

Spiritual Health and Training Plan

Train yourself to be godly. Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (1 Timothy 4:7-9).

I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

Spiritual health is of utmost importance. The Christian who is spiritually healthy trains to be godly and endeavors to grow in Christlikeness. This is a major part of experiencing the abundant life that Jesus offers. The Christian who neglects spiritual health demonstrates spiritual laziness and is more susceptible to lifestyle sins and the guilt which follows them.

Spiritual health is all about progress, not perfection. Spiritual health must be a lifelong pursuit. Just as with physical health, if spiritual health and training is not a continual pursuit, progress will be lost. Our level of spiritual health and training in godliness is just as dependent on ourselves as it is on God because spiritual health and training in godliness is part of our sanctification.

Salvation includes three aspects: justification, sanctification, and glorification. Justification is being right with God by being saved from the penalty of our sins. Justification is past tense for the believer. Justification is possible because of Jesus' atoning death on the cross and his resurrection. We are justified, not by any action of our own, but when we believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from dead (Romans 10:9-10).

Glorification is having a resurrection body like Jesus has and thus is being saved from the very presence of sin. Even though we have been justified, the sinful nature still lingers in our bodies. Glorification is future tense for the believer. We will receive resurrection bodies at Christ's return (1 Corinthians 15:35-56). We will be glorified, not by any action of our own, but by God's action which will usher in the new heaven and earth.

Sanctification is growing in Christlikeness through collaboration with the Holy Spirit and thus being saved from the power of sin. Sanctification is present tense and ongoing for the believer. The Holy Spirit leads us to become more like Jesus and less interested in sinning, but the Spirit's leading is collaborative in nature. We are involved. By our actions we can grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) or by our actions we can keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). Pursuing spiritual health by training to be godly is the heart of sanctification.

The pursuit of spiritual health by training to be godly and growing in Christlikeness is not merely our doing, of course. The Holy Spirit who dwells within us gives us self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7) so that we can fan into flame spiritual health and godliness in our lives. This material is designed to help you fan into flame Christlikeness in your life!

Training to be godly is a process that requires an awareness of your current spiritual health. To gauge your current spiritual health, please prayerfully fill out the Spiritual Health Assessment sheet. The Spiritual Health Assessment will help illuminate what areas of spiritual health need to be addressed. The Spiritual Health Assessment sheet is not all encompassing, but is a diagnostic tool to help you think deeply about how robust your walk with God is.

Spiritual Health Assessment

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? And I trust that you will discover that we have not failed the test.

2 Corinthians 13:5-6

Education: God Values My Knowledge

| | Doesn't describes me | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Generally describes me |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| I spend time in God's Word daily | 1 | | | | |
| I have good Bible study habits..... | 1 | | | | |
| I can competently share the Gospel..... | 1 | | | | |
| I can competently explain salvation in terms of Justification, Sanctification, & Glorification..... | 1 | | | | |
| I have a good grasp of the Trinity | 1 | | | | |
| I believe the Bible is God-breathed, inerrant, & authoritative..... | 1 | | | | |
| I have a good grasp on the timeline and narrative flow of the Bible..... | 1 | | | | |
| I am growing in knowledge, wisdom, & understanding of the Bible | 1 | | | | |

Expression: God Values My Worship

| | Doesn't describes me | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Generally describes me |
|--|-------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| How I live my life shows that God is my highest priority | 1 | | | | |
| I am dependent on God for every aspect of my life..... | 1 | | | | |
| There is nothing in my life that I haven't surrendered to Christ..... | 1 | | | | |
| I regularly meditate on God's Word and invite Him into my everyday activities..... | 1 | | | | |
| I have a deep desire to spend time in God's presence..... | 1 | | | | |
| I am the same person in public that I am in private..... | 1 | | | | |
| I have an overwhelming sense of God's awesomeness even when I do not feel His presence. | 1 | | | | |
| God is what I treasure most in my heart | 1 | | | | |

Good Works: God Values My Service

| | Doesn't describes me | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Generally describes me |
|--|-------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| I regularly use my time to serve God..... | 1 | | | | |
| I am currently serving God with the gifts and passions He has given me | 1 | | | | |
| I regularly reflect on how my life can have an impact for the Kingdom of God | 1 | | | | |
| I often think about ways to use my God-given gifts and abilities to please Him | 1 | | | | |
| I enjoy meeting the needs of others without expecting anything in return | 1 | | | | |
| Those closest to me would say my life reflects serving more than being served..... | 1 | | | | |
| I see my painful experiences as opportunities to minister to others..... | 1 | | | | |
| I regularly train spiritually to better serve others | 1 | | | | |

Christlikeness: God Values My Generosity

| | Doesn't describes me | Partially describes me | Generally describes me |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| I regularly look for opportunities to give myself away..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| My financial report reflects that I prioritize God and others in my spending..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I am quick to confess anything in my character that does reflect Christlikeness..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I am able to praise God in difficult times and see them as an opportunity to die to self..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I enjoy meeting the needs of others without expecting anything in return..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| Those closest to me would say my life reflects giving more than receiving..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I consistently pursue habits that help me model my life after Jesus..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I work daily to deny myself by doing for others..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |

Unity: God Values My Family & Membership

| | Doesn't describes me | Partially describes me | Generally describes me |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| I am genuinely open and honest about who I am..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I regularly use my time and resources to care for the needs of my family and the Church..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I have a deep meaningful connection with others in church..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I strive to receive advice, encouragement, & correction from others..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I see myself a part of something bigger than myself when it comes to family and church..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I regularly gather with my church body for fellowship and collective worship..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I see my family as my first focus for discipleship..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I promote unity within my church family..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |

Evangelism: God Values My Invitation

| | Doesn't describes me | Partially describes me | Generally describes me |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| I feel personal responsibility to share my faith with those who don't know Jesus..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I pray and look for opportunities to share my faith with the lost..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I regularly pray for the souls of the lost..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I am confident in my ability to share my testimony..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| My heart is full of passion to share the gospel with those who haven't accepted it..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| My faith comes up frequently in conversations with those who don't know Jesus..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I am open to going anywhere God calls me, in whatever capacity, to share the Gospel..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I see the Great Commission as marching orders for my life..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |

Spiritual Disciplines

| | Doesn't describes me | Partially describes me | Generally describes me |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines of abstinence..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines of engagement..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I am passionate about growing more spiritually disciplined..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I am accountable to another believer regarding my spiritual discipline..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I am not legalistic concerning my spiritual discipline..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |
| I enjoy talking about spiritual disciplines with fellow believers..... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 | |

Spiritual Growth Plan

While there are many approaches to pursuing spiritual health, the Spiritual Growth Plan sheet is a good tool to help make the process of training to be godly more manageable. The process looks like this:

First, prayerfully, and with the counsel of another believer who will help keep you accountable, decide which value domain from the Spiritual Health Assessment you want to address and decide on a goal to pursue. The value domains are what God values within our discipleship (God Values My Knowledge/Worship/Service/Generosity/Family/Membership/Invitation). A goal should be broad in scope. For example, your goal may be something like, “My goal is to grow more knowledgeable about God,” or “My goal is to become more generous,” or “My goal is to be more evangelistic.”

Second, decide on specific tasks that will aid in your pursuit of the goal. These specific tasks are the action steps that you will take to accomplish your goal. A good idea is to have the tasks line up with questions from the Spiritual Health Assessment sheet or to center the tasks around the spiritual disciplines described below.

If your goal is to grow more knowledgeable about God, you may come up with tasks like, “I will ask a trusted minister for a podcast about biblical doctrine to listen to,” or “I will listen to the entire William Lane Craig *Defenders* podcast,” or “I will read a recommended book about a particular doctrine,” or “I will practice the discipline of study an hour a day three days a week,” or “I will attend a Sunday morning Bible class regularly.”

If your goal is to become more generous, you may come up with tasks like, “I will create and stick to a budget,” or “I will invite someone to lunch or coffee and I will offer to pay,” or “I will practice the discipline of secrecy (described below).”

If your goal is to become more evangelistic, you may come up with tasks like, “I will practice the discipline of prayer for 30 minutes a day, five days a week,” or “I will pray regularly for my heart to be softened toward the lost,” or “I will write out my testimony and rework it based on the comments of three trusted believers,” or “I will invite five acquaintances and five strangers to church.”

Third, decide on the timeframe you will dedicate to each task. Just as a goal without concrete, specific tasks is less likely to be achieved, a task without a timeline is less likely to be completed. Give yourself enough time to accomplish the task. If your goal is to listen to the entire *Defenders* podcast, you might give yourself the timeline of, “...by the end of June.” If your goal is to order a book about a certain topic, you might give yourself the timeframe of, “by next Friday.”

Fourth, note the date you actually complete the tasks. Some tasks will only take very short period of time, some may take much longer. Keep track of your progress, noting incremental advancement.

Finally, share this plan with another believer who will serve as an accountability partner with you. Pray for and with each other. Encourage one another. Talk to each other about your successes and your failures. Accountability is a key factor in pursuing spiritual health.

If you need help deciding on which goals and tasks to pursue, you can contact Chris, Andrew, Clay, or the elders to help. You can also join a Conversational Discipleship Group which will focus on spiritual health. It is also a good idea to then take the help offered by the staff, elders, and guided Conversational Discipleship Groups, and work with your family to develop plans together.

Spiritual Disciplines

To fan into flame the gift of God, we need to collaborate with the Holy Spirit and improve our self-discipline. We can do this by developing spiritual disciplines that will help us to be more Christlike if they become regular and habitual parts of our lives. Spiritual disciplines are practices that should become a foundational aspect of our spiritual training.

What follows is a list of tried and true spiritual disciplines. This list is not exhaustive, but it is a compilation of the practices which many who enjoy spiritual health regularly employ. Remember, all of this has the potential to become very legalistic if we do not recognize that this entire process is within the scope of sanctification, not justification. We do not practice spiritual discipline to be right with God, we practice them because, having been made right God already through justification, we want to be closer to God and more Christlike. To this end, we collaborate with the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual disciplines are generally divided into two categories: disciplines of abstinence (stopping something) and disciplines of engagement (starting something). Disciplines of abstinence are valuable because they counteract our tendencies to keep on doing things that can hinder our spiritual health. Disciplines of engagement are valuable because they counteract our tendencies to avoid doing things that will promote our spiritual health. The following disciplines and definitions are taken from Dallas Willard's *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.

The Disciplines of Abstinence

Solitude

Solitude is choosing to be alone with God. In solitude, we purposefully abstain from interaction with other human beings, temporarily denying ourselves companionship and interaction with others. We close ourselves away.

Solitude is choosing to be alone and to dwell on our experience of isolation from other human beings. In solitude we find true social distance and the perspective from which we can see the created things that trap, worry, and oppress us. By seeing these things, we can better fix our eyes on God, the uncreated one, who craves our attention. Solitude allows for a time of communion with the God and God alone.

Of all the disciplines of abstinence, solitude is generally the most fundamental in the beginning of the spiritual life, and it must be returned to again and again as that life develops. Take time regularly to be alone with God.

Mark 1:35—Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Luke 4:42—At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.

Silence

In silence we close off our souls from “sounds,” whether those sounds be noise, music, or words. Silence accompanies, but goes beyond solitude, and without silence, solitude has little effect. Silence is the way to make solitude a reality. As with all disciplines, we should approach the practice of silence in a prayerful, experimental attitude, confident that we shall be led into its right use for us.

But we must also practice the silence of not speaking. Practicing not speaking can at least give us enough control over what we say that our tongues do not “go off” automatically. This discipline provides us with a certain inner distance that gives us time to consider our words fully and the presence of mind to control what we say and when we say it. Such practice also helps us to listen, to observe, and to pay attention to people.

How few of us live with quiet, inner confidence, and yet how many of us desire it? Such inward quiet is a great benefit we can receive as we practice not talking.

Ecclesiastes 3:1,7—There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens... a time to be silent and a time to speak.

Habakkuk 2:20—The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.

Fasting

In fasting, we abstain in some significant way from food and possibly from drink as well. This discipline teaches us a lot about ourselves very quickly. It will certainly prove humbling to us, as it reveals to us how much our peace depends upon the pleasures of eating. If nothing else, though, it will certainly demonstrate how powerful and clever our body is in getting its own way against our strongest resolves.

There are many ways and degrees of fasting: food and drink; food alone; restricting certain types of food and drink. Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food. Fasting unto our Lord is therefore feasting—feasting on him and on doing his will. Fasting is one of the more important ways of practicing that self-denial required of everyone who would follow Christ (Matthew 16:24). In fasting, we learn how to suffer happily as we feast on God.

Fasting teaches temperance and self-control and therefore teaches moderation and restraint with regard to all our fundamental drives. Try fasting from a single meal, focusing on God.

Matthew 4:4—It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’

Matthew 6:16—When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

Frugality

In frugality we abstain from using money or goods at our disposal in ways that merely gratify our desires or our hunger for status, glamour, or luxury. Practicing frugality means we stay within the bounds of what general good judgment would designate as necessary for the kind of life which God desires for us.

Frugality is the active choice not to buy things for ourselves. As such, frugality frees us to consider what good for God a certain sum of money might do. Frugality can involve a small amount of money or a large amount.

In our current world, a large part of the freedom that comes from frugality is freedom from the spiritual bondage caused by financial debt. This kind of debt is often incurred by buying things that are far from necessary, and its effect, when the amount is substantial, is to diminish our sense of worth, dim our hope for the future, and eliminate our sensitivity to the needs of others.

Philippians 4:12-13— I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Colossians 3:1-3— Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Chastity

Chastity is choosing not to pursue the self-gratifying thought or action of sex. Of course, all believers are to practice chastity as a continual lifestyle until marriage. In exercising the spiritual discipline of chastity, we purposefully turn away from dwelling upon or engaging in the sexual dimension of our relationships with others—even our husbands or wives. The married couple should mutually consent to this for a time to focus on prayer.

Sexuality is one of the most powerful and subtle forces in human nature, and the percentage of human suffering tied directly to it is horrifying. It is imperative that “each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable” (1 Thessalonians 4:4). An essential part of this learning consists in the practice of abstaining from sex and from indulging in sexual feelings and thoughts, and thus learning how to not be governed by them.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5—The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Secrecy

In the discipline of secrecy, we abstain from causing our good deeds to be known. Secrecy, or doing anonymous good deeds, helps us tame the hunger for fame or just the positive attention of others. We learn to love to be unknown without the loss of our peace, joy, or purpose.

In the practice of secrecy, we experience a continuing relationship with God independent of the opinions of others. Secrecy rightly practiced enables us to place our personal public relations department entirely in the hands of God. Secrecy helps teach love and humility before God and others. And that love and humility encourages us to see others in the best possible light rather than trying to be seen by others.

Matthew 6:1-4—Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Sacrifice

In the discipline of sacrifice, we abstain from keeping for ourselves that which is necessary for usual lifestyle. In sacrifice, we choose to do without something we think we need. This goes beyond frugality or tithing. Sacrifice is forsaking the security of meeting our needs with what is in our hands. It is total abandonment to God, a stepping into the darkened abyss in the faith and hope that God will bear us up. With the discipline of sacrifice, we practice a different dimension of faith, and often we are surprised at its results.

Luke 21:1-4—As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. “Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

The Disciplines of Engagement

Study

In the spiritual discipline of study, we engage ourselves, above all, with the written and spoken Word of God. Here is the chief positive counterpart of solitude. As solitude is the primary discipline of abstinence for the early part of our spiritual life, so study is the primary discipline of engagement.

In study we also strive to see the Word of God at work in the lives of others, in the church, in history, and in nature. We not only read and hear and inquire, but we meditate on what comes before us; we withdraw into silence where we prayerfully and steadily focus upon it. In this way its meaning for us can emerge and form us as God works in the depths of our heart, mind, and soul. We devote long periods of time to this. Studying the Bible, commentaries, and books on doctrine or various aspects of the Christian life is an essential part of training to be godly.

Psalms 119:15-16—I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

Colossians 3:2—Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Worship

In worship we engage ourselves with, dwell upon, and express the greatness, beauty, and goodness of God. We worship through thought and through outward expression. We worship alone and in union with God’s people. To worship is to see God as worthy and to ascribe great worth to him. We may sing a song, paint, dance, write, play music, etc. as worship.

In worship we are met by God himself as our thoughts and words turn to the perception and experience of God. The Christian’s worship is most profitable when it focuses upon the Trinity—God the Father, who sent the Son and whose will we seek; God the Son: Jesus Christ, who compels our minds and hearts with wonder at the actions and words of his earthly life, his death on the cross, his resurrection, and his work as ascended intercessor; and God the Spirit, who indwells believers, confirms the truth for us, and leads us into increasing Christlikeness.

John 4:24—God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.

Hebrews 12:28—Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.

Celebration

We engage in celebration when we enjoy ourselves, our life, our world, in conjunction with our faith and confidence in God's greatness, beauty, and goodness. We concentrate on our life and world as God's work and as God's gift to us. Here is one of the most important disciplines of engagement, yet most overlooked and misunderstood. It is the completion of worship, for it dwells on the greatness of God as shown in his goodness to us.

Typically, the discipline of celebration is exercised when we come together with others who know God to eat and drink, to sing and dance, and to relate stories of God's action for our lives and our people. Holy delight and joy is the great antidote to despair and celebration is a wellspring of genuine gratitude.

Healthy faith before God cannot be built and maintained, without heartfelt celebration of his greatness and goodness to us, even in the midst of our suffering and terror. Celebration helps us to see how great and lovely God is and how good he has been to us. Celebration heartily done makes our deprivations and sorrows seem small, and we find in celebration great strength to do the will of our God because his goodness becomes so real to us.

Psalm 118:24—This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 145:7—They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

Service

In service we engage our resources and strength in the active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world. Not every act that may be done as a discipline need be done as a discipline. We may often be able to serve another simply as an act of love and righteousness, without regard to how it may enhance our ability to follow Christ. But we may also serve others to train ourselves away from arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment, or covetousness. In that case, my service is undertaken as a discipline for the spiritual life.

The discipline of service is vital for all believers, but is particularly important for Christians who find themselves in positions of influence, power, and leadership. To live as a servant while fulfilling socially important roles is one of the greatest challenges any disciple ever faces. Service to others in the spirit of Jesus allows us the freedom of a humility that carries no burdens of "appearance." It lets us be what we are—simply a lively piece of clay who, as a servant of God, happens to be here now with the ability to do this good and needful thing for that other bit of clay there.

1 Corinthians 12:5—There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

Ephesians 4:11-12—So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

Prayer

Prayer is conversing, communicating with God. When we pray, we talk to God, aloud or within our thoughts. Prayer almost always involves other disciplines and spiritual activities if it is to go well, especially study/meditation, worship, solitude, and occasionally fasting.

Prayer is far more than a discipline. It would be a rather lackluster spiritual life in which prayer was chiefly undertaken as a discipline, rather than as a way of co-laboring with God to accomplish good things and advance his Kingdom purposes. Yet prayer can be a discipline, and a highly effective one, as we see from

our Lord's advice to those with him in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38).

Prayer as a discipline has its greatest force in strengthening the spiritual life only as we learn to pray without ceasing. We can train ourselves to invoke God's presence in every action we perform. The emphasis upon the character of overall discipline throughout life must not be missed if prayer is to be the powerful work and effectual discipline God intended it to be, one of his most precious gifts to us.

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

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18—Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Fellowship

In fellowship we engage in activities of worship, study, prayer, celebration, and service with other disciples. This may involve assembling ourselves together in a large group or meeting with only a few. Personalities united can contain more of God and sustain the force of his greater presence much better than scattered individuals.

The Christian life is not meant to be lived in isolation, but must involve meaningful connections with other believers. Because of this reciprocal nature within the corporate body of Christ, fellowship is required to allow realization of a joyous and sustained level of life in Christ that is normally impossible to attain by all our individual effort, no matter how vigorous and sustained. In fellowship we receive the ministry of all the graces of the Spirit to the church.

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

Confession

Confession is a discipline that functions within fellowship. In it we let trusted others know our deepest weaknesses and failures. This will nourish our faith in God's provision for our needs through his people, our sense of being loved, and our humility before our brothers and sisters.

We let some friends in Christ know who we really are, not holding back anything important, but, ideally, allowing complete transparency. We lay down the burden of hiding and pretending, which normally takes up such a dreadful amount of human energy. We engage and are engaged by others in the most profound depths of the soul. Confession alone makes deep fellowship possible, and the lack of it explains much of the superficial quality so commonly found in our church associations. Confession is one of the most powerful of the disciplines for the spiritual life.

James 5:16—Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

1 John 1:9—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Submission

In submission we engage the experience of those in our fellowship who are qualified to direct our efforts in growth and who then add the weight of their wise authority to help us do the things we would like to do and refrain from the things we don't want to do. They oversee the godly order in our souls as well as in our fellowship and in the surrounding body of Christ.

The highest level of fellowship—involving humility, complete honesty, transparency, and at times confession and restitution—is sustained by the discipline of submission. Submission is a call for help to those recognized as able to give it because of their depth of experience and Christlikeness—because they truly are “elder” in their spiritual life.

Hebrews 13:17—Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

1 Peter 5:5—In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

Your Spiritual Health

Every believer wants to be spiritually healthy. The process is not an overnight one. It takes lots of collaboration with the Holy Spirit and much time. It is worth it. We should strive to experience the abundant life Jesus offers. We should prioritize spiritual health. Training to be godly is truly valuable. Growing more Christlike is truly valuable. You don't have to—nor should you—do it alone.

Take the time to introspect and contemplate your walk with Christ. Take the time to assess your current level of spiritual health. Take the time to consider the spiritual disciplines. Take the time to put them into practice. Take the time to formulate goals. Take the time to develop specific tasks that will help you reach your goals. Make the investment with another believer and hold each other accountable for sticking to the plan you each devise. Reach out for help along the way. Revise your goals and tasks. Add new goals and tasks. Above all, make sure to rely on the Holy Spirit to lead you on your path toward spiritual health!

Glendale Christian Church Spiritual Growth Plan

Goal Development: For each goal, indicate the corresponding domain(s) from the Spiritual Health Assessment. It is possible for one goal to address multiple domains.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...Philippians 2:12

DOMAIN (Spiritual Health Assessment):

GOAL 1:

| Tasks to accomplish the goal | Who will do the task? | Time frame? | Date Completed |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |

DOMAIN (Spiritual Health Assessment):

GOAL 2:

| Tasks to accomplish the goal | Who will do the task? | Time frame? | Date Completed |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |

DOMAIN (Spiritual Health Assessment):

GOAL 3:

| Tasks to accomplish the goal | Who will do the task? | Time frame? | Date Completed |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |

Read and initial each item prior to signing this document.

- I was involved in the development of the above goals and tasks and believe I will benefit from their completion.
- I agree with the conditions set forth in this spiritual growth plan.
- I will do my best, relying on the Holy Spirit to complete the assigned tasks and goals above.
- I will remember it is about progress not perfection.

| | | | |
|-----------|------|----------------------------------|------|
| Signature | Date | Accountability Partner Signature | Date |
|-----------|------|----------------------------------|------|