

Essentials to Spiritual Growth

Are you a brand new follower of Christ, wondering where to get started on your journey? Or are you a mature Christian looking for ways to grow even closer to Christ or ways to renew your relationship. A Spiritual Growth Plan can help you figure out what steps you need to take to grow. The following are elements of a spiritual growth plan that could be incorporated into your own individual plan. These elements are vital to building your relationship with the Lord. Use them to develop your own Personal Spiritual Growth Plan choosing those that will help you grow the most.

Step 1 – Connect with God. *Make time to be with God.* Christianity is all about a relationship—Our relationship with God. We must make sure that this relationship is the most important relationship we have. In order to keep this relationship thriving, we must spend time with God learning about him, connecting, and growing closer.

- a. **Read and reflect on the Bible.** Find a Bible reading plan that's right for you. The Bible is God's word where we learn about God and Jesus. But not only do we learn about God, God speaks through the words and the stories to reveal himself to us. Reading and reflecting is a conversation with God as he speaks through his word and reflection.
- b. **Pray.** Prayer is simply talking to God. You don't have to use big fancy words. There are no right and wrong words. Just be yourself. Give thanks to the Lord daily. Pray for others in need. Pray for direction. Pray for your own concerns. There is no limit to prayer. You can pray with your eyes closed or open, while sitting or standing, kneeling or lying on your bed, anywhere, anytime. So make prayer a part of your daily routine.
- c. **Join a Bible study or prayer group.** God created us to live in community. Relationships with others help us grow. Other believers disciple, encourage, and challenge us in the faith. Learning from others and praying with and for others gives us an opportunity to connect with God in new ways and allows us to also help these others connect with God in new ways.
- d. **Find other ways you can connect with God and do them.** We are all made different. Journaling may help one to process life and see how the Bible fits into life. Through the beauty of God's creation, another person may feel closer to God. Other times, one might play praise music because the music and words combined help one cry out to God. Others may draw a prayer or paint a picture as an offering to God. Sharing your testimony with someone may connect us and them to God. What else can you do in your time with God in order to draw closer to God?

Step 2 – Connect with Other Christ Followers. We often think that our relationship with God is the only relationship we need to get close to Jesus. However, God created us to live in community with others. God did not create us to walk through life alone, but with the help of other believers. Growth does not happen outside of relationships. Think of times in your life when you experienced

great emotional or spiritual growth. Most times we think of a person who helped us achieve this growth. Here are some ways to connect

- a. **Attend church services regularly.** The Bible encourages us to meet together regularly with other believers (Hebrews 10:25). This is also fundamental to spiritual growth. At church, we get teaching to help us grow in our faith. In addition, we get opportunities to share our lives with other believers. Through this sharing, God speaks. He uses other people to help us through a struggle or give us encouragement. And he also uses us to speak and minister to others. Unfortunately the nature of our morning services is not enough for people to connect to others in authentic, intimate relationships. Therefore, it is important that everyone connect with a group of believers in another setting.
- b. **Get a Spiritual Coach.** Life Coaches, business coaches, personal trainers, and counselors are rampant in our society. Why? Because they help us grow in some areas of our life. A spiritual coach is someone who will help you grow in life and your relationship with God. They are like a personal trainer at the gym only they are a Christian life trainer. This concept in the Bible is called discipleship.
- c. **Be part of a small group.** Small groups allow us to connect with other believers for encouragement and accountability. The Bible tells us to "carry one another's burdens." Small groups is that place.
- d. **Serve others.** There are many ways to serve both inside and outside of the church.
 1. **Get involved in a ministry group.** Our church offers many ministry opportunities. Pray and ask God where you should "plug in." It's the people who really "get plugged in" that find their purpose and soar in their walk with Christ. Sometimes this takes a little time. In order to help you find your place, we offer a Discovery Process and personal coaching. Don't get discouraged if the first thing you try doesn't seem to fit.
 2. **Get involved in missions.** Missions give us an opportunity to serve God through meeting the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of people. It gets us out of the comfort zone of our church and into the world that God is trying to reach. If your spiritual life needs a kick, go on a mission trip.

Step 3- Live It Our relationship with God is not just about doing. It is also about letting God change us and allowing God to be a part of every part of our lives. Our finances, our relationships, our work... So part of Christianity is listening to what God says in the prayer and Bible studies and obeying. What part of your life do you need to allow God to be a part of? Is it your finances and you need to start tithing? Is it your relationship with someone? I.e. living with someone but not married. Is it your anger that needs to be directed in healthier ways? What area of your life do you need God? God often uses the difficult life circumstances to mold us into a new creation and give us the life He intended. God does not necessarily cause the difficult life circumstances but he works with us to change our habits, thought processes so we can be healed from the hurt and freed from the bondage of sin. Are you going through a difficult life circumstance that God needs to help you with?

My Personal Growth Plan

Use this as a worksheet to develop your personal growth plan. Spiritual Growth is a process. If you are a new Christian try to do at least one thing in each step. If you have been a Christian for a while, challenge yourself to grow. There are no right or wrong answers. As you fill out this sheet, prayerfully consider, "God reveal to me what I need to do to get closer to you."

Step 1 – Connect with God.

I will connect with God by

- Read, reflect, and apply the Bible by _____

- Pray daily by _____
- I will join a Bible study or prayer group
- Other things I will do to connect with God _____

Step 2 – I will connect with others by

- Attend church services regularly.
- Get a spiritual coach
- Be part of a small group.
- Serve others.
 - I will serve in _____ ministry
 - I will get involved in missions by _____

Step 3- Live It

Begin this section by reflecting on the following questions

1. What is God telling me about my life?
2. I need God to _____ in my life
3. I don't allow God to _____
4. I need to change _____ in my life to get closer to God.

In order to live the Christian life and get closer to God, I need to

- _____
- _____
- _____

I believe that my relationship with God is the most important relationship in my life and should be the utmost priority. This personal growth plan is a covenant between me and God. God please draw near to me, as I draw near to you.

your signature