

Jesus summarized the cost of discipleship with a vivid metaphor: “Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt 16:24).

Following Jesus isn't just a one-time decision. It's a daily process of growth. The call to spiritual growth is the call to be a disciple of Jesus. It's a call to be more like Jesus. It's a call to submit ourselves to the lordship of Jesus. Spiritual growth is the process of becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. When we place our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit begins the process of making us more like Him, conforming us to His image. Spiritual growth is identified by the fruit of the Spirit becoming increasingly evident in a believer's life.

What are these characteristics (Galatians 5:22-23)? \_\_\_\_\_

## How do we grow in our faith?

### 1. The Word

Learning how to grow spiritually is a life-long journey which occurs as you read and apply God's Word to your life. In order for spiritual growth to occur, we must be taught, rebuked, corrected, and trained by God's Word. Then we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We cannot properly honor and serve God unless we have knowledge of His will. We acquire that knowledge through regular, diligent Bible study.

### Read Psalm 119:97-105.

What are some things that the Psalmist says about the scriptures? \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Prayer

When you ask the Lord for wisdom...when you pray for wisdom...you are opening yourself up to learn about God's overall purpose and plan.

How often should we pray? (1 Thessalonians 5:17) \_\_\_\_\_

What do you think Paul means by praying continually? \_\_\_\_\_

Most of the time, we know what we are praying for. What happens when we don't know what to pray for? (Romans 8:26) \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Trials

Trials can be long, short, emotional, physical, mental, or circumstantial, and come with varying degrees of difficulty. They build into our lives passion, perseverance, and

character change. The Christian always has hope because what may appear as random, is never or unforeseen by the Father in any of the trials that come into their lives. All their pain and trials can have redemptive purposes, and anything that has come into their lives has been allowed by God.

Why should Christians rejoice in sufferings? (Romans 5:3,4 and James 1:2-4)

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**Read Romans 8:28 and James 1:12.**

What would you tell another Christian who you know is going through suffering? \_\_\_\_\_

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**The Necessary Environment**

Try keeping this easy equation in mind: Grace + Truth (The Word) + the Holy Spirit + Time  
A key idea for today: Growth Happens in the Context of Relationships. Think about this idea for a few minutes. Growth happens when we are free to be ourselves, and can bring out our junk, warts and all, to a small group of people. Then there is freedom to experience real healing, forgiveness, and brokenness. We live out our love for God while relating to other people.

**Read Philippians 3:12-14**

What is the prize Paul is talking about in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you been made perfect yet? \_\_\_\_\_

What are areas of weakness you still struggle with? \_\_\_\_\_  
(these answers can remain confidential)

What are some of the strengths or gifts God has given you? \_\_\_\_\_

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How can you better lean into your strengths, allowing God to utilize them fully for His Glory?

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A lot of people encourage minimizing our weaknesses. Instead, let's look for those areas God has gifted us in and see if we can maximize those strengths. This will enhance our pursuit of the prize!

What is an area you desire to work at in your spiritual journey? \_\_\_\_\_

How are you going to invest in this area this week? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Take a minute to evaluate yourself by scoring each of the following statements from 1 (I need to really work on this) to 10 (I'm excelling at this):**

I'm learning more and more about God \_\_\_\_\_

I'm digging deeper into the Bible and Christian theology \_\_\_\_\_

I'm taking the initiative to learn and not waiting for others to feed me \_\_\_\_\_

I'm teaching others and helping them grow in their faith and understanding of God \_\_\_\_\_

I'm showing more grace to others than I used to \_\_\_\_\_

I'm wanting to obey God out of love for him \_\_\_\_\_

Others can see the fruit of the Spirit in me \_\_\_\_\_

I'm thinking more about the needs of others, and less about my own needs \_\_\_\_\_

I'm speaking more truth in my conversations with others (with humility and grace) \_\_\_\_\_

I'm becoming more engaged in my church and the Christian community \_\_\_\_\_

**Memorize: Matthew 16:24**