

SPIRITUAL GROWTH: *Growing from Milk to Meat*



Discussion Aids

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

Matthew 16:24

These discussion aids are intended for those desiring to learn more about discipleship and the spiritual growth process. It follows the outline of the ACCFS presentation: *Spiritual Maturity: Growing from Milk to Meat*. The lessons walk through the concept of Discipleship and some Key Priorities, Disciplines, and Attributes which are present in a healthy spiritual growth process. The lessons are formatted to have a presenter prepare a lesson on each topic and then have follow up discussion based on the topic in a group(s) setting.

Each lesson has a theme verse followed by a lesson goal and a few teaching points to guide the presenter. Discussion questions to provoke conversation follow. At the end of each lesson are reflection and homework points to be used for further personal application. These lessons can also easily be modified to be utilized in a small discussion group format.

We suggest beginning and ending with a prayer offered by one of the attendees. It is our hope God may be glorified as each participant feels the blessings of God while they study and learn about spiritual growth.

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Discipleship & Growth

Our Goal in Spiritual Growth

Matthew 22:35-40 “Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Lesson Goal:

Throughout your lifetime, God desires for you to grow in Christlikeness through the process of discipleship. This process should be rooted in the two great commandments of Jesus: love God with all we have and love your neighbor as yourself.

Teaching Points:

- Discipleship is a process of being continually conformed into the image of Christ for God’s glory. As we learn more about Him, we should desire to be more like Him.
- Discipleship is part discipline and part grace (*Phil. 2:12-13*). It is strongly relational and heavily dependent on our growing knowledge of the Word.
- Throughout the growth process, it is essential to focus on the two great commandments of Christ and keep them as the center of our lives.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does discipleship mean to you? Have you seen an example in your own life of how you are becoming more Christ-like?
2. Who in your life is helping you along this process of discipleship? Identify the relationships which are key to your discipleship.
3. How can you keep the two great commandments (loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself) first and foremost in your life? Describe some helps you have available to you.

Reflection and homework:

- What is one area in your life where you can demonstrate your love for God more?
- What is one area in your life where you can do better at loving your “neighbor as yourself?”

Where Do I Start?

Grow From Where You Are

1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."

Lesson Goal:

Often we feel like we do not know where we need to start when we approach the spiritual growth process. Accurately determining where you currently are at and where you need to grow is the first step in the process. Using the Spiritual Growth Assessment, help clarify what your first steps might need to be.

Teaching Points:

- A spiritual self-inventory is a critical first step in spiritual growth to accurately determine where you need to grow.
- You need to develop a plan to address these areas and then follow through on this plan. Don't wait to get to a certain "level" of maturity before you get serious about taking the next step.
- Growth is one step at a time as we encounter one area of growth after another.

Discussion Questions:

1. Identify your approach to spiritual growth in the past.
2. What are areas where you need to grow?
3. Evaluate strategies you can use to continue the growth process.

The Priority of Relationships

Seeking Purposeful Relationships

Romans 12:4-5, “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

Lesson Goal:

God uses relationships in our lives to encourage and strengthen the growth process. We should be actively seeking purposeful relationships in our lives at all times.

Teaching Points:

- God establishes the Body and places its members “*as it hath pleased him.*” (1 Co. 12:18)
- We are encouraged to have several key, viable relationships in our lives. We should seek to be mentored by others, be accountable to others, and to mentor others.
- Multi-generational, self-perpetuating relationships create a healthy, caring Body.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does God call us into relationships?
2. Describe how relationships help the growth process. What are key elements of healthy relationships?
3. What relationships are important in your personal life? Identify the roles these relationships play.

Reflection and homework:

- Do you have a mentor? If not, who could you ask into such a relationship?

- Are you currently mentoring someone? If not, who could you ask into such a relationship?

The Discipline of Firstfruits

Giving God the Best

2 Chronicles 31:5-6, “And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the fields; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. . . they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord their God, and laid them by heaps.”

Lesson Goal:

God calls us to give Him the firstfruits of our lives. We should avoid the temptation to give God our “second-best,” instead identifying and prioritizing our Spiritual walk with Him.

Teaching Points:

- What are the firstfruits of our time, energy, and talents? How do we identify them?
- God blesses us as we give Him the best in our lives and prioritize our relationship with Him (*Matthew 6:33*).
- We are called to “*delight*” in Him (*Psalms 37:4-5*).

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain why God asks us to give Him the firstfruits of our lives.
2. How do you know if you are giving the firstfruits of your life to Him? What standard(s) do you use to judge this? How do you stay accountable to this standard?
3. How does Satan use busyness to distract you in your walk? What are some strategies to use against these distractions?

Reflection and homework:

- Identify when/where you are mentally at your best. What part of the day do you consider to be the firstfruits of your time?

- How can you give God the firstfruits of your life? Make a plan to improve or support this area of your life.

The Discipline of Study

Saturating Your Mind with the Word

2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Lesson Goal:

We are called to know God’s Word and study it regularly. By saturating our minds with His Word, we learn how to be more closely aligned with the mind of Christ.

Teaching Points:

- Studying the Word is a primary way in which our minds become renewed and “transformed” (*Romans 12:2*).
- There will be times when the study of the Word seems to go easy and times when it is more difficult. It is important to recognize this cycle and persevere through these “high” and “low” times.
- What are some practical and personal methods to read and study, especially when going through some of these “low” times? (i.e. – a character study, a word study, read a children’s bible story book, read a Psalm over and over, focus on the life of Jesus in the Gospels)

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe your current Bible study habits.
2. In your own words, what does it mean to “saturate” your mind with the Word?
3. How can we encourage each other to study the Word more? What type of accountability can we offer each other?

Reflection and homework:

- What is one way you could improve your Bible study habits to more fully “saturate” your mind with the Word?

- Set a weekly, monthly, and yearly goal for bible study. How do you plan to achieve these goals?

The Discipline of Intentionality

Sowing and Reaping

Galatians 6:7-9, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Lesson Goal:

God has established the principle of sowing and reaping. Intentional sowing can lead to intentional reaping. We should be as intentional in our spiritual growth process as we would be in other aspects of our lives.

Teaching Points:

- The principle of sowing and reaping is found throughout scripture. It is good to examine our priorities in light of this principle.
- God rewards those who intentionally continue to seek Him.
- There is a caution to not incorrectly subscribe causality to everything that happens. God is God and sometimes He answers in ways we do not immediately understand. (i.e. – proposals might not come back the way we think they should, being faithful in witnessing does not bear fruit, a job opportunity is not opening up despite our best efforts, we tithe faithfully yet still have financial struggles, sickness is not healed despite fervent prayer)

Discussion Questions:

1. Define intentionality. What are you intentionally sowing right now? What will this sowing lead to?
2. Give an example of where you have personally seen this principle of sowing/reaping played out. Describe an incident where the sowing of good things (or bad things) has led to the reaping of good things (or bad things).
3. What are some dangers in taking this principle out of God's hands and judging too quickly as to why certain things happen? How can we incorrectly apply this principle, especially in others?

Reflection and homework:

- What/where are you currently most intentional in your life?

- What is one area where you can be more intentional in your sowing of spiritual things?

Guarding Key Attributes

Comparison and Love

1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Lesson Goal:

How we approach spiritual growth is vital to its success. We must be careful to pursue our growth with the right motivation of love and be careful not to compare ourselves improperly with others.

Teaching Points:

- Comparing ourselves to others and their spiritual walk can lead to discouragement or unhealthy competition. (*I Corinthians 12:18, II Corinthians 10:12*)
- The Bible is clear spiritual growth should be motivated by love and not vanity. (*I Corinthians 8:1, 13:2*)

Discussion Questions:

1. How do we compare ourselves to others? Identify areas where we most quickly fall into this trap.
 - a. List some consequences of comparing ourselves to others. How have you personally seen this in your life?

2. What does knowledge “*puffeth up*” mean (*I Corinthians 8:1*)? Define this phrase. What caution should this be to us? How do we guard against this pitfall?

3. How does love for others counteract the dangers of comparison within our lives?

Reflection and homework:

- Why do you seek to grow spiritually? Are your motivations pure? How do you know?
- How does comparison positively or negatively affect your spiritual life?

Guarding Key Attributes

Humility

Philippians 2:3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

Lesson Goal:

Humility is a key attribute in the path of spiritual growth and discipleship. Pride can quickly derail the growth process and lead us down a path where we focus more on ourselves than on our goal of Christlikeness.

Teaching Points:

- Christ-like humility is a key example for us to follow. (*Phil. 2:3-7*)
- Pride in one's own abilities or progress in growth can keep us from relying on God's grace and sidetrack our spiritual growth process. (*James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5*)

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is pride such an easy trap to fall into in this pursuit of spiritual growth?
 - a. How does pride destroy our perspective of spiritual growth?

2. Explain why humility is an essential attribute to possess for proper spiritual growth.

3. In *1 Peter 5:5*, Peter encourages humility while also discussing submission. Describe why this submission to others is so important in order to have humility.

Reflection and homework:

- Why do you seek to grow spiritually? Are your motivations pure? How do you know?

- Identify areas of pride in your life. How can you humbly submit these areas to God and regain the proper perspective?

Guarding Key Attributes

Counterfeits of Growth: Satan's Attempts to Hijack our Growth

1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"

Lesson Goal:

There are several ways Satan can hijack our spiritual growth process and get us off track. It is important we identify these counterfeits and provide a guard against them.

Teaching Points:

- Satan wants to use any means necessary to keep us from reaching our potential in Christ. He will attempt to hijack our growth process and send us down wrong paths.
- It is important to realize often these counterfeits can have an air of legitimacy on the surface but in reality are leading us into a more self-focused direction.
- How Satan attacks men is often different from how Satan attacks women. It is wise to look at this topic with these gender differences in mind.

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe ways you have seen Satan hijack your own growth process.
2. How do we guard against focusing too much upon ourselves and not enough upon God? Identify ways we can continually put the focus back on Him.
3. For men: How have you let the following hinder your spiritual growth process? How are these counterfeits evident in your life?
 - a. **Lust:**
 - b. **Apathy:**
 - c. **Discontentment:**
 - d. **Other counterfeits:**

4. For women: How have you let the following hinder your spiritual growth process? How are these counterfeits evident in your life?
 - a. **Desire for being noticed:**

 - b. **Comparison:**

 - c. **Discontentment:**

 - d. **Other counterfeits:**

Reflection and homework:

- Have you let your spiritual growth be hijacked by Satan? Where do you need to repent and get back on track with God?

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