a member of Christ’s body.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.

The Greek word for member in this verse is melos. It is a biological word that was used in the Greek culture exclusively to describe limbs and parts of the human body.

As children of God, He sees us as melos of His Body. For a melos to be healthy, it has to be connected to the other melos. If a person was to cut off their arm, the arm would suffer, and the rest of the body would suffer. When we are cut off from the Body of Christ, we are affected and those that the Father wants us to impact and encourage are affected.

Unfortunately, many people can’t distinguish the cottage industry in the Western world that we call “church” from how God defines His Church, His Body.

To be who God intends us to be, we need to be connected to His Body.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for making me a melos in your Body. I pray that I can look beyond the dysfunctional organization that man has turned “church” into and have the courage to connect with others who you have called to be your children. Use others to impact my life and use me to impact theirs as I live out who you created me to be, the unique melos I was designed to be. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.

***Ephesians 1:3-8** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace⁸ which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight*

In John 15:16, Jesus said we did not choose Him, but He chose us and appointed us that we would go and bear fruit. In verse 5 above, it says we were adopted as His by Him according to the kind intention of His will. When children are born to their biological parents it may or may not have been intentional. When a child is adopted, that is a very intentional act. When a child is adopted, they are a part of the family and become recipients of all that the family has to offer in terms of love, support, provision, etc. As adopted children of God, we have access to His forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love. Just as children must choose to pursue an intimate relationship with their parents we must choose to pursue intimacy with God. God was very intentional in His choice of you as His children. He has lavished His love, forgiveness, and grace on you. Run to Him and not from Him and receive all that He has for you.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for adopting me as your child. I know I am your child because of your kind intention. I pray that I would not buy into the lie of satan that I am cut off and disqualified for your love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace because of my frail humanity. May I have the courage to humble myself before you and confess all my sin and leave it at your feet and walk forward with the confidence that your love for me is based in your character and not mine. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.

***Colossians 1:13-14** For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

When we are born-again and are given the right to become children of God, we don't just adopt a new set of beliefs and embrace a new worldview. God sets us free from the power and penalty of sin and transfers our citizenship to His Kingdom. We are redeemed by God, He literally pays the price for our freedom from the domain of darkness. He paid the ransom hanging over us with the life of Jesus. The highest price that could have been paid was paid to purchase our forgiveness. We don't deserve it, but we no longer have to walk under the guilt and condemnation of our sin, we were bought with a price.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for rescuing me from the domain of darkness. Thank you for paying the price so that I can walk in freedom from sin. Thank you that I am forgiven because of your great mercy and grace. May I have the courage to walk out my freedom and not allow the enemy to shackle me with condemnation. May I walk in the authority and power that you have given me when you transferred me into your Kingdom. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I am complete in Christ.

***Colossians 2:9-10** For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;*

When we are born of God and become His children, He doesn't just rescue us and then let us fend for ourselves. When He redeems us, we have the opportunity to partner with Him in His deep work of Grace in our lives. Through Jesus we have been made complete. We need to lean into all that means in our lives. The Greek word for complete is pleroo and it means to make full, fill up, to accomplish, to consummate. The power of our redemption is rooted in the power of pleroo. No matter where we came from or what we've done, Jesus has the "rule and authority" to accomplish His work in our lives. Our responsibility is to present ourselves to Him to allow His pleroo work to be facilitated in our lives. (Romans 12:1,2)

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for making me complete in Christ. Thank you that my past, my sin, and my frail humanity are not greater than your ability to work in and through my life. I present myself to you and give you all "rule and authority" over my life. I ask you to bring your completeness to those areas of my life that I've allowed to be shattered. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 4:14-16 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

One of the most powerful things about Christianity is that it is the only World Religion that is not about us trying to clamor to appease some deity and try to measure up as we perform various duties, rituals, etc. – it is all about the Creator reaching down to us, to restore relationship.

Because God initiated relationship with us, He has guaranteed everything we need to nurture relationship with Him.

He gives us direct access, at any time, to His Grace. All we need to do is draw near to Jesus. Unfortunately, our sin and shortcomings cause us to withdraw from Him because of guilt and condemnation. We feel that we are not worthy to approach Him. The truth is that we, in and of ourselves, are not worthy to approach Him in any way, shape, or form. But, because of Jesus we can approach God with confidence. Confident that the blood of Jesus is powerful enough to cleanse all of our sins. Confident that Jesus paved the way for us to have an intimate relationship with God. Confident that His Grace and Mercy are given to us based on the obedience of Jesus and nothing else.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for allowing me to approach you, even approach you with confidence. Thank you that you always have Grace and Mercy available for me in my time of need. When I am in need, I don't feel confident. When I have sinned, I don't feel confident. May I always have the faith to approach you in my time of need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I am secure...

I am free from condemnation.

Romans 8:1-2 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Whether or not we like it, we live under “law” while we are on this planet. We can have the illusion that we can shed the restrictions of law, but no one is exempt.

Even if a person was on a deserted Island, all alone, they are subject to law – the proverbial “law of the jungle”, the law of gravity, physics, etc.

Most cultures have many layers of law, some have fewer. If we zoom out far enough, there are ultimately 2 laws at work for all mankind. The law of sin and death was introduced in the Garden and all people since have been born under the dominion of that law. Through Jesus Christ, God made a way for His creation to be set free from the law of sin and death. Not just shielded from that law, but literally set free from it. The struggle for those who have been set free by the new law of life through Christ is that sometimes we digress into behavior and motives that were deposited along the way under the old law. When this happens, the tendency is to be paralyzed by the condemnation that dominate our thinking. The enemy loves to take advantage of the opportunity to have us focus on our failure and slip into the yoke of the old law, running from the Father in shame instead of to Him in repentance. The privilege we have to confess our sins and be 100% cleansed from the penalty and power of it is because we are now under a new law, new rules, new consequences. We can approach God with confidence, knowing we will be judged by the new law, not the old one – the Law of Life, not the Law of Death.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for not only providing a new with which to judge me but setting me free from the old law that condemned me to a life of bondage and failure. I pray that I would allow the new law of life to frame my identity and not the old law of death. I pray that I can walk in the power of forgiveness and not the paralysis of condemnation. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

This verse has been used out of context probably more than most verses. Most people think this means everything going to be just fine because God will fix everything. A more accurate meaning could be that God can use everything, even our mistakes, failures, disappointments, injustice against us, etc. to form and fashion us into who He designed us to be. As humans, we zoom way in and focus on the immediacy of everything. Of course, we need to be attentive in the moment, but we also need to zoom out and try to look at things from the Father’s perspective also. If we just look “down” at our circumstances we will miss a bigger picture and we will be most likely miss out in the fullness of God’s purpose. This is why Paul encourages us in Colossians 3:2 to set our minds on things above and not things below. The writer of Hebrews encourages us in chapter 12 verse 2 to raise our gaze and fix our eyes on Jesus.

Especially in those times when we feel trapped in the negative consequences of our own or other’s choices – we need to look to the Father for His perspective. In Ephesians 1:11-14 it says: 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,¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

Paul reiterates what Jesus said in John 15:16 – we did not choose Him, He chose us to bear fruit and fruit that will last. When we responded to Him, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. From that moment on, the Father is working to facilitate His good, pleasing, and perfect will in our lives – even when “all hell breaks loose”. He has the power to work out EVERYTHING in conformity with the purpose of His will. Sometimes

we can't see how things can be redeemed or changed for the good, but we need to trust God's word and character more than we trust our feelings or perception.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for working for my good regardless of the situation I end up in. Jesus said that in this world I will have trouble but to be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. I pray that I will have the humility and courage to fix my eyes on Jesus when I am in the tough sections of the journey and cooperate with you as you work out everything in conformity with the purpose of your will. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I am free from any condemnation brought against me and I cannot be separated from the love of God.

Romans 8:31-39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?³³ Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?³⁶ Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our lives are full of "successes" and "failures". As humans we tend to determine value and self-worth from the accumulative scorecard of the ebb and flow of the circumstances in our lives. Some people are wired to be overly optimistic about their scorecard and others can be overly pessimistic. Swinging to either extreme in our self-estimation can be unhealthy and ultimately unprofitable.

One challenge just about everyone has to deal with is some level of feeling they don't "measure up". For some this degrades into a discontentment and skewed sense of striving throughout life and for others it can lead to deep discouragement and condemnation. At the end of the day, everyone could have done "better" and accomplished "more", made less "mistakes", etc, etc.

As children of God, we have the advantage of being about to frame our value and self-worth in His love for us. We make plenty of mistakes and fall far short of the glory of God. One of the most amazing things about Grace is that, in the midst of our frail humanity, we always have the refuge of God's love to turn to. We have the privilege of confessing our sins to Him and walking in the power of forgiveness.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for your amazing Grace and limitless love for me. I ask you to help me press past the tendency to focus on my failures, shortcomings, missed opportunities, etc and fix my eyes on Jesus. Help me to see myself through your filters and embrace who you made me to be. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,²² who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

*Often we get so caught up in the daily grind of life that we fail to zoom out and get a proper perspective of what is really going on at the foundation of our lives. When we get tunnel vision or shortsighted concerning the totality of our lives, it's easy to get sidetracked and knocked off course. How and where we set our minds determines a lot of how we experience life. **Colossians 3:2** tells us to set our mind on things above and not things below. Paul isn't talking about a shallow "Positive Mental Attitude", he is encouraging us to frame our lives within a "Proper Mental Attitude". It's not just semantics, it makes a big difference. Where we need to start is with the truth that God has established and anointed us, sealed us and placed the Holy Spirit in us as a sign of His commitment to us – His pledge.*

The truth is that He has done that already, but if we don't recognize, accept, and embrace it then we are left to keep our minds set on "things below" and that inevitably breeds discouragement and frustration.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for your powerful and deep commitment in my life. Help me to learn how to raise my gaze and not be consumed with the things below. Help me to see more and more from your perspective and lean into all that you have for me. As I have to navigate daily life here below, may I do it in a way that reflects what you have deposited in me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I am hidden with Christ in God.

***Colossians 3:1-4** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

One of the things that is very challenging to comprehend at times is the tension between the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. Nobody has the 100% right perception of it because, at the end of the day, we can't fully understand all His ways and we are definitely limited in our ability to see from an eternal perspective. This truth of our identity in Christ is a perfect example. In His sovereignty we have been raised up with Christ, but we are instructed to keep seeking the things above. With all the power and provision of the Father at our disposal, we must take steps to respond to what He has for us.

It's easy to allow our temporal circumstances to frame our thinking about eternal truth. We must have the courage to look beyond ourselves, our circumstances, our fears, our opinions, etc. and embrace the truth that we have Life in Jesus, we can hide in Him.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for raising me up with Christ. Thank you for giving me Life in Christ. Please help me to raise my gaze. Help me to not get drawn down into the weeds and fixate on temporal. Give me the courage to bring the temporal to you and find refuge in the hiding place, which is Christ.

I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.

***Philippians 1:6.** For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

*One thing that we can be confident of, the Father is committed to working in and through us to bring us to maturity in Christ. Paul says in **2 Timothy 2:13** If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. His commitment runs deep in our lives. When we blow it, we often run from Him. The enemy fills our minds with doubt, fear, and condemnation. Like the dad in the story of the prodigal son, God is watching and waiting for us to run to Him so that He can continue to work in our lives. The amazing thing is that He*

will even use the pain and consequences of our sin to work in our lives, by showing us and others the depth of His Grace and Forgiveness through us.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for what you have started in my life and I am confident that you desire to continue to work in and through me. I commit to run to you and from you in my time of need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I am a citizen of heaven.

Philippians 3:20 *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;*

The most powerful thing about this truth is that it allows us to navigate life with the proper perspective. Larry Norman said, "This world is not my home, I'm just passing through." While the passage on this planet can have some extremely challenging times, at the end of the day it is not our permanent home. The Father has given us the Grace to navigate this earthly journey and Jesus said He'll never leave us nor forsake us. As Kingdom citizens we are given the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us. Our responsibility is to simultaneously live as Kingdom citizens while living through the ebb and flow of life on earth. It is much easier to do the latter if we embrace the former.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for making me a citizen of your Kingdom. May I not throw off the power that you give me to navigate this life. Help me to overcome any fear, doubt, condemnation, etc. that would keep me from living out my destiny as an ambassador for your Kingdom. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I have not been given a spirit of fear/timidity but of power, love and a discipline

2 Timothy 1:7. *For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.*

The Greek word for timidity is deilia, which means timidity, fearfulness, and cowardice. God wants to set us free from timidity, fearfulness, and cowardice. He has given us power, love, and discipline through His Grace and the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

If you read this verse in context of verses 6-9 you see that we are encouraged to be who God has made us to be. Don't be held back from using the gifts God placed in your life because you are shackled with the timidity and fear that comes from the condemnation of the enemy because of past behavior. God made each of us for a purpose. When we stray from that, He invites us to turn to Him and allow Him to trade our sin for forgiveness and deilia for power, love, and discipline.

Verses 6-9 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,⁹ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for making a way for me to be set free from the deilia that wants to paralyze me. Thank you that I can shed the past through your forgiveness and walk in power, love, and discipline. Teach me

how to be courageous in you and “kindle afresh” those gifts you’ve placed in me to be your Ambassador to my generation. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

I am significant...

I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life

John 15:5. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

This statement from Jesus really gives a very amazing snapshot of our lives in the context of the Kingdom. The true core of everything revolves around our connection to Him. All the things people strive for in their pursuit of personal well-being - peace, joy, happiness, contentment, fulfillment, value, etc. comes from Him. Apart from Him, these things are fleeting at best. This is because He created each one of us with a purpose. According to

Ephesians 2:10, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. At the end of the day, these are the things that matter – what He prepared for us. We can set out to accomplish all kinds of things that aren’t prepared by Him. Each culture has paradigm of what is “successful” and a measuring system for everyone’s performance. If we get sucked into that mindset we are always striving and ultimately never “arrive” at wherever it is that we were wanting to land – there’s always something more, an inbred discontentment. The accumulation of things, acquisition of titles, etc. our only temporary “fixes”. When we have the courage to abide in Him and embrace His path for us, then we will enjoy a fruitful life in those things that really matter. We may not look like a “success” to the culture around us, at some point we must decide what audience we are playing to – an ever-shifting audience of our culture or an audience of One.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, that you have made a way for me to abide in you. May I have the courage to walk out what you made me to be. Regardless of my vocation, may my true life be in you. Help me to look beyond my cultural paradigms and see my life from your perspective. Help me to not measure myself by what others may think of me, help me to have the confidence and courage to play to an audience of One. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm.

Ephesians 2:6 ...and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

The power of this verse is found in the context with which it was said:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

All of us are, by nature, were children of wrath – bound by the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind. But God offers Grace to set us free. Not only set us free but raise us up and make us new. We are His trophies of Grace. Our failed past is a shining example of the surpassing riches of His Grace that He wants to show off to display His plan and purpose in Christ. We don't boast in our past mistakes, we embrace His Grace and walk in the power of forgiveness. We are no longer bound in the dungeon of our frail humanity, we are raised with Him to serve His purpose in our generation.

Prayer:

Thank you, Father, for reaching down to me in the midst of my sin and failure. Thank you for sending Jesus to provide a way out of the bondage of disobedience. Thank you that I can be made alive in Christ. I pray that I will have the courage to fully embrace your mercy, love, and grace. I want to cooperate in your life changing process in my life so that I can serve your purpose in my generation. In Jesus' Name, Amen

I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.

John 15:16 *You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.*

The ramifications of this statement are deep and powerful. So often we look at our relationship with God based on our performance and we tend to think that His love for us is mercurial, vacillating according to our daily report card. His love for us is one of the few constant things in our lives. He loves us so much that Jesus died for us. He loves us so much that He chose us. He loves us so much that He chose us for a purpose. He loves us so much that He designed us for life-long purpose. When we see our relationship from His perspective we can walk with confidence and security. Regardless of how we feel at any given moment, we are loved by Him, appointed by Him, and given purpose in life by Him. When we feel out of sync with that truth, we need to turn to Him and ask the Father in Jesus name to give us His perspective and He promises to meet us at our time of need.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, that you chose me. Thank you that you chose me for a purpose, I ask you to help me see my life and existence through your filters, please give me your perspective. Show me why I'm here and I ask that I can start bearing the fruit that you created me to produce. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I am God's temple.

1 Corinthians 3:16 *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

The implications of this verse are far reaching. The fact that we are God's temple reinforces the truth that He is ever present with us. To some that is frightening, because they view Him as the divine policeman, but we can look at it another way: He is present to lead, guide, support, protect, and sustain us. We are not His project, we are His temple – His dwelling place. He resides in us. As we begin to grasp this and live it out, we will be changed.

Also, the fact that we are God's temple causes us to examine how we should treat ourselves, both physically and emotionally. We should be asking ourselves how we are treating His temple, what are we allowing to enter His temple, etc.

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, that I am your temple. Thank you that you dwell in me. Thank you that you are ever present. I pray that I can embrace your presence and lean into what you want to do in me and through me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I am a minister of reconciliation for God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.¹⁸ Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

²⁰ *Therefore, we*

are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

*One of the most amazing things about how God wants to work in our lives is that He desires to do a deep work of healing and reconciliation in us, not only so we can experience an intimate relationship with Him, but that we can be able to be His hand of reconciliation to others. When the Father forgives us of our sins He chooses not to hold them against us. We often categorize and catalog them and allow them to become a paralyzing weight, preventing us to be who He created us to be. Once we turn to Him for forgiveness, He can actually redeem our experience and use us in a powerful way to speak the message of reconciliation to those who may be on the same path as we were. When we allow Him to comfort us in our afflictions, He can use us to comfort others. **2 Corinthians 1:3,4** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. Allow God to make you new and then look for opportunities to comfort those around you who may be experiencing some of the heart pain you have experienced.*

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for your forgiveness and comfort. Thank you for making a way that my sins are not only forgiven but not held against me. Thank you for making a way that I could be made new. I pray that I would have the courage to embrace all you have for me and help me to be a voice of reconciliation to my sphere of influence. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I am God's workmanship.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

*It's very clear through the tapestry of the Scripture that God is very intentional in His creation. This also applies to us. When Jesus said in John 15:16 that we didn't choose Him, but He chose us and chose us to bear fruit, He was speaking of this divine intentionality. When we get off track and disobey the plan of God for our lives, the enemy would like to lie to us and make us feel that it's over. We can no longer serve His purpose and walk in the fruit we were chosen to produce. **Romans 11:29** says the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. No matter how far we stray, when we turn back to Him and receive His forgiveness, He desires to get us back on track, so we can walk out who He created us to be.*

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for creating me with divine intentionality. Thank you for placing gifts in me so that I can bear fruit for your Kingdom. Please help me to have the courage to walk out the love, acceptance, and forgiveness that you have poured out in my life so that I can be a messenger of your Grace to others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Ephesians 3:12 *In whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.*

*Our disobedience to God has many consequences. One that is very debilitating is the erosion of our confidence and boldness. This is manifested in different way with different people. Some start trying to manufacture a surface boldness and confidence that isn't grounded in forgiveness and grace and they just come off as arrogant and cocky. Some retreat into a funk that seems to want to suffocate them with a cloak of worthlessness and despair. Same root, different ways to deal with it. When we sin, God doesn't want us to try to mask it nor run from it. He desires us to honestly come to Him and ask forgiveness, then to move forward with a balanced and biblical boldness and confidence that comes from His Grace. **Hebrews 4:15,16** says, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

PRAYER:

Thank you, Father, for your amazing Grace. Help me to fully embrace your Grace to the point of walking in the power of your forgiveness. Help me to quit masking or running from the debilitating effects of my sin. I confidently bring it all to you and ask that you will meet me in my time of need. Fill me with the boldness and confidence that you have apportioned to me by faith. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.

***Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

*This verse is so often quoted out of context. Many people use it to mean they can have all they want and be all they want, not always in context of God's good, pleasing, and perfect will for their lives. When Paul said this, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, He was talking about having the ability in Christ to walk in contentment. **Philippians 4:11-13** Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. ¹² I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. In our culture, it's hard to walk in contentment. We are pressured to live a life of comparison. We have a code of measurements that makes us want to assign a ranking to our worth based on vast array of accomplishments. Paul tells the Colossians in chapter 2 verse 8 to "see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." When we are POWs to the ways and thinking of the world around us rather than the principles of Christ, we can't walk in contentment, we are drained of the power to walk in strength. We can walk in the power and strength of contentment, which may seem impossible at times, because we can do all things through the strength of Jesus.*

Prayer:

Thank you, Father, for the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Thank you that He paid the price to set me free from the captivity of the world's thinking. Help me continually turn to Him so that I'm not taken captive again by that thinking. Help me to walk in contentment and strength. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Discipleship Overview

Putting the pieces of the puzzle together of what it looks like to be a growing and maturing Follower of Jesus

For discipleship to be most effective 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. It is the impartation of life, the transference of principles and leading by example.

The Bible must be at the center of discipleship. Discipleship is the building of a biblical foundation in an individual's life. One way of describing this process is to build a biblical or Christian worldview. 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, and the culture we are a part of, what we read and 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 strategically and on purpose. True biblical discipleship teaches a person to use God's word as the source and foundation of their worldview.

The goal of transformational 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 personal, practical application of biblical truth.

While there are many very effective 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. Transformational 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.

A definition of discipleship:

From the words of Jesus Christ, 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.

Some attributes of a disciple from the words of Paul:

A disciple:

- 1) *Seeks to glorify Christ -- Col 1:10; Ro 15:5,6; 2 Thess 1:11,12*
- 2) *Has spiritual wisdom to know, understand and obey the will of God – Col 1:9,10; 4:12*
- 3) *Seeks to know and love God better – Col 1:10; Eph 1:17*
- 4) *Seeks to know God's calling, inheritance, power and love – Eph 1:18; 3:17,18*
- 5) *Is growing in godliness/sanctification – 1 Thess 5:23*
- 6) *Is blameless/holy – 1 Thess 3:13*
- 7) *Is pure/righteous – Php 1:10*
- 8) *Is strengthened by the Holy Spirit for endurance, patience, joy, thankfulness, faith and hope – Col 4:12; Eph 3:16,17; Rom 15:13*
- 9) *Serves and ministers, motivated by faith, love, hope and a spirit of unity – Col 1:10; 1 Thess 1:3; 3:12; 2 Thess 1:11; Rom 15:5*
- 10) *Shares their faith actively and is concerned for the spread of the Gospel – Philemon 1:6; 2 Thess 3:1,2*
- 11) *Shares in the ministry and supports its leaders – Eph 6:18-20; Heb 13:17,18 (though Paul probably didn't write Hebrews)*

Since "discipleship" has become a word that may have lost some of the original impact of the first century proclamation of Christ, we have chosen the phrase "Transformational Discipleship" to describe the depth of our intention for discipleship.

We see discipleship as a process that is more than acquiring biblical information; 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 alters our behavior.

A cornerstone of transformational discipleship is reconciliation; a person reconciled to God is the only candidate for true transformational discipleship.

The outcome of transformational discipleship is to equip believers who...

- **Have a biblical worldview--1Chr.12:32; Ps.119:104; Pr.2:11; Pr.3:5,6; Pr.17:27; 2Co.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 and 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. Biblical discipleship teaches a person 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 Christians 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. There are many things that form the "understanding" of an individual, but we must allow God's principles to supercede any other input that we have in our life.

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

Having a biblical worldview will provide a protection for us because only God knows the best path through life. There are many choices that we make in life and the choices 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 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.)

- **Have an understanding of God’s purpose for their life--Ac.13:36; Ac.20:24; Ro.12:2; 1Co.10:31; Ep.4:1; Ph.3:14; 2Ti.1:9; Ja.4:13-15; 1Jn.2:17**

Each of us was placed on earth by God to serve a specific purpose. As we discover and walk out God’s purpose for our lives we will 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 purpose 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.

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 purpose for our life. As we live according to His purpose, 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 have 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 the 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 provide a foundation of stability and security.

- **Are growing in spiritual maturity--Ho.6:3; Ro.12:1,2; Ep.3:16-19; Col.1:10; Heb.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 life, 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 truly 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 wide 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 life in 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 for ever 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.

- **Are becoming more like Jesus in the way they relate to God and people-- Mt.20:26-28; Lk.5:16; Lk.22:42; Jn.12:49; Ro.15:7; Ep.5:2; Ph.2:5-7; 1Jn.2:6**

WWJD has become a very popular acronym in the church; we see it on necklaces, rings, bracelets, shirts, etc. It stands for, "What Would Jesus Do". As Christians we need to take time to think about our attitudes and actions from God's perspective. We need to live our life through God's filters. As Christians 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 won'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 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 choose 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 in the midst of our imperfections, we need to accept others. Acceptance of a person doesn't mean you condone their behavior. Jesus accepted 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 Christian, it is not an option but a command.

- **Are increasingly cooperating with the Holy Spirit's work in their life--
Ps.143:10; Eze.36:27; Jn.14:16,17; Ro.8:9; Ga.5:16; 2Ti.1:14; 1Jn.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.

Psalm 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 their teaching, 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, everyday can become a learning experience as we walk with Him.

- **Are listening to and obeying God as the result of God's enabling Grace--
1Co.15:10; 2Co.1:12; 2Co.6:1; Tit.2:11,12; Heb.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 in 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 down 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 more clear and 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 try to achieve 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.

- **Are studying and applying the Scriptures in such a way that transforms beliefs, values and behaviors--Ps.119:9; Ps.119:11; Jn.8:31,32; Col.3:16; 2Ti.2:15; 2Ti.3:16,17; Jas.1:22; 1Pe.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 there are many temptations that 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 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 help them in a practical way. Without a foundation and continually refilled reservoir of His word we can't help others with the rich 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 use 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 the 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 true 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.

- **Have a lifestyle of worship, prayer and spiritual warfare--1Chr.16:11; Mt.26:41; Ro.12:1; Ro.12:12; 2Co.10:4,5; Ep.6:10-18; Ph.4:6; Col.4:2; 1Th.5:17**

We will face many challenges in life. Some challenges are with other people 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 discouraging 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 balance as they engage in spiritual warfare.

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

In order 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 a 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 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:**

Jn.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:**

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

2Co.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**

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

Is.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**

Heb.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**

Ac.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**

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

Jn.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 life, not a ceremony or ritual that is disconnected with the rest of our existence.

- **Have a growing ability to work with others, especially those different than themselves—Ro.12:18; Ro.14:1; Ro.14:19; Ro.15:1; Ro.15:7; Ep.4:2; Col.3:13; Col.4:5; 1Th.4:11,12; 1Ti.3:7; Tit.3:1,2; Heb.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 there are people who are very difficult to live at 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 the 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 main 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 what ever 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—completely 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 servant-hood that wins respect instead of selfish lives that loses 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.

- **Can share the gospel in a practical, articulate, confident and compassionate manner--Eze.33:7-9; Ac.1:8; Ro.1:16; Ro.10:14; 2Co.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.

Eze.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 reject the message, that is on them. God just wants us to be faithful to speak 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 of 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 the way that God uses more often than not 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.

- ***Have a commitment to continue to be involved in God's work through the local church--Ac.2:42; 1Co.14:12; Ep.3:10, 11; 1Ti.3:15; Heb.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. 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 raw ingredients 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) 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. 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 part 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.

- **Are growing in character through the fruit of the Spirit—Jn.15:16; 2Co.8:7; Ga.5:22,23; Col.1:10; 2Pe.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 life. 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 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 context of the Christian life. The fruit of the Spirit has to do with character. As maturing Christians 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 bearing 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.

- **Have a lifestyle of Scripture memorization--Ps.37:31; Ps.40:8; Ps.119:11**

God's word is a powerful force in our life. 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.

Psalm 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 a certain 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 heart, 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 to steer us in the right direction. We can't underestimate the power of His word as it grows in our life.

- **Are able to disciple others--Mt.28:19,20; 1Co.11:1; Col.1:28,29; 2Ti.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 have 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 very powerful 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 making disciples, not just accumulating converts.

- **Have a lifestyle of servanthood--Mt.16:24,25; Mt.20:26,27; 1Co.10:24; Ph.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. In the midst of a selfish race, the servant principles of Jesus stand out in stark contrast to the cultural norms. As a Christian 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 life. Even though the world doesn't operate like this, we belong to God's kingdom and we need to follow His rules.

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 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 view our role on this planet. We need to understand that God placed us on the earth to serve Him and consequently 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.

- **Have a lifestyle of flexibility and thankfulness--Ps.110:4; Ro.8:28; 2Co.4:7-9; Ep.1:11; Ph.1:27; Ph.2:14; Col.3:15; 1Th.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 heart. 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.

Psalm 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 Christians we have a responsibility to respond biblically to any situation that arises. Many Christians act as if they have an 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 what ever 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 very difficult 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.

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 eventual 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.

- **Have a lifestyle of discernment--Ro.12:2; 1Co.6:12; 1Co.10:23; Ep.5:15; Ph.1:9,10**

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 is the right decision. As we understand God's character and get to know Him more then we will be able to make decisions based on principle instead of passion. Biblical discipleship trains people 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 discernment 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 made 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.

- **Walks in forgiveness—Mt. 6:12;14-15; Mt.18:21-35; Mk.11:25; Lk.6:37; Ep.4:32; Col.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 be those who 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.

Habits of a growing and maturing Follower of Jesus:

- *An intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ*
- *Personal coaching, mentoring and accountability*
- *A lifestyle of communion with the Father through prayer*
- *Intentional study of the Bible*

- *Scripture memorization*
- *Commitment to a community of believers*
- *Intentionally serving others*