

Fit



TO FOLLOW



“Train with Jesus, and become like him.”

A 90 Day Challenge

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I dedicate this training manual to the men and women on each of the Word Retreat teams. Thank you for showing me Jesus in the way you served each other and those who attended each retreat. And to Ray Vidic, who willingly entrusted to us the Word Ministry. Lastly, to Dallas Willard who helped me to believe and take up the easy yoke of Jesus.

TRAINING PLAN



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Why the 90 Day Challenge:

The most important undertaking of your life is not what you do, or achieve but who you become. One can possess many things and visit many places in life but that doesn't guarantee you will become a person of deep character, be able to love unselfishly, or live with inner freedom and peace.

There are many voices that promise answers to finding the Good Life, but none so powerful and clear as Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who speaks so directly to the deep desires of our souls for more than existence but becoming whole. As he speaks about an "abundant life," his words awake in us the realization that we have in many ways settled for less. Unlike the other voices offering their answers, **it is Jesus who offers himself as the means to this life.** Jesus gives us his life, teachings, death, and resurrection as evidence so we can put our trust in him.

"Fit to Follow" isn't a Bible study program but a training invitation to join our lives to Jesus and his Holy Spirit. It is a summons to learn from Christ how to live his way in everything we do from morning to night one day at a time. His purpose is to free us and help us to experience the "abundant life" that he promised. Fit to Follow offers a training plan to enable us to develop a life of abiding with Christ.

For three short years Jesus cast a vision of what this new life would encompass. He called people to become his apprentices so they could learn to live in this "abundant life" through a relationship with him.

There is a phrase in Acts 4:13 that always stops me in my tracks. The phrase is **"they took note that these men had been with Jesus."** This phrase is both a challenge and an inspiration. It challenges me to stop and take a personal assessment of my own life. Has my life been shaped and changed because of my relationship to Christ? Have I become the kind of disciple of Christ of whom people will say, "they have been with Jesus." This phrase awakens in me a desire for more of

the character traits these leaders saw in the disciples of Jesus. I am not only challenged by this phrase, but inspired to desire more from my life.

After Peter and John healed a crippled beggar in Jesus name and by His power, they were seized and taken before the Jewish Council who demanded to know by what authority did they do this miracle? Peter's answer was clear, "This man was made well by the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth." The character and boldness of the disciples left the religious authorities perplexed. How was it that ordinary, uneducated men could have such confidence or do a miracle? Then someone said, "These men were with Jesus." Not long before this, Jesus stood before this same group of religious authorities. Now they saw Jesus' impact upon the lives of His followers.

The point is made in this passage that although these disciples were uneducated, ordinary men, because they had been with Jesus, they were changed. Their strength and boldness reminded the Jewish Council of Jesus. It is inspiring to know that the source of the disciples' boldness and confidence was a direct result of the time they had spent with Jesus. They had lived with Jesus, learned His ways, observed His interactions with people. For three years they sat at Jesus feet, followed Him from town to town, watched Him live His life in relationship to God His Father and to other people. For three years He trained them to be like Him in behavior, purpose and character. At Pentecost they had been filled with His Spirit. Now they were becoming like Him in character, confident and boldness. The authorities looked at these men and realized they had been with Jesus. Suddenly it made sense. This was the only reasonable explanation for their behavior; they had been with Jesus.

We, too, can be with Jesus. We can sit at His feet, follow Him from morning to night, and become His apprentices. He wants to train us to become increasingly more like Him in our behavior, love, purpose and character. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

How does this happen? We have to decide to become a disciple who makes everyday a training day with Jesus.

In 2002 I attended Dallas Willard's class "Spirituality and Ministry" offered through Fuller Seminary. At the time I had been in ministry for over 20 years as a Pastor and I came to that class with a sense of hopelessness. My spirituality wasn't much to write home about and the churches I had served in were to some degree in the same condition. Sure there were some who experienced growth and transformation but it wasn't the norm. The song by DeGarmo & Key, "Casual Christian" seemed to define the kind of Christian I had become and saw in the churches I had pastored.

"I don't wanna be, I don't wanna be a casual Christian
I don't wanna live, I don't wanna live a lukewarm life
Because I wanna light up the night
With an everlasting light
I don't wanna live the casual Christian life."
In moments of silence I wonder "isn't there more."

Many of us aren't comfortable with our life and all that we hoped to become as Christians. We love Jesus and believe in him but our belief hasn't taken us as far as we hoped. The "abundant life" Jesus promises seems to be something that belonged to a different era, but sadly not to ours. We profess faith but have a hard time demonstrating the abundant life personally. We live with a version of Christianity that offers us assurance and sin management without any hope of freedom in our relationships and in our life. For many Christians this leads to a quiet despair and deep frustration.

When Dallas Willard started teaching the class, in his humble manner, about transformation and spiritual growth as a natural part of the Christian life, I found it hard to accept. He offered no new secret, only the encouragement to enter a life of training with Jesus vs. trying. He offered a vision of the Christian life of growing closer and deeper in a loving relationship to Christ. He spoke about how our relationship with Jesus will change everything in us and in our churches when we start doing what Jesus taught, "remain in me and I in you, because apart from me you can't do anything." Dallas aptly describes the futility of our present version of Christianity and described it with this statement, "I would

rather have a car that runs, then a good insurance policy on a car that doesn't."

Part of the class was for each student to meet with Dallas Willard. When it was my time, He asked if I had anything he could pray for me. I said yes and shared with him my struggle to believe that real transformation was possible for Christians. He asked if that was my own experience in my Christian life and I said yes. Then he simply and directly said, "It is possible to experience Christ easy yoke and find freedom from your burns. Stop trying so hard and learn to put my confluence in Christ to help you to grow. He spoke about my needs to enter into a daily relationship of learning from Jesus. His words were spoken with such grace and he gave me hope and a vision of living the Christian life in a very different manner.

Fit to Follow is an invitation to step into the life Jesus promised. It's about practicing the kind of life Jesus offers when he says, "remaining with me and I with you" and learning to thrive through that relationship in our life.

How does it work?

The simple answer is one day at a time from morning to night. Brother Lawrence, a lay brother in a Carmelite monastery in Paris who was a cook and dish washer called it "Practicing the Presence of God." He learned to practice what he called "a habitual, silent, secret conversation of the soul with God." The Apostle Paul offer us the advice of doing everything in Jesus' name, which means to do it the way Jesus would do it if he were in your place; to do it with his kind of grace, love, joy, courage, and virtue. The only way this is possible to is to train and grow in our relationship to him.

It starts when you invite him to be with you and you with him in everything you do in a normal day. When your feet hit the ground in the morning you stop and ask him to be with you and guide you throughout the new day. It's true he is already with you; "asking" is a reminder to ourselves that we need to be with him. It is also a way to

begin a conversation with Jesus that can resemble how a teenager texts a friend endlessly from morning to night letting their friend know what they are doing now, or thinking now! The Good News is Jesus is definitely on the unlimited data plan, so you never run out minutes or his willingness to be involved in your life.

For most of us this isn't natural and many of us are still living like our ancestors, Adam and Eve, who believed they could get by in life without God's guidance. Jesus' desires you to live differently, so he reminds you that you must remain with him because apart from him you can't live productive and meaningful lives. As descendants of Adam and Eve, you naturally struggle with the idea of needing God's help in everything you do; yet when you train with Jesus, you will discover the power of his easy yoke in your life.

So training with Jesus or being his disciple begins with the acceptance of joining your life to his throughout your day. You can ask for his help to learn how to start your day or car in his name. Do errands, schoolwork, your job, relationships, and everything else in such a way that it will reflect his character, virtue, love and purpose. The lifestyle the disciples developed with Jesus, changed their lives to such a degree that left the Jewish Leadership amazed!

The general human failing is to want what is right and important, but at the same time not to commit to the kind of life that will produce the action we know to be right and the condition we want to enjoy. This is the feature of human character that explains why the road to hell is paved with good intentions . We intend what is right, but we avoid the life that would make it reality. Willard, Dallas (2009-02-06). The Spirit of the Disciplines (p. 6). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

Training with Jesus

Being in relationship with Jesus is what make you fit to follow him and leads to the “abundant life” he offers. Over and over Jesus calls us to be his disciples, learn from him and his ways; take on his easy yoke and remain in him. He sent the Holy Spirit to be with us so that we can follow him.

Even though we live in a fallen world, struggle with sin, and have problems with our confidence in Jesus, we must step out in faith and make the effort to learn from Jesus how to live in him and to live like him.

First, start with a personal commitment to bring Jesus into everything you do. This is a daily commitment that should be renewed each day. The Fit to Follow Plan seeks to guide you in a way that reflects all that Jesus believed and taught.

Second, we suggest that you become deliberate and focused for 90 days as a way to experiment and train in this close walk with Jesus. We train in our relationship with Christ because for most of us we are very good at believing in Jesus, but weak at “remaining” with him in each part of the day.

Third, when we think about getting close to Jesus, we usually think about praying or reading the Bible. Those things are very important but Fit to Follow seeks to developing a balanced relationship to Christ so we have expanded our exercises and divided the training into three parts.

- **CARDIO**: exercises that connect my heart, mind and soul to Christ. This involves the typical spiritual exercises Christian have used for ages. Remaining with Jesus means connecting my heart, mind and soul to Jesus.

- **CORE**: exercises that help us to bring our character into a deeper relationship to Christ. We training in the fruits of the spirit so

that we can reflect the life of Christ in our relationships to others like family, friends, and co-workers.

- **BODYBUILDING:** exercises that will help us join with Jesus in building the Body of Christ for his glory. Christ died for his people not only to save us but to build a community of people that loving serve each other, and share the love of Christ to those who are still seeking for meaning in life.

A list of the exercises can be found at the end of this section. The example below shows how you can write out a Weekly Training Plan in which you focus on certain spiritual exercises during each week. The cardio session of the Weekly Training Plan lists Prayer and the Word. These two exercises need to be a part of our daily life as much as possible. Prayer and being in his Word are foundational in our relationship to Christ. The plan helps us focus on the areas we believe Christ wants us to grow: Cardio, core and bodybuilding.

Weekly Training Plan_(example)

WEEK :		M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su	Scripture verse
Cardio	Exercises								
	1 Prayer	x		x		x		x	Mark 14:36
	2 reading the word		x	x	x	x	x		
	3								
4									
Core	1 Joy	x		x		x			Romans 15:13
	2 Kindness	x	x	x	x	x	x		Galatians 5:22
	3								
	4								
Bodybuilding	1 praying for team	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Ephesians 3:14
	2 Service to the poor					x	x		
	3								
	4								

This Weekly Training Plan helps us arrange our life around spiritual exercises to grow in our spiritual life and helps us practice these throughout our week. Remember the Weekly plan is only a tool to help you remain in Jesus and grow in Christ. The weekly Plan has value only if you do what Jesus says we must, "Remain with him."

Weekly Training Plan Guidelines:

- The Weekly Training Plan should be completed weekly.
- At anytime you can add or subtract from your Weekly Training Plan.
- Start slow and add to your Weekly Training Plan as you learn and

develop skills in the areas in which you have been training.

- Ask Jesus for His guidance regarding the areas you should focus on each week.
- Prayer and seeking God's guidance is foundational to choosing the right spiritual exercises. Your team can help by praying with you as you fill in the Weekly Training Plan or make weekly adjustments.

IMPORTANT! We are saved by grace and we live in God's grace every day of our lives. How well you do or don't do with these exercises will not change your position in Christ. Disciples and those in training with Jesus aren't perfect, just in training. So enjoy and step out in faith, trusting the Lord to work in your life. Remember, we all have difficulty with these exercises, but with practice and an open heart to Jesus, you will experience more and more of his help in your life. You can learn to do what you can't do right now. One more thing, if you start to feel guilty because you're not doing what you feel you should, stop and pray. Thank the Lord that He loves and understands you perfectly and remember you're in training.

Fourth, is the importance of training with a team. The word team is never used once in the Bible but the idea of team, namely, a group working together towards a goal, or joining oneself to another to accomplish more than one can do alone, can be found in many places in God's Word. In Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus invite all that are "weary" and need help to join our life to his. Notice that Jesus is inviting "all" to come to him. The Disciples of Jesus shared their life and training with him. They also did it together with the other disciples.

Fit to Follow, encourages us all to be in training during the 90 Day Challenge with a team. A team can help you to stay motivated to do your weekly training with Jesus. Your team can share with you the up and down of training. Your team can pray with you, and you can pray for them as you join together to practice and live a life of being with Jesus. The Team Discussions Guides are designed to help you share the "90 Day Challenge" together. Training with Jesus and with other believers makes

the training a powerful experience of growing together in Christ. We suggest that you have a team of at least three and no more than five. This isn't a law just a suggestion. The first time we started "Fit to Follow" teams my wife Kathi's team had 8 women on it and did well.

The classical Disciplines * of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths. They invite us to explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. They urge us to be the answer to a hollow world.
Foster, Richard J. (2009-03-17). Celebration of Discipline (p. 1). HarperSanFrancisco. Kindle Edition.

THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISE LIST



Spiritual Exercises List:

What makes something a spiritual exercise?

Exercises that are spiritual are simply those that help you live in the fruit of the Spirit and grow in the life of Christ. Spiritual exercises are any activity that can help you learn and gain the ability to live a life as Jesus taught and modeled.

How many spiritual exercises are there?

I read one author that listed 72 spiritual exercises, so really the answer is as many as you can define that can help you to grow in Christ and be supported in God's Word. Certain practices are basic, such as prayer, reading the Word, solitude, confession, and meditation on God's Word. The practice of the fruit of the Spirit will be used in this Training Plan as well as other activities that

will help us learn to strengthen the church, God's people.

What spiritual exercises should you practice?

John Ortberg in his book, "The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People" says "In a sense, the answer comes from thinking backward: First, we must understand clearly what it means to live in

the kingdom of God. Jesus spent much of his time helping people see what true spirituality looks like. Second, we must learn what particular barriers keep us from living this kind of life. Third, we must discover what particular practices, experiences, or relationships can help us overcome these barriers."

Prayer, areas of your life you struggle with or desire to grow more like Jesus should be where you focus your training on during the 90 Day Challenge. The FTF Assessment can help you as well, but trust God to lead and guide you. Experiment and use this 90 Day Challenge to learn what exercises work best for you.

The list below is not a complete list but is what is being recommended for the 90 Day Challenge. If you have a Spiritual Exercise you would like to train in and isn't on the list, include it in your Training Plan.

If your soul is healthy, no external circumstance can destroy your life. If your soul is unhealthy, no external circumstance can redeem your life. Ortberg, John (2014-04-22). Soul Keeping: Caring For the Most Important Part of You (p. 40). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

CARDIO – exercises that connect my heart, mind, and soul to Christ.

THE EXERCISE OF MEDITATION – is the ability to seek God's voice and obey his word by focusing our attention on the Word of God. The word meditate has a range of meanings including to reflect on, to study and to practice. Meditation is mentally practicing what we should do as God's Word instructs.

"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (**Joshua 1:8** NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF PRAYER – prayer is the act or practice of talking to God. Prayer is the essential means God uses to transform us. Prayer moves us closer to the heart of God, and helps us to see our need and creates a desire to be conformed to Christ.

"Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. **10** Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **11** Give us this day our daily bread. **12** And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **13** And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:9-13 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF FASTING – involves abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water usually in God's Word. It is done to focus your attention upon God; in worship, and seeking his guidance.

"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. **17** But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, **18** so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." (Matthew 6:16-18)

THE EXERCISE OF STUDY – is the primary means to bring our thinking and beliefs in line with God's truth and vision of life revealed to us in His Word. God uses his Word to inform us and to transform our hearts, minds and souls.

"Do not conform 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." (Romans 12:2 NIV)

THE EXERCISES OF SOLITUDE: – we choose abstain from interaction with other human beings, denying ourselves companionship for the purpose to drawing near to God.

“Wait on the Lord; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the Lord!” (Psalm 27:14 NIV)

“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” (Luke 5:16 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF SILENCE- is quieting our thoughts, desires and worries and to focus on God’s voice." Silence is done prayerful and with confidence that we shall be led deeper in God’s presence.

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

“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. (Isaiah 30:15 NIV)

“He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psalm 46:10 NIV)

CORE – exercises that enable you to live by the virtues, values and principles of Christ as you grow in the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

THE EXERCISE OF LOVE – is the will to do good to others. Is more than a feels or desire but a commitment to act towards people that furthers their wellbeing.

“It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (I Corinthians 13:5-7 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF JOY - A deep abiding inner happiness that is rooted in God's grace and mercy that we enjoy as his children. This joy is a result of living in the Good News of Jesus.

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11 NIV)

"The precepts **of the Lord** are right, giving **joy** to **the** heart. **The** commands **of the Lord** are radiant, giving light to **the** eyes." (Psalm 19:8 NIV)

"Burst into songs **of joy** together, you ruins **of** Jerusalem, for **the Lord** has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem." (Isaiah 52:9 NIV)

"Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF PEACE - is the inner quietness and tranquility that comes from being a child of God and living and trust in Christ who is Lord of all things. It is a gift our salvation in Christ.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we[a] have peace with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we[b] boast in the hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-7 NIV)

“You know the message **God** sent to the people **of** Israel, announcing the good news **of peace** through Jesus Christ, who is Lord **of** all.” (Acts 10:36 NIV)

“May the **God of** hope fill you with all joy and **peace** as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power **of** the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF PATIENCE – is the ability empower by the Holy Spirit to be longsuffering; able to endure under difficult circumstances. A patience person can exhibit forbearance when under strain, especially when faced with longer-term difficulties.

“The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and **patience** is better than pride.” (Ecclesiastes 7:8 NIV)

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience.**” (Colossian 3:12 NIV)

“...being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and **patience.**” (Colossians 1:11 – NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF KINDNESS – starts with caring and being tenderhearted and compassionate toward others. It’s goal and habit is to actively looking for opportunities to show kindness. Kindness includes a willingness sacrifice one’s comfort for others.

“I will tell of the **kindnesses** of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us— yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many **kindnesses.**” (ISAIAH 63:7 NIV)

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, **kindness**, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians 3:12 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF GOODNESS – is a virtue that is willing to act for the good of others. It involves an inner quality of the heart and a commitment to righteousness and integrity. Goodness is an attribute of God.

“Answer me, Lord, out of the **goodness** of your love; in your great mercy turn to me.” (Psalm 69:16 NIV)

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith **goodness**; and to **goodness**, knowledge...” (II Peter 1:5 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF FAITHFULNESS – is the quality of being worthy of belief, trustworthiness, and loyalty. The Greek word denotes an ethical quality and describes a person who is dependable.

“Let love and **faithfulness** never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.” (Proverbs 3:3 NIV)

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a

tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and **faithfulness**. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.” (Matthew 23:23 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF GENTLENESS – involves having a teachable and, responsive spirit in our relationship with God. Secondly this word implies quality of humility, gentleness, and respectfulness in our relationships with people. To become this kind of person, God must tame and train us!

“Let your **gentleness** be evident to all. The Lord is near.” (Philippians 4:5 NIV)

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness** and respect.” (I Peter 3:15 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF SELF-CONTROL – is the ability to control oneself. It involves moderation, constraint, and the ability to say “no” to our baser desires and fleshly lusts.

“Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks **self-control**.” (Proverbs 25:28 NIV)

“It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live **self-controlled**, upright and godly lives in this present age. (Titus 2:12 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF HUMILITY – is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness. Humility doesn’t push, presume, not preforms before God or others. It is a virtue with promise that God you bless those who are humble.

“Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life.” Proverbs 22:4 NIV)

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in **humility** value others above yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3 NIV)

“ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the **humility** that comes from wisdom.”
(James 3:13 NIV)

Bodybuilding – exercises that will strength Christ Church and futures his Kingdom in our world.

THE EXERCISE OF SERVICE – it consists of obedience to God to follow Jesus example of serving all people in need, with your gifts, abilities, and

offer assistance to anyone who is in need help.

“Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. **26** Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, **27** and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— **28** just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
(Matthew 20:25-28 NIV)

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to **serve others**, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” (I Peter 4:10 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF WORSHIP – Worship is the human response to the God’s wonder, majesty, genius, grace, mercy, and love. Is expressed

privately and corporately with believers. Worship is praise, honor, and obedience before our God and Creator.

“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; **worship** the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.” (Psalm 29:2 NIV)

“Come, let us bow down in **worship**, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.” (Psalm 95:6 NIV)

Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘**Worship** the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” (Matthew 4:10 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF CELEBRATION - we enter into celebration when we enjoy ourselves, each other, our world, in the confidence of God’s greatness and goodness. We sing, praise, rejoice, in the gift of life God has given and share this joy together.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:4-8 NIV)

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF FELLOWSHIP - is the sharing together of our life in Christ and experiences in humility, honesty, and transparency.

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV)

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24–25 NIV)

“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF SHARING OUR FAITH – we share our faith by sharing our belief and experience of what Christ has done for us and for all who trust in him. Our message is the Gospel of Jesus and our story is a life being transformed by his grace and mercy.

“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.” (Matthew 28:19 NIV)

“I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ.” (Philemon 1:6 NIV)

“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.” (Acts 1:8 NIV)

THE EXERCISE OF DISCIPLE-MAKING – involves joining together with other believers, and helping them overcome sinful patterns, grow in their faith, and model what it means to enter a life of training with Jesus.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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.” (Matthew 28:18-20 NIV)

“The Spirit of the Disciplines is nothing but the love of Jesus, with its resolute will to be like him whom we love.” Willard, Dallas (2009-02-06). The Spirit of the Disciplines . HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

MY TESTIMONY



Sharing your testimony is a great way of giving witness to what God has done in your life. It tells the story of how God reached out to you and helped you to believe or recommit yourself to Christ.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself that can help you to personally prepare to give your testimony.

Your Life before:

1. What did my life revolve around the most? What did I get my security or happiness from?
2. How did those areas begin to let me down?

How I Received Christ

1. When was the first time I heard the gospel explained and it made sense to me?
2. When did my attitude begin to change? Why?
3. What were some of my struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?
4. Why did I go ahead and accept Christ?

After I Accepted Christ

1. What changes has Christ made in your life?
2. What has Christ put in my heart to do for him?

Helpful Hints

1. Write the way you speak; make the testimony yours.
2. Practice your testimony until you feel comfortable in sharing it.
3. Shoot for short story -- 5 - 10 minutes.

Team Discussion Guide



Training Session – Week 1-12

“Nothing less than life in the steps of Christ is adequate to the human soul or the needs of our world.”

~ Dallas Willard, [The Great Omission](#)

Team Discussion Guide



Training Session – Week 1

“ The disciplines are activities of mind and body purposefully undertaken, to bring our personality and total being into effective cooperation with the divine order. They enable us more and more to live in a power that is, strictly speaking, beyond us, deriving from the spiritual realm itself, as we “yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God,” Willard, Dallas (2009-02-06). The Spirit of the Disciplines (p. 68). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

GOALS: To start connecting your life to Christ and to begin a relationship with your team. To explore what it means to guard our hearts.

1. Bible Study:(Before Team Meeting)

“Guard Your Heart”

Your heart is the most important part of who you are. It is not your experience, knowledge, or skills. Those things are important to your life but not as important as your heart. It is your heart that matters most of all and that is why God’s Word says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” (Proverbs 4:23) We don’t guard garbage because it has no value. But we plan for the safekeeping and security of things that are of great value. Your heart must be guarded because it is the essence of who you are. It is your authentic self—the core of your being. It is where all your dreams, desires, and passions live. It is the part of you that connects with God and other people. Like your physical heart, your spiritual heart can be unhealthy. When this happens, your spiritual life slows down and can even stop. This is why Solomon says, “Above all else.” He doesn’t say, “If you get around to it” or “It would be a nice idea to consider.” No, he says, make it your top priority.

a. When you think about guarding your heart, how have you been keeping your heart safe? What practices are you using to keep it healthy and strong?

b. The assumption Solomon is making when he says we must guard our heart is that the heart is under constant attack. What are some of the ways you have experienced your heart being under attack?

c. Just as there are many diseases and disorders that can affect the physical heart, there are many ailments of the spiritual heart that can impair growth and development as a believer. Read the scriptures below and write down the heart conditions mentioned.

- **Psalm 95:8-10**

- **Psalm 78:8**

- **Hebrews 3:12-13**

- **John 12:40**

- **Romans 1:24-25**

d. What have you learned from these passages about things that can happen to a person's heart? What can you do to protect your heart from developing any of those conditions?

e. How can learning to train with Jesus be a pro-active way to guard one's heart?

2. Prayer

One way God's Word teaches us to guard our hearts is to pray. Jesus told his disciples to pray and watch. Paul tells the Thessalonian church to "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Training in prayer is one of the most effective ways to guard your heart daily.

Read "Ways to Pray" at the end of this Discussion Guide.

a. What is the typical type of prayer you offer to God?

b. Is there a type of prayer that interests you in the article "Ways to Pray"? What is it and how are you going to add it to your training?

c. What do you find hard about praying?

d. This week, if you have problems praying, try using the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Read through it. Use each part of the Lord's Prayer to express your heart to the Lord.

3. Sharing Your Testimony

- a. Be ready to share your personal story or testimony with your team.
- b. Each team member gets 10-15 minutes. If your team has more than four members you may need to keep it to 10 minutes per person.
- c. How to share your testimony
The before – what was your life like before you asked Christ into your life? Describe issues or problems you experienced.
The after – what happened when Christ came into your life? Where are you today in your relationship with Jesus?
- d. After each testimony all members of group (if they feel comfortable doing so) may pray for the person who just shared his or her testimony. Offer thanks and pray for their growth in Christ.
- e. While each person gives their testimony, take notes.

4. Review the Fit to Follow Assessment (Sharing with the Team)

- a. What were some of the things that stood out to you?
- b. Did you learn anything about yourself that you hadn't seen before?
- c. In what areas do you need to grow in your life with Christ?
- d. Are there any spiritual exercises that you need to practice after completing the assessment?

5. Sharing Your Training Plan

- a. Share with your team what exercises you have chosen for this first week and why.
- b. What concerns do you have that your team could pray for this week?
- c. What prayer needs do you want the team to bring to Christ this week?
Any special requests for friends and family?

6. Praying for Your Team:

Each week you are asked to pray for your team members. Training takes effort and dedication. Many times we get off track due to unimportant things. So let's uphold each other during the 90 Day Challenge. Each week share prayer requests and before you close, pray for them together.

Team Names

Date:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Merely knowing about God will leave you unsatisfied. Truly knowing God only comes through experience as He reveals Himself to you through His Word and as you relate to Him. Throughout the Bible, we can see that God took the initiative to disclose Himself to people through their life events. Blackaby, Richard (2014-01-02). Experiencing God (p. 2). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Ways to Pray

Can you imagine how quickly you would get bored with food if you only cooked with one or two herbs? Many times the reason we find prayer boring is because we develop a habit of using one or two forms of prayer. Many people use the form of prayer known as petition. Prayers of petition involve asking God for things for oneself. There is nothing wrong with this form of prayer, but if you spend all of your prayer time asking God for things, it will become hard to get to know Him personally.

The Forms of Prayer:

1. Prayer of Praise

Praise is more than part of prayer; it is a major purpose of prayer. Even more than that, praise is our whole purpose for living.

A. Praise is a ministry to the Lord: In the New Testament, we discover that God renews the special calling He originally gave to the children of Israel. It is called the "holy priesthood", (1 Pet. 2:5). Peter explains that we are to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." In the same chapter, the apostle refers to Christians as "a royal priesthood...a peculiar people." (1 Pet. 2:9). Peter's expression, "a royal priesthood" corresponds directly to the phrase found in Ex. 19:6 - "a kingdom of priests." The priest of the Old Testament not only made sin offerings to God for himself and the people, but he made praise offerings as well.

B. Praise teaches the believer to be generous: The Psalmist spoke of praise as an evening "sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2). All praise involves the element of giving. As someone has said, "A stingy person cannot praise another; the price is too high." In this sense the prayer of praise teaches generosity. The

person who finds it easy to praise the Lord is an individual who understands their dependence upon the Lord.

C. Praise is our way to continually acknowledge God: To master the prayer of praise, we must learn to continually recognize who God is and what He has done for us through Christ. When one considers who God is and what He has done for each of us, praise is the only reasonable response.

D. Praise is our only gift to God: Praise and adoration are the only real gifts men and women can offer God. What else could we possibly give God besides our worship?

2. Prayer of Thanksgiving: Praise is the adoration of God; it centers exclusively on worship. Thanksgiving, on the other hand, is thanking God for what He has done. Praise involves specific attributes of God's character. Thanksgiving thinks of all the things God has done for us, our family, our friends, and then puts these things into words. Praise is verbalizing our love for God. Thanksgiving is verbalizing a specific "thank you" for God's kindness and care.

3. Scripture Prayer: Praying Scripture is using God's Word to express our thoughts and desires to Him. Look up some prayers in Scripture that Paul or the Old Testament prophets used. Then simply apply them to yourself, your friends and your family. You can also use praises or confessions found in Scripture and turn them into personal prayers. A passage you have studied can be turned into a prayer. Here are a few passages I find exciting to pray for myself and others: Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12; Eph. 2:1-10; 5:1-21. These passages can be personalized by simply putting your name or someone else's name where the Scripture uses the pronoun "you".

4. Listening Prayer: An ancient tribe of American Indians had an old proverb which said, "Listen, or your tongue will keep you deaf." Listening in prayer seems to be a contradiction to many. Prayer is something we do. But prayer should also be a time of listening to God. In "listening prayer" the absence of speech involves an active listening to God. (Simply to refrain from talking and just to sit in one place is not prayer.) In "listening prayer" the heart is active in keeping itself focused on the Lord. The purpose of "listening prayer" is to be able to see and hear those things He has been teaching. When I enter into this kind of prayer, I usually imagine sitting before Him waiting to hear what He has to say to me.

5. Prayer of Confession: The way into God's heart is always hindered by unconfessed sin. For this reason, a time of confession should be a part of your prayer life. 1 John 1:9 assumes you and I will confess our sins. When we do, God also promises He will forgive us. The Psalmist said, "Yahweh, you examine me and know me." (Ps. 139:1). Paul said, "The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." (1Corinthians 2:10) The prayer of confession is entered into with the purpose of cleansing, purifying, and being healed. We should always ask the Lord to search our heart and reveal to us if there is any act, attitude, or behavior He desires to remove from our life. Our times of prayer should involve a time of letting God examine us. We can be sure that He will protect and comfort us with His love as we confess the sins He brings to mind.

6. Prayer of Intercession: Intercessory prayer is that aspect of prayer in which we ask God's blessings on behalf of others. As His royal priesthood, we each have a ministry of intercession in His body, the Church. Paul's letters always start off with prayer for those to whom he was writing. In the Old Testament, the priest was instructed to intercede on behalf of his people. Intercessory prayer is a way to bring God's blessing and grace into someone's life. There is no limit as to what one can pray for. Ask the Lord if He has someone He desires you to pray for.

7. Prayer of Petition: Petition involves asking God for personal needs. St. Theresa of Avila once said, "You pay God a compliment by asking great things of Him." Our petitions to God are to be offered in total honesty and do not need to be complicated. It is not wrong to repeat our petitions to God. In Matthew 7:7-8, "Ask, seek and knock" are all in the Greek tense that implies continuance. This tense means we should keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking. Do not be afraid to bring every concern or need you have to the Lord in prayer. He is our great Provider.

8. Prayer of Supplication: Of this type of prayer James writes, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much." (James 5:16) The word "prayer" is more accurately rendered "supplication". The essence of this verse implies that prayer in the form of supplication is effective because it is offered in a "fervent spirit". Supplication is a type of prayer possessing a certain level of urgency. One commentary suggests supplication involves a fleeing to God for protection. It is a form of prayer used when someone is in great need. God invites all forms of prayer.

9. Meditative Prayer: Meditative prayer involves carefully and prayerfully thinking over a matter of Scripture. It can be defined as evaluating a matter in reference to God. The best object for sound meditative prayer is God's Word. The Psalmist said, "My soul waits only on God." (Ps. 62:5, 6) How does one enter into meditative prayer? First, choose a passage of God's Word. Second, imagine yourself there in the passage and ask yourself, "What would I have seen and felt if I were there when this happened?" Read the passage over and over, focusing each time on the full meaning of each word in the passage. Meditative prayer was not foreign to the authors of the Bible. "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening" (Gen. 24:63). "I think of You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the watches of the night." (Ps. 63:6) Meditative prayer is a Biblical form of praying over God's Word in such a way as to let God speak more personally to you through His written Word. May we join the Psalmist and be able to declare, "As for me, I will meditate on Your precepts." (Ps. 119:78)

There are many other forms of prayer. For example, Richard Foster in his book, "Prayer" lists 21 different forms of prayer listed in God's Word.

My purpose in giving you this short list is to help you understand that there are many different ways to pray to God. The invitation has been made by our Lord and Savior, now is the time to accept that invitation and enter into the very heart of God.

"Prayer - Our heart's steady attention on God." Richard J. Foster, "Streams of Living Water."

Training Session – Week 2

Goals: This week's focus explores the idea that because God is with us we can learn to live in His presence. Training will help us arrange our life around activities that enable us to abide in Jesus.

1. Subject: God With Us

The Bible tells us God is always with us and will never leave us. Jesus tells his disciples, right before He returns to heaven, "...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Put yourself in God's place for a moment. Okay, it's a stretch, but try. Ready? Ask yourself this question: Given all the suffering, abuse and pain in this fallen world, why do you think God created us? Since He knew the future, what was He after? What was His purpose in creation since He knew what would happen? What does God get out of all this?

When God created the first man and woman He could have done it with a single word, but we see in Genesis that God is personally involved. In fact, the Creation account is jam-packed with God's personal involvement, especially during and after the creation of man and woman. When Adam named the animals, God was right there with him. We see Adam and God talking in the garden and enjoying a relationship that one can only imagine. Whatever Adam did, he did with God. Wherever Adam went, he went with God. The Bible doesn't specifically say God spent time with Eve, but knowing God's nature, it is clear He did the same with Eve.

When Adam and Eve sinned against God by disobeying His one command, God didn't walk away. God is walking in the Garden when He asks, "Adam, where are you?" Adam says, "I heard you in the garden. I knew you were there, and I was afraid of you, so I hid from you." God wanted to be with His friends Adam and Eve, but they no longer wanted to be with God. We will never understand God unless we understand that the fall wasn't just about Adam and Eve's disobedience or our loss of innocence. God's heart was broken. Yet, in

spite of man's fall, we hear Good News in Genesis chapter three. God still plans to be with people. He will continue to work with Adam and his descendants.

It's recorded in God's Word over and over. God desires to be with us. He invites us to develop a relationship with Him. We see it in God's continued plan for Adam and Eve. And we can know that God is always inviting us to be in relationship to Him.

Read the verses below and list the things you learn about God's desire to be "with us." What does God's presence give us? How does God's presence help those who choose to live in relationship to Him?

Genesis 39:2-4

Exodus 33:15-16

I Kings 8:57-59

Isaiah 8:10

Ezekiel 37:27-28

Amos 5:14-15

Matthew 1:23

d. Is there anything in your life that is keeping you from accepting His invitation to “abide with Him” right now?

2. God’s Word

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who ... correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:5).

One of the first things I was taught as a new Christian was that I should read and study the Bible. I don’t remember being told why. Sometimes we do things simply for the sake of doing them. There is certainly nothing sacred about the first day of a year, but it is as good a time as any to ask ourselves anew why we do what we do.

I am sure you know all the common excuses for not studying Scripture. The first excuse usually offered is that the Bible is difficult to understand. This is too often what we tell ourselves in order to quiet our conscience for neglecting the reading and exploration of God’s Word.

God’s Word has a practical clarity to it, not that all parts of Scripture are equally clear, but the Bible is necessarily clear in its basic message. This means we can, with the Spirit’s instruction, grasp the essentials.

The second excuse is that the Bible is too boring. We complain that we need someone to “make the Bible come alive” for us, but Hebrews 4:12 tells us his Word is alive and powerful. God’s words make us come alive. There is nothing dull about the drama, passion, crime, devotion, and real life depicted in Scripture. The ancient settings may seem foreign to us, but the struggles and issues biblical characters faced are the same ones we face today.

As followers of the Lord Jesus, we should be motivated to read and study the Bible in order to continue to grow in “the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” We need to deepen our understanding of the background and context of the Bible in order to better understand and apply the truths it contains to our lives. There are many ways to read and study God’s Word, ways that help us experience more fully the love and mercy of God in our life.

a. When you think about reading or studying the Bible, what issues concern you?

b. How many ways can a person study the Bible? This week visit this website on the Bible.org -<https://bible.org/article/12-methods-bible-study>. Read over the different methods listed. This week try using one of the 12 methods listed as you study the Bible.

- What did you learn from trying a different method to explore the Word of God?
- How can using different methods to explore God's Word impact your Christian life?
- Share what you learned from the method of Bible study you chose with the team this week.

c. Reading the Bible can get boring if we aren't careful. Below you will find a few suggested ideas on how you can read the Bible. Remember, it's not how much you read but how much you open your heart up to God as you read His Word. One important thing I do before I open my Bible and when I close it is this: **Start and end with prayer.**

3.Ways to Read the Whole Bible

Ever tried to read the whole Bible? Ever get bored in the middle? You may find better reading plans out there, but here are several that tackle this in different ways:

- a. Read the Bible slowly but steadily. This plan offers a less intense, more leisurely walk through the Bible. The goal is to finish in three years, about one chapter per day. Three years is a long commitment, but you will have more time to soak in the material. Plus, the readings alternate between Old Testament and New Testament to keep it fresh. You switch between 2-4 weeks in the Old Testament and one week in the New Testament. It looks like they left out 1 John though, so make sure to slip that in somewhere! <http://www.tniv.com/Experience%20it/docs/3YearsGuidedTour.pdf>

- b. Read the Bible Quickly (“90 Days through the Bible”) – A 90-Day Plan
 This plan can take your breath away. You will read the entire Bible in an aggressive ninety days, about 12-14 chapters each day. Naturally, you won’t soak in all the details, but you will get a good sense of what is in the Bible. Many have testified that this experience is incredibly powerful because it helps one get the big picture of the Bible quickly. You can find resources and testimonials for this plan here: http://www.tniv.com/Experience%20it/docs/Strive_90Days.pdf or <http://www.biblein90days.com/>
- c. Read the Bible With Your Family (Robert Murray M’Cheyne Reading Calendar) – A 1-Year Plan
 This plan has a historical flare for you history buffs. It was developed by Robert Murray M’Cheyne, a Scottish preacher, in the mid 1800s. The plan offers the unique feature of “family” and “private” readings—an opportunity to develop a family Bible reading habit. As an individual, you can make these “morning” and “evening” readings, so you’re beginning and ending your day in God’s Word. <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/d.haslam/mccheyne/calendar/calendar.pdf>
- d. Read the Bible by Types of Literature (“Genres” Bible Reading Plan) – A 1-Year Plan
 This idea is probably my personal favorite. Instead of reading the Bible straight through, this plan walks you through the Bible by genres, or types, of literature. Mondays you read from the Law, Tuesdays you read History, Wednesday you read Psalms, Thursday you read Poetry, etc. The benefit of this plan is that you will get a feel for the different types of literature in the Bible. They all communicate meaning differently, so it’s good to have a handle on this. http://70030.netministry.com/articles_view.asp?articleid=31623&columnid=3801
- e. Read the Bible Chronologically (as it happened) – A 1-Year Plan
 This approach offers an extremely interesting way to read the Bible: chronologically. That is, you read through the material in the order in which things happened. You read Moses’ psalm along with the Exodus, David’s psalms during his lifetime, Solomon’s proverbs during his reign, the prophets alongside their respective kings, etc. The one challenge is that you obviously jump around a lot, but the benefit of a chronological perspective is real. Here are two options for this approach: www.biblegateway.com and www.esv.org/biblereadingplans. You can also buy published Bibles laid out chronologically.

- f. Read the Bible Historically (as it was written) – A 1-Year Plan
This reading plan is very unique. Instead of reading the Bible chronologically, with this plan you read it historically. That is, you read the books in the order they were written. They may describe events out of order chronologically, but you will get a perspective on which material was written first. Think about it: What parts of the Bible did later biblical authors also read? This approach will help you see that. <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/readingplans/>
- g. Read the Bible with One Psalm and Proverb Each Day (“Every Day in the Word”) – A 1-Year Plan
This plan offers daily variety without jumping around too much. Each day you read from four different books: an Old Testament book, a New Testament book, Psalms, and Proverbs. The benefit here is that each day, alongside the Old and New Testament readings, you read one psalm and one proverb. (One proverb is usually short.) This will enhance your reading with daily worship and daily wisdom. <http://www.esv.org/biblereadingplans/>
- h. Read the Bible Straight Through (the traditional approach) – A 1-Year Plan
You can find lots of traditional “straight through” reading plans. Your Bible may have one. Here are a few different ones based on how many books you read at a time:
- 1) Read one book at a time with the “Comprehensive Bible Reading Plan (365 days).” Available at <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/readingplans/comprehensive.php>
 - 2) Read two books at a time (Old and New Testament) with the “Through the Bible” reading plan: available at <http://www.esv.org/biblereadingplans/>
 - (3) Read three books at a time with the “Daily Reading Bible” available at <http://www.esv.org/biblereadingplans/>

4. Review your Training Plan

- a. How is your training going and what difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning about yourself and about staying close to Christ through your training?
- c. If you have made any changes to your plan, share them with your team.

5. Team Exercise – Practicing a Spiritual Exercise Together

- Have team members select an exercise they would like to use for training during the next week.
- Each team member determines how much or how often it will be used in their plan.
- The goal of training together by doing one spiritual exercise is to learn from each other. Be ready to share what you learned or what problems you experienced.

6. Praying for Your Team:

Each week you are asked to pray for your team members. Training takes effort and dedication. Many times we get off track due to unimportant things. So let's uphold each other during the 90 Day Challenge. Each week share prayer requests and pray for them together before you close.

Team Names

Date:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

6. Additional Reading:

If you are interested in learning more about how to study the Bible, take a look at Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods: Twelve Ways You Can Unlock God's Word. This is a great tool that explains many ways to explore God's Word. The Kindle version is just \$5.98. The paperback is \$12.95. It's a great tool to have.

Want to explore a reading method that has touched millions of lives? It's called **LECTIO DIVINA**. The title is Latin meaning Divine Reading. Below is an example of what I like to call **PRAYERFUL READING**:

LECTIO DIVINA is an ancient method for praying with the Bible, keeping your heart open to hear what the words of Scripture are saying to you in your life. Find a place where you can be quiet and undisturbed in your prayer time and choose a brief passage of Scripture. After you have taken a few minutes to invite Christ to guide you, turn your attention to the passage you have selected.

- 1 Read a short passage of text that you have decided upon in advance. Read slowly, letting your awareness rest in turn upon each word, savoring it. As you read, be alert for any particular word or phrase that draws your attention in a special way.
- 2 Meditate on this word or phrase, allowing it to engage you fully. Does the word upon which you are meditating connect with some aspect of your own experience? As you hold this word or phrase in your heart, let yourself become aware of any answering words, images, or memories that arise in you.
- 3 Respond to the Word you have heard, simply and directly. Your heart may call out in thanks, or praise, or joy. If the Word has been painful, your response might be one of remorse, anger, or supplication.
- 4 Rest in God's presence, content simply to be with God.

The word of God is living and active ... so turn it loose in your life.

- 2 Meditate on this word or phrase, allowing it to engage you fully. Does the word upon which you are meditating connect with some aspect of your own experience? As you hold this word or phrase in your heart, let yourself become aware of any answering words, images, or memories that arise in you.
- 3 Respond to the Word you have heard, simply and directly. Your heart may call out in thanks, or praise, or joy. If the Word has

been painful, your response might be one of remorse, or anger, or supplication.

- 4 Rest in God's presence, content simply to be with God.

The word of God is living and active ...

Training Session – Week 3

Goals: We all experience difficulty in connecting with God, so how does He help us? This week we are going to explore a very important subject that many Christians have forgotten about, and that is “sanctification.”

1. Subject: Growing Whole

“**Sanctification**” is a word we don’t hear or talk about much in Christian circles today. In many ways, it is a result of the influence of **our culture**. The idea of becoming holy or a person who has a godly heart is just not a high priority in our self-focused, materialistic, post-modern, do it if it feels good culture. We are too **at peace** with our **world** in our homes, too **at ease** with **sin** in our lives, too **content** with **spiritual immaturity in our churches**.

God’s mission in the world is to **save people and sanctify** them. Paul, speaking about this mission of God says, “And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (**2 Corinthians 5:15** ESV). Christ died for us all and He has a purpose that goes far beyond just saving us from sin. He also wants us to become like Him in our character and in our hearts. God’s word makes it clear over and over, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love” (**Ephesians 1:4** NIV).

God has a very clear goal. Christ died on the cross to bring about the means for us to experience holiness in our life.

Questions:

a. Read Ephesians 5:25–27. For what purpose has God called the church to himself?

b. Read Titus 2:14. How does Paul explain the purpose of our salvation in this passage? What is the ultimate goal of our salvation in Christ?

J.C. Ryle, the Bishop of Liverpool, said: "We must be holy, because this is one grand end and purpose for which Christ came into the world...**Jesus is a complete Savior.** He does not merely take away the guilt of a believer's sin, He does more—He breaks its power (1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 12:10). My fear is that we rightly celebrate, and in some quarters rediscover, all that Christ saved us **from**, but we give little thought and make little effort concerning all that Christ saved us **to.**"

Don't let this old sounding word "**sanctification**" confuse you or make you think you don't need the reality of the Holy Spirit's ministry of sanctification in your life. **It's immensely important, and you won't be able to experience all that Christ has for you without opening your life to the ministry of God's Spirit.**

Questions:

c. What ideas come to your mind when you consider pursuing a life of holiness? How do your ideas reflect the Word of God?

d. In our culture we have come to equate holiness with abstaining from drinking, smoking, and/or dancing. How does that view differ from what the Bible teaches about **sanctification**? Look up these passages and try to define how God sees this work of the Holy Spirit in our life.

- **I Thessalonians 4:3**

- **John 17:19**

- **I Corinthians 1:2, and 6:11**

e. Among some Christians, a radical pursuit of holiness is often suspected because talk of right and wrong behaviors feels **judgmental and intolerant**. If we are to be "without spot or blemish," it necessitates we distinguish between attitudes, actions and habits that are pure and impure. **Where does one's attitude or viewpoint originate?**

God's Word teaches us that one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit in our life is to bring about sanctification. Paul says, "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as first-fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth "(**2 Thessalonians 2:13**NIV).

Notice that part of our salvation is to experience a "sanctifying work" in our life by the Holy Spirit. It's a part of salvation. It's part of the Christian life to be open to the Holy Spirit bringing about real change in our heart and soul, and in our attitudes.

Question:

f. Read **I Peter 1:2** What impact on the heart does the Holy Spirit create in a believer's life?

The following is a quote from a Princeton theologian, **Charles Hodge**, who puts it this way:

“Sanctification...does not consist exclusively in a series of new kinds of acts. It is making the tree good, in order that the fruit may be good. It involves an essential change of character. [Just] as regeneration is...a new birth, a new creation, a quickening or communicating a new life, so sanctification in its essential nature is not holy acts, but such a change in the state of the soul, that sinful acts become more infrequent, and holy acts more and more habitual and guiding” (Systematic Theology, 3:226, emphases added).

2. Meditation

Some Christians believe the exercise of meditation isn't a Christian practice. Richard Foster makes it very clear when he says, “The discipline of meditation was certainly familiar to the authors of Scripture. The Bible uses two different Hebrew words to convey the idea of meditation, and together they are used some fifty-eight times. These words have various meanings: listening to God's word, reflecting on God's works, rehearsing God's deeds, ruminating on God's law, and more. In each case, there is stress upon changed behavior as a result of our encounter with the living God. Repentance and obedience are essential features in any biblical understanding of meditation. The psalmist exclaims, ‘Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day.... I hold my feet from every evil way, in order to keep thy word. I do not turn aside from thy ordinances, for thou hast taught me’ (Ps. 119: 97, 101, 102). It is this continual focus upon obedience and faithfulness that most clearly distinguishes Christian meditation from its Eastern and secular counterparts.” Foster, Richard J. (2009-03-17) Celebration of Discipline (p. 16) HarperSanFrancisco. Kindle Edition.

Richard Foster makes it clear that this exercise brings us closer to God for the purpose of developing a heart of obedience and faithfulness. Meditation can be a great tool for training in this area of our life with Christ.

So how does one meditate upon God's word? Meditating, reflecting, thinking and analyzing involves our whole being. In some ways, meditation doesn't easily fit into western culture. We value action and busyness more than stopping and considering. As a result, meditation came more naturally to Middle Eastern cultures. We have to overcome some cultural obstacles to learn to meditate but the benefits are well worth it.

Here are a few ways you can practice meditating on God's Word.

- Take time to read a verse or passage over and over.
- Begin to memorize all or part of it. And say it throughout the day.
- Become emotionally involved—allow yourself to feel what God feels, his desires expressed through his words.
- Move from meditation to application—connect your thoughts to action.
- As you meditate, consider how the truth and power of the Word of God should affect your behavior.

For more resources:

Foster, Richard J. (2009-03-17). *Celebration of Discipline*, HarperSanFrancisco. This is one of the best books on Spiritual exercises.

Willard, Dallas (2009-02-06). *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, HarperCollins. This book is great and helps explain how the exercises must be a part of our life in Christ.

3. Review your Training Plan

- a. How is your Training going and what difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning about yourself and about staying close to Christ?
- c. If you have made any changes to your plan, share them with your team.

4. Team Exercise – Practicing a Spiritual Exercise Together

- Pick a spiritual exercise to do together for this week.
- Each team member determines how much or how often it will be used in their plan.
- The goal of training together in the area of one spiritual exercise is to learn from each other. Be ready to share what you learned or what problems you experienced.

5. Review with the Team

- Share what you learned from your experience and how it helped.
- What problems did you experience? Did any other team members experience the same problems?
- Are you learning to practice praying during your spiritual exercise?
- What insight do you have to share with the team?

6. Praying for Your Team:

Each week you are asked to pray for your team members. Training takes effort and dedication. Many times we get off track due to unimportant things. So let's uphold each other during the 90 Day Challenge. Each week share prayer requests and before you close, pray for them together.

Team Names

Date:

Team Discussion Guide



Training Session - Week 4

Goals: To learn the importance of the Holy Spirit in our life. To understand his purpose and what it means to live by His influence and to grow in the fruit of the Spirit.

If it's true that the Spirit of God dwells in us and that our bodies are the Holy Spirit's temple, then shouldn't there be a huge difference between the person who has the Spirit of God living inside of him or her and the person who does not? Francis Chan. *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit* (p. 32). Kindle Edition.

1. Subject: Filled and Empowered

Training with Jesus and learning to practice the Spiritual Exercises is about training to take Jesus' easy yoke and light burden into every facet of our lives. Training with Jesus also involves depending upon God's Spirit to guide us and empower our training so that we will learn to live like Jesus lived.

In the Book of Acts we learn that the Holy Spirit has been given to all who believe in Christ. A new age has come where God is always with us via the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts, the day the Holy Spirit came upon believers is called the day of **Pentecost**. This was the fulfillment of Christ's promise and the beginning of a new age in God's Kingdom. From then on His Spirit would live in and through his people. The Holy Spirit had worked in people's lives in the Old Testament at specific times and for specific reasons. Now everything

has changed because of Christ's work on the cross! On the Day of Pentecost, **God began something very new in the lives of His people, as new as when Moses came down from the Mountain carrying the Ten Commandments of God.** Now the Holy Spirit is within us, around us, alongside of us, ahead of us, and working through each of us who submit ourselves to his leading and guidance. The Holy Spirit is given to each of us at the moment of our birth in Christ Jesus. We are in this period of **"Pentecost."** You receive the Holy Spirit by putting your faith in Christ, and in Him alone.

When we study the Holy Spirit and try to understand Him and his gifts, we realize there has been much abuse and misuse of the Holy Spirit's ministry. As **Francis Chan** says, "Bad theology can lead to ineffective lives or, worse yet, lives spent striving after what the Spirit of God opposes. And all this information about what 'tongues' is and what it isn't can take us away from what is of greatest importance. That is, learning to live and walk in the life of the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. And even though it can get confusing, we must keep seeking to understand what God's Word says to us about the Holy Spirit and how important it is to have the Holy Spirit working in our life."

This quote from Francis Chan's book, "Forgotten God," is so important for all of us who desire to live a life connected to Jesus. Training can be done in our flesh and it may have some effect, but when we depend upon God's gift of the Holy Spirit, real learning and transformation begins. It is a partnership, but we must get it right. God is our senior partner.

As J. I. Packer has said, "The Christian's life in all its aspects—intellectual and ethical, devotional and relational, upsurging in worship and outgoing in witness—is supernatural; only the Spirit can initiate and sustain it. So apart from him, not only will there be no lively believers and no lively congregations, there will be no believers and no congregations at all."

Some Christians believe that God only speaks to a special category of believers in Christ. This is a misconception that keeps many Christians from having a true interactive relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. The fact that God speaks to us in Christ is no indication of specialness, spiritual superiority, or some kind of elevated righteousness. The Lord can speak through anyone or anything. If he only speaks to people who have their lives "together," conversations with him would be very short. I love the example of God speaking through a donkey in the book of Numbers in the Old Testament.

- Hebrews 1:1-2

- Romans 1:20

- John 14:16-18

- Romans 8:26-27

e. The God of the Bible speaks through **burning bushes and little boys and talking donkeys and a still small voice**. God has not grown silent today. So how do we recognize His voice?

2. Recognizing God's Voice

The key is to focus more on **building a personal relationship with our Creator and less on individual actions and decisions**. Hearing God's direction is only one dimension of a **rich and interactive relationship**. Obtaining specific guidance is but one facet of being in relationship to our Grace-filled God. Our aim must be to enter into God's purposes in creating our world and us. We must seek to do all things to the glory of God.

Colossians 3:17

"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (NIV)

Questions:

a. God communicates in many ways and forms.
Hebrew 1:1 - List some of the ways God speaks.

b. Watch your motives.

Matthew 16:25- How do our motives relate to finding real life?

c. Misunderstanding God and His Ways.

Matthew 22:29 - Why would not knowing God's Word cause us to not hear God's voice?

e. Matthew 13:15 - Is this passage teaching that Christians who choose not to read and explore God's word will have difficulty hearing God and being led by Him in their life? Explain.

E. Unwillingness to Believe and Trust in God's Word

Numbers 23:19-20 -Can doubt about God's Word and what it teaches cause us to miss what God is saying? How can we make sure personal circumstances or desires aren't placed on the same level of authority as God's Word?

God's people are meant to live in an ongoing conversation with God, **speaking and being spoken to**. God desires to be in relationship with us and involve us as we learn from His Spirit within us. He looks for a two-way conversation, between us and Himself. Open your heart to him and start talking and sharing your life with Him. When you're training, keep the conversation ongoing with Him. Ask for the strength and wisdom to train well with Christ.

"Put simply, the contemplative life is the steady gaze of the soul upon the God who loves us."

~ Richard J. Foster, Streams of Living Water

3. Fruit of the Spirit

Questions:

a. Read Galatians 5:16-26 – What is the first thing we are told to do in order to overcome the flesh and grow in the fruit of the Spirit?

b. What does Paul mean by saying when we are led by the Spirit, we aren't under the law?

c. What do you believe it means to keep in step with the Holy Spirit? How does that relate to developing His fruit in your life?

The Fruit of the Spirit is the love of Christ flowing in and out of us through the power of the Holy Spirit! Because we have a personal relationship with Christ, we have God's living presence in us. As a result we have the ability to reflect His fruit and His character. In addition, we have a moral obligation to live out our New Life in Christ effectively. Training and growing the fruit of the Spirit is something God calls us to do. We do not do this alone; he gives the Holy Spirit to work in and through us so we can bear and convey his fruit in our character. Training is a way of "cultivating" His fruit as God empowers us to grow in faith.

Training in the fruit of the Holy Spirit is a cooperative endeavor happening when we are growing in our relationship with Christ. As we grow in faith through training with Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit will become more and more evident in our life.

Questions:

d. What particular fruit do you believe God is calling you to practice and train in?

e. Ask your team to join you in praying that God's Spirit will guide and empower you to be Christians that reflect the Fruit of the Spirit.

4. Review your Training Plan

- a. How is your Training going and what difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning about yourself and about staying close to Christ?
- c. If you have made any changes to your plan, share them with your team.

5. Team Exercise – Practicing a Spiritual Exercise Together

- Pick a spiritual exercise to do together this week.
- Have each team member share what exercise they would like to train in.
- Each team member determines how much or how often they will practice this fruit.
- The goal of training together in the area of one spiritual exercise is to learn from each other. Be ready to share what you learned or what problems you experienced.

6. Review with the Team

- a. Share what you learned from your experience and how it helped.
- b. What problems did you experience and did any other team members experience the same problems?
- c. Are you learning to practice praying through the spiritual exercises?
- d. What insight do you have to share with the team?

6. Praying for Your Team:

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Team Names

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We may as well face it: the whole level of spirituality among us is low. We have measured ourselves by ourselves until the incentive to seek higher plateaus in the things of the Spirit is all but gone.... [We] have imitated the world, sought popular favor, manufactured delights to substitute for the joy of the Lord and produced a cheap and synthetic power to substitute for the power of the Holy Ghost. -A. W. Tozer

A great book to read on the Holy Spirit is Francis Chan's "Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit"

Team Discussion Guide



Training Session – Week 5

Goals: Paul tells us that to live a godly life is our great gain. Our purpose is to explore what this means for our lives, relationships, and service.

Being an athlete or musician or Jesus-follower is not about being perfect, and I hope you can see the virtues in this way-not as a game but as life choices that are invigorating, good for us in the way exercise is and central to all God designed us to be. Gregory Spencer. *Awakening the Quieter Virtues* (Kindle Locations 114-116). Kindle Edition.

1. Subject: Godliness= Great Gain

A godly life isn't something we consider or talk about very often. Paul tells Timothy that godliness has great gain. Great gain for most people today is more about wealth, status, power, retirement, exotic vacations, and the ability to do what they want. What kind of gain was Paul referencing to Timothy?

To Paul, worldly living is acting like people who live without reference of God. They are just humans acting like humans. To live a godly life is to live in the same manner Jesus did. When His enemies were putting Jesus to death, He prayed asking His Father to forgive them. When Peter cut off the ear of an officer who had come to take Jesus, Jesus shows great compassion and grace by healing him. Jesus taught His disciples to be servants by washing their feet. He humbled Himself to the point of dying in our place and paying for our sins, because He loved all people. Jesus didn't have wealth, status, or even worldly power the way we understand it. Would it be correct to characterize His life as one of "great gain"? Absolutely!

Jesus told a parable that describes how precious it is to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Since He Himself is the King of that kingdom and the one who makes it valuable, the parable applies to Him, too. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Notice well: the man does not sell all that he has begrudgingly; he does it joyfully because he sees how precious the treasure is. He knows that, whatever he pays for that field, it's a steal. Because Jesus is worth so much more than anything else in the world, every loss we endure in order to have more of Him, can be endured with joy.

Paul gave us a living example of this parable. He said, "Whatever gain I had, I counted loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I might gain Christ"(Philippians 3:7-8).

The mark of a child of God is not that we have attained perfection, but that we long for Christ. We thirst like hungry babies for His Word, His fellowship and His power. No Christian is satisfied with his present condition. The more we taste, the hungrier we get for Jesus. His value does not diminish with time—it increases. And the better we know Him, the more we love Him. And when we finally enter into His presence with rejoicing, our endless song will be, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." Your mouth is always full of praises for what you value most. "To you who believe, He is precious."

Godliness comes from the Greek word "eusebia" and is used in the New Testament to express the idea of inner virtue or spirituality. Vine defines this word as, "piety, which, characterized by a God-ward attitude, does that which is well pleasing to Him. In

1 Timothy 4: 7-8, this inner spirituality is to be preferred over "physical exercises." In verse 7 the "exercises" a godly person should engage in are those which develop further godliness. In 1 Timothy 6:11 godliness is set in contrast to following after the lusts of the flesh and the world. Godliness is a mind and heart set on those matters that concern God (Rom.8:5-6). Godliness is learning to live our life like Jesus lived his life, and that is living a life of great gain

Think of a person you consider godly. What is he or she like? Usually, we consider one who is godly to be spiritually minded and to exhibit this spiritual-mindedness in one's life. What does that look like in real life?

A godly person seeks God on His terms. For example, Cornelius was called a devout man because he sought to please God (Acts 10:2). The word "devout" is a form of the word for "godliness." Cornelius was "devout" and you can see it in his response to the preaching of the gospel by Peter.

A godly person worships God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Worship is our attempt to give something of ourselves to God. It is the "fruit of our lips" (Hebrews 13:15) and the presenting of our bodies as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1). Worship is our inner devotion expressing itself to God in praise through our physical bodies.

A godly person shows respect and reverence for God by studying and obeying His Word. Our response to God's Word is directly related to our relationship with God. For example, Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). To respect God means we must respect His Word! Growth naturally results, as one becomes obedient to Christ.

A godly person is one who acts properly, reacts properly, and leaves no doubt in anyone's mind that he/she is a child of God. God is seen in this person from the inside out and from the outside in.

A godly person lives without the complication of sin and rebellion in their life and relationships. They aren't perfect, but always growing stronger in their experiences.

No wonder godliness is seen by Paul as something that is of "great gain," something that must be cultivated in a person's life. We simply cannot be faithful children of God without godliness.

1 Timothy 6:6

"But godliness with contentment is great gain."

2. So how do we grow in Godliness?

Paul says we must train to be godly. When one trains in godliness it means training in what pleases God. We must be careful, though, because godliness is so much more than morality alone. This training must come from a heart of reverence for God and desire to reflect God's character and values.

The fruit of the Spirit in this 90 Day Challenge is the focus of our training.

j. Would you say that a Christian has everything he needs to live a godly life? What are those things?

k. What do you say to a professing Christian who says he doesn't have power to live a godly life? What would you share with the people making these excuses using 2 Peter 1:1-4?

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. COLOSSIANS 3: 12

4. Review your Training Plan

- a. How is your Training going and what difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning through your training about yourself and staying close to Christ?
- c. If you have made any changes to your plan, share them with your team.

4. Team Exercise – Practicing a Spiritual Exercise Together

- a. Have each team member share what exercise they would like to use for training.
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5. Praying for Your Team:

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Team Names

Date:

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6. Additional Reading:

Two very good books on the subject of godliness are: "The Practice of Godliness," and "Godliness has Value for all Things" (1 Timothy 4:8) Jerry Bridges, NavPress, Kindle Edition.

A must read is a very old book but still very powerful: Thomas Watson, "The Great Gain of Godliness" the Kindle Edition is less than \$1.00. Try it.

Training Session – Week 6

Goals: You are halfway through the 90 Day Challenge. Stay focused and remember you can do this with God’s help and the encouragement of your team. Keep your heart and mind set upon Christ so you can finish well in Him.

“The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow our minds to dwell upon. It is in our thoughts that the first movements toward the renovation of the heart occur. Thoughts are the place where we can and must begin to change. There the light of God first begins to move upon us through the word of Christ, and there the divine Spirit begins to direct our will to God and his way.” Transformation of the Mind by Dallas Willard, Spring Arbor University JOURNAL, Summer 2003.

1. Subject: Mindset

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

Your mindset matters every day of your life. It sets you on course before you take your first step each morning and determines how well you will do. Mindset is defined as a set of beliefs or a way of thinking that determines one’s behavior, outlook and mental attitude.

In this world, many things are out of our control. You may not be able to change your family background, your IQ, your boss, or the weather, but you CAN change what goes on inside your mind and heart. As Christians, we are called to have a particular mindset, namely, the mindset of Jesus Christ. Talk

about raising the bar! Paul says, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5 NIV)

Questions:

a. If you had to use one phrase to define your present mindset, what would it be?

b. How should the idea of having the same mindset as Jesus affect your faith?

c. How could a person develop a mindset like Jesus?

Training in godly living takes a clearly defined mindset as is seen in Jesus. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes these words, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom" (Ecclesiastes 9:10 NIV).

This passage in Ecclesiastes is about giving yourself diligently to whatever the task at hand may be. This involves qualities such as determination, persistence, and being intentional.

My guess is that not many of us live this way consistently, making a commitment to give it all we have. This mindset, I believe, is expressed best with the phrase, "going the extra mile." Let's be extra mile kinds of persons.

In our world today, extra mile living or being fully committed has become optional for too many people.

The opposite of a mindset of commitment or going the extra mile is avoiding challenges that stretch us and cause one to grow. Seeking to just get by is a cop out. God made us for much better in Christ. So much better!

So I want us to consider these two words, which come from the teachings of Jesus. The two words are "extra mile." Why look at these two words? Because choosing to train with Jesus takes an extra mile mind set. Jesus had it!

There is a story found in the book of Genesis about Abraham –a story that illustrates living an extra mile kind of life. Abraham was the father of the nation of Israel. This story starts when Abraham was an old man. His wife had died and it was time for his son Isaac to be married.

Now in Eastern culture, this is a very big deal. The whole future of the people of Israel rested on this marriage, because all were going to be descendants of Isaac. Abraham needed to find a great wife for him.

Questions:

d. How did Abraham pull off finding a wife for Isaac? What do you think about his plan?

e. Read Genesis 24:2-4 – What stands out about the person Abraham picked to find a wife for his son? What kind of mindset does he possess?

f. Why does Abraham tell his servant to get a wife from among his relatives and not the Canaanites?

The servant accepted this commission and assembled a caravan of 10 camels loaded with gifts. He knew that he would travel many miles to find Abraham's family and Isaac's wife. He went to a city called Nahor and made the camels kneel down while he stood by a well outside town.

Questions:

g. Genesis 24:12-14 – What does the servant's prayer and plan have in common? How do they relate to his mindset?

h. How does his plan accomplish finding a girl that possesses an extra mile kind of mindset?

Rebekah did everything that reasonably could have been expected of her and then went the extra mile. It's the "extra mile" that made all the difference in her life. It changed her life and history. She went on to marry Isaac and began a great adventure with God.

Rebekah became the ancestor of the people of Israel. Her name has been remembered and celebrated for thousands of years. No generation has gone by that hasn't remembered and celebrated Rebekah.

"Whatever your hand finds for you to do, do it with all your strength."
Rebekah was an extra mile person. To Abraham's servant that meant she was also a person of character.

Questions:

i. Try to imagine the kind of transformation that could occur for you -- perhaps in your work, relationships, marriage, with your children, your physical health, or your training -- if you became an extra mile kind of person? Is this idea easy for you to imagine?

Jesus calls us to go the extra mile, "If anyone forces you to go with him one mile, go with him the second mile as well." (Matthew 5:41NIV) By Roman law, soldiers were allowed to draft people to carry their backpacks and other burdens. They could pull anybody off the street and say, "You carry it." That person was required by law to carry it one mile.

Jesus was saying: In a world where people generally serve only when they are forced to, you do it voluntarily and with joy.

Now understand that Jesus was not being legalistic. He wasn't saying, "Every time somebody asks you to do something, you choose to go the extra mile because if you don't, God will not like you." You still must use judgment and

discernment. There is a time to protest, a time to say no, and a time to set boundaries.

But Jesus was teaching, "If you really want to develop an extra mile life mindset; if you want to follow my example with the heart that God made you to have, then live as an extra mile kind of person.

Jesus says "If somebody asks to borrow your coat, give it to them and your shirt as well." This is Jesus' extra mile training program. That is what Fit To Follow is all about, learning to train like Jesus.

Questions:

k. How does Jesus suggest we become an extra mile kind of person? What plan does Jesus suggest? Read Matthew 11: 28-29.

l. Read Philippians 2:5-8. What did Jesus do to become an extra mile savior?

m. Read Luke 6:38. How is this passage an extra mile training plan for those who seek to follow Jesus?

n. What fruit of the Spirit could you train in today that could help you become a person who goes the extra mile?

The biggest threat to the church today is fans who call themselves Christians but aren't actually interested in following Christ. They want to be close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from them. Idleman, Kyle (2011-06-07). Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus (p. 25). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

2. Review your Training Plan

- a. How is your training going? What difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning through your training about yourself? Are you staying close to Christ?
- c. If you have made any changes to your plan, share them with your team.

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Additional Reading:

More on the subject can be found in John Ortberg "The Me I Want to Be" Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Kyle Idleman, "Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus" Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Training Session – Week 7

Goals: To explore the meaning of being a servant follower of Jesus. To discover how Jesus' character made it possible for Him to humble Himself and serve us all.

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:5-8 NIV)

Before Team Meeting:

Your team should complete this study at home before discussing at weekly team meeting.

1. Subject: A Servant like Jesus

We don't use the word servant much. In fact we don't really like the connotation of the word. But it is a word used often in the Bible to describe Jesus. Jesus presents Himself as a servant when he says, “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28 NIV). The story of Jesus washing the disciple's feet is recorded in John's Gospel. This story took place in the upper room before the Last Supper. The significance of this event has been discussed for centuries.

Walking in sandals on the filthy roads of first century Palestine made it imperative that feet be washed before a communal meal, especially since people reclined at a low table and their feet were very visible. When Jesus rose from the table and began to wash the feet of His disciples (John 13:4) He was doing the work of the poorest of servants. The disciples must have been stunned at this act of humility performed by Christ, their Lord and Master. Why would He wash the feet of His disciples, when it was their proper work to wash His feet? When Jesus came to earth, He came not as King and Conqueror, but as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. The humility expressed by this act performed with towel and basin foreshadowed His ultimate act of humility and love on the cross.

When Jesus washed the disciples' feet, He told them (and us), "I have given you an example; that you should do as I have done to you." (John 13:15) As His followers, we are to serve one another and seek to build one another up in humility and love. When we seek to serve ourselves or desire for people to serve us, we miss the true meaning of Jesus' words "you should do as I have done to you." To Jesus, greatness is found in those who are willing to follow His example by seeking to serve others. In fact, Jesus makes it clear that in His Kingdom, those who will be greatest must be willing to serve others. (Mark 9:35, 10:44) The Lord promises to greatly bless those who have a servant's heart. "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them (John 13:17).

Questions:

- a. Read John 13:1-16. What is the significance of Jesus washing the disciple's feet?

- b. How is Peter's reaction contrary to what Jesus was seeking to do for the disciples? Does Peter understand what Jesus was doing when he says "wash my whole body"?

- c. How do Jesus' words and example affect you as His follower? How does being a servant relate to your life and relationships?

d. What do you find hard about being a servant?

Jesus took upon himself the form of a servant. (Philippians 2:7) As the Servant of God, this instance reveals His amazing humility. He - who is the Son of God, of the same nature with God, and equal to God - voluntarily became His Servant. He willingly becomes our servant in His work on the Cross.

Questions:

e. What does His willingness to be a servant teach us about Jesus?

f. Does the fact that Jesus was willing to serve, call us to do the same?

Read the following quote from Andrew Murray's book "Humility" and then answer the questions that follow.

"In the Gospel of John, the inner life of our Lord becomes open to us. Jesus speaks frequently of his relationship to the Father, of the motives by which he is guided, and of his consciousness of the power and spirit in which he acts. Though the word humble is not used, there is no other place in Scripture where his humility is so clearly revealed. We have already said that this grace is, in truth, nothing but man's simple consent to let God be all, in virtue of which he surrenders himself to his working alone. In Jesus, we will see how as the Son of God in heaven, and as man on earth, he took the place of entire subordination. He gave God the honor and the glory which is due to him. And what he taught so often was made true to himself: "He who humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk. 18:14). As it is written, "He humbled himself... therefore God exalted him to the highest place" (Phil. 2:8-9). Listen to the words from John's Gospel, in which our Lord speaks of his relationship to the Father, and see how unceasingly he uses the words "not" or "nothing" about Himself. The "not I" in which Paul expresses his relationship to Christ, is the very spirit of what Christ says of his relationship to the Father: "the Son can do nothing by himself" (Jn. 5:19). "By myself I can do nothing ... and my judgment is just, for

I seek not to please myself but him who sent me" (Jn. 5:30). "I do not accept praise from men" (Jn. 5:41). "I came down from heaven, not to do my will" (Jn. 6:38). "My teaching is not my own" (Jn. 7:16). "I am not here on my own" (Jn. 7:28). "I do nothing on my own" (Jn. 8:28). "I have not come on my own; but he sent me" (Jn. 8:42). "I am not seeking glory for myself" (Jn. 8:50). "The words I say to you are not just my own" (Jn. 14:10). "These words you hear are not my own" (Jn. 14:24). These words open to us the deepest roots of Christ's life and work. They tell us how it was that the Almighty God was able to work his mighty redemptive work through him. They show how important Christ counted the state of heart that was fitting for him as the Son of the Father. They teach us what the essential nature and life is of that redemption which Christ accomplished and now communicates." Murray, Andrew (2002-03-04). Humility (eBook): The path to divine growth and true nobility (Kindle Locations 220-228). Christian Art Distributors Pty Ltd. Kindle Edition.

Questions:

g. How does Murray's writing about Christ's humility reveal the heart and life of Christ?

h. According to Murray, the relationship Jesus has with His Father is what makes it possible for Jesus to choose to be a humble servant. How would relationship make that possible? Explain?

i. When you read the passages Murray listed, in which Jesus states that everything he does is through the Father, what does that say to you about how you, as His follower, ought to live your life?

j. Read John 15:1-17. Is Jesus inviting us to have the same kind of relationship He enjoyed with His Father with the words "abide in me and I in you?" Explain why or why not?

Review each week at Team meeting.

2. Review your Training Plan

- a. How is your Training going and what difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning through your training about yourself and about staying close to Christ?
- c. If you have made any changes to your plan, share them with your team.

3. Team Exercise – Service Project

- This week have the Team choose to do a service project together. (If you desire, bring your family members along.)
- Call your church to see if you can be of help at the church (office cleanup, bring food for the Youth Group, etc.)
- Choose a local Ministry in town and find out how your Team could help.
- Try to pick a service project everyone can participate in.

4. Review Team Service Project Experience

- Share what you learned from your experience together and what it taught you about serving together.
- What problems did you experience and did any other team members experience the same?

- What did you enjoy about serving and what did you find hard?
- While you served, how did you seek to bring Christ into your experience?
- What did serving teach you about Christ and meeting people's needs?

5. Praying for Your Team:

Each week you are asked to pray for your team members. Training takes effort and dedication. Many times we get off track due to unimportant things. So let's uphold each other during the 90 Day Challenge. Each week share prayer requests and before you end, pray for them together.

Team Names

Date:

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Training Session – Week 8

Goals: To explore the way God’s Word presents the nature of the Church and how we should love one another; to examine our commitment level to build the Body of Christ in our local church and the community at large.

The problem is that you can have knowledge without having intimacy. In fact, knowledge can be a false indicator of intimacy. Idleman, Kyle (2011-06-07). Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus (p. 44). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Before Team Meeting:

Your team should complete this study at home to discuss at weekly team meeting.

1. Subject: The Family of God

One of the biggest problems facing the Church today is the harm that has been done to the cause of Christ by unhealthy Christians who attempt to carry out ministry without health in Christ. Some talk about superficial matters after church and call it "fellowship" even though there is little, if any, real involvement in the lives of others. The lack of devotion to Christ is seen in their unwillingness to serve God’s people. This can make the church an unhealthy community.

Christians and unbelievers alike often complain about the Church’s lack of health and say that Christians aren’t any different than people in general.

What is the problem? There isn't one answer, this problem has many components.

One element is how Christians see themselves. In Pastor Kyle Idleman's book **"Not a Fan"** he describes one issue, pointing out that many Christians are more like "fans" at a sports event than followers of Jesus Christ. His disturbing description says many Christians are like "the guy who goes to the football game with no shirt and a painted chest. He sits in the stands and cheers for his team. He's got a signed jersey hanging on his wall at home and multiple bumper stickers on the back of his car. But he's never in the game. He never breaks a sweat or takes a hard hit in the open field. He knows all about the players and can rattle off their latest stats, but he doesn't know the players. He yells and cheers, but nothing is really required of him. There is no sacrifice he has to make. And the truth is, as excited as he seems, if the team he's cheering for starts to let him down and has a few off seasons, his passion will wane pretty quickly. After several losing seasons you can expect him to jump off the fan wagon and begin cheering for some other team. He is an enthusiastic admirer." (Idleman, Kyle (2011-06-07). *Not a Fan: Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus* (p. 24). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.)

Idleman says that many Christians are like a "fan" who cheers for Christ or the church when things are going well, but who walks away when it's a difficult season. Fans are people who sit safely in a seat in the church sanctuary cheering, but they know nothing of the sacrifice and pain of following Christ. Fans of Jesus are people who know all about Jesus, but they don't know Him personally. "Fans" aren't really connected to the team but watch from the sidelines in God's community. They don't serve nor do they help make the church stronger. The condition of their heart and a lack of relationship to Christ causes this way of life."

There is a second element causing this condition and that is the lack of real community, which the Bible calls "koinonia" which means sharing the Life of Christ together. Koinonia is a Greek word whose primary meaning is "fellowship, sharing in common, communion." The early church, "... devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42) This was an essential part of the early Church. The New Testament places emphasis upon the need for Christians to know each other closely and intimately enough to be able to bear one another's burdens, confess faults one to another, encourage, exhort, caution one another, and minister to one another with the Word, song, and prayer. As we carry out the various elements of God's kind of community, we will experience what Paul describes "may you have power, together with all the

Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ " (Ephesians. 3:18-19).

When we explore God's word, we find over fifty "one another" statements and commands in the New Testament. These call us to a special kind of relationship together in Christ's community, the church.

Questions:

a. Read the passages below and consider how God's Word describes the Church vs. what you have experienced. Please read them slowly and in a prayerful spirit.

"Be at peace with each other." (Mark 9:50)

"Wash one another's feet." (John 13:14)

"Love one another." (John 13:34)

"Love one another." (John 13:35)

"Love each other." (John 15:12)

"Love each other." (John 15:17)

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love." (Romans 12:10)

"Honor one another above yourselves." (Romans 12:10)

"Live in harmony with one another." (Romans 12:16)

"Love one another." (Romans 13:8)

"Stop passing judgment on one another." (Romans 14:13)

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you." (Romans 15:7)

"Instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)

"Greet one another with a holy kiss." (Romans 16:16)

"When you come together to eat, wait for each other." (1 Corinthians 11:33)

"Have equal concern for each other." (1 Corinthians 12:25)

"Greet one another with a holy kiss." (1 Corinthians 16:20)

"Greet one another with a holy kiss." (2 Corinthians 13:12)

"Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)

"If you keep on biting and devouring each other you will be destroyed by each other." (Galatians 5:15)

"Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Galatians 5:26)

"Carry each other's burdens." (Galatians 6:2)

"Be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)

"Be kind and compassionate to one another." (Ephesians 4:32)

"Forgiving each other." (Ephesians 4:32)

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)

"In humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)

"Do not lie to each other." (Colossians 3:9)

"Bear with each other." (Colossians 3:13)

"Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)

"Teach one another." (Colossians 3:16)

"Admonish one another." (Colossians 3:16)

"Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

"Love each other." (1 Thessalonians 4:9)

"Encourage each other." (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

"Encourage one another." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

"Build each other up." (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

"Encourage one another daily." (Hebrews 3:13)

"Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)

"Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)

"Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)

"Don't grumble against each other." (James 5:9)

"Confess your sins to each other." (James 5:16)

"Pray for each other." (James 5:16)

"Love one another deeply, from the heart." (1 Peter 1:22)

"Live in harmony with one another." (1 Peter 3:8)

"Love each other deeply." (1 Peter 4:8)

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (1 Peter 4:9)

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others." (1 Peter 4:10)

"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another." (1 Peter 5:5)

"Greet one another with a kiss of love." (1 Peter 5:14)

"Love one another." (1 John 3:11)

"Love one another." (1 John 3:23)

"Love one another." (1 John 4:7)

"Love one another." (1 John 4:11)

"Love one another." (1 John 4:12)

"Love one another." (2 John 5)

b. After reading the "one another" passages above, how do they impact or shape how you see the church of Christ and your role in it?

c. Describe what your church would be like if 65% of those attending took seriously the "one another" passages?

e. How could we do "Bodybuilding" in our church family if we followed the suggestions in the "one another" passages?

f. Go back and make a list of the things we should do for our brothers and sisters in Christ?

In the early church, we see a rhythm of life in the way Christians gathered together in homes, instructed one another, prayed together, and shared the work of the Lord.

Bearing one another's burdens means, at the very least, to uphold one another in prayer. It also means being willing to spend time with another, so that you can understand that person's feelings and problems. It means committing yourself to an authentic effort to relieve that person's pressures or discouragement, offering intense prayer, practical help, or wise counsel, not just a superficial word of "I'll pray for you."

Questions:

g. Share with your team ways you can help "love one another" in the Body of Christ today?

h. Discuss with your team how you can “bear each other’s burdens” during your 90 Day Challenge?

In the book “Renewal as a Way of Life” by Richard F. Lovelace, he points out, “Whenever spiritual awakenings have occurred throughout Christian history, they have always been accompanied by a restoration of Christian fellowship, including the kind willing to bear one another’s burdens. During the Wesleyan awakening in eighteenth century England, the great evangelist George Whitefield wrote to his converts: “My brethren ... let us plainly and freely tell one another what God has done for our souls. To this end you would do well, as others have done, to form yourselves into little companies of four or five each, and meet once a week to tell each other what is in your hearts; that you may then also pray for and comfort each other as need shall require. None but those who have experienced it can tell the unspeakable advantages of such a union and communion of souls.”

Review each week at Team meeting.

2. Review your Training Plan

- a. How is your Training going and what difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning through your training about yourself and about staying close to Christ?
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3. Team Exercise – Service Project

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- Call your church and see if you can help at the church (office cleanup, bring food for the Youth Group, etc.)
- Choose a local Ministry in town and offer your team's help.
- Try to choose a service project everyone can attend.

4. Review Team Service Project Experience

- Share what you learned from your experience together and what it taught you about serving together?
- What problems did you experience and did any other team members experience the same?
- What did you enjoy about serving and what did you find hard?
- While you served, how did you bring Christ into your experience?
- What did serving teach you about Christ and people's needs?

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Date:

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Training Session – Week 9

Goals: To review the call of Jesus to “go and make disciples;” to explore how this calling was practiced in the New Testament; to explore how Jesus call to discipleship can be made into a lifestyle for our own life.

“The greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples – students, apprentices, practitioners – of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.”
— Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*

Before Team Meeting:

Your team should complete this study at home to discuss at weekly team meeting.

1. Subject: Jesus’ Disciples

In the New Testament the word "disciple" is used to refer to a student in training. Jesus is not the only one to have "disciples" in the New Testament (Mark 2:18; Matt 9:14; Luke 5:33; 7:18; John 1:35; 4:1), the Pharisees had

disciples as well. (Mark 2:18; 6:29; Luke 5:33) Even John the Baptist has his own disciples, men who followed his teaching and life example. (John 9:28)

Having disciples was a common method of training and developing students in the ancient world. In first century Palestine disciples usually sought out a teacher (cf. Luke 9:57-62) but Jesus reverses this practice by personally "calling" people to become His disciples. (Mark 1:16-20; 2:14-17; 3:13) Jesus deliberately chose His disciples. Within the context of shared experiences He taught them about God the Father, God's Kingdom, and about life, faith and virtue.

The word "disciples" is used 233 times in the New Testament and is not limited to referencing only "the twelve disciples." There are only three places where the phrase "twelve disciples" occurs. (Matt 10:1; 11:1; 20:17) The general use for the word "disciple" refers to one who followed Jesus. For example, the 70 who followed Jesus and received training from him in Luke 10:1 were also called His disciples.

Jesus' purpose in having disciples wasn't merely to inform and pass on knowledge. He also intended to equip them to become disciple makers, leaders who would reach out to all people groups in the world. (Matt. 28:19-20) He promised His disciples that He would be with them. To Jesus, disciple making is a joint endeavor between the disciple and Himself.

Questions:

a. Have you been discipled by someone in your Christian experience? What was it like and what was the primary focus?

b. What did you learn and do in your discipleship training experience? Share your experience with your team.

c. When you finished the discipleship course, were you equipped to help someone become a disciple of Jesus? Did you feel ready to become a disciple maker?

e. Read Matthew 28:18–20. Do you believe this passage is meant for you and for all Christians? Imagine answering Jesus' call to make disciples. Share with the Team what you would do.

f. As a Christian parent, how does discipleship and disciple making fit into your parenting plan?

Being Together:

The basic method Jesus used for making disciples was to gather a group of willing followers, teaching by example what it meant to live like Him and learn His ways. No New Testament text better illustrates this life of "being together" than Colossians 3:1–17.

Questions:

g. From this passage, outline the elements of being a disciple as expressed in Paul's description.

h. What does one need to learn and what does one need to practice?

What stands out in this passage is the disciple's role as an example in life and learning as demonstrated in the community of New Testament disciples. There are many statements in the New Testament from the Apostle Paul that express this strategy of "being together" and making disciples. In one of his first letters to the early church he says, "Our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the Joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and in Achaia." (1 Thess. 1:5-7)

Questions:

i. In your church how does discipleship involve "being together?" Give examples of how the element of "being together" works?

j. What ways could you suggest that would help fulfill the element of "being together" in a discipleship plan?

k. How does the promise of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 to his disciple makers also reflect this "being together" principle?

In the New Testament, the practice of discipleship follows a simple and transferable pattern for followers of Jesus: Learning to be like Jesus by being with Christ and learning to be like Jesus by being with those who are further along on that same path. The way of discipleship, as seen in the New Testament, is not simply sharing content. It isn't more knowledge we need. We need more disciples who are willing to share their lives with other believers. We need to learn how to follow Jesus every day of our lives.

Question:

1. How could the 90 Day Challenge fulfill our call to be a disciple maker? What do you see as its strengths and what could be its weaknesses in discipleship?

Review each week at Team meeting.

2. Training Plan

- a. How is your Training going and what difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning through your training about yourself and about staying close to Christ?
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3. Team Exercise – Service Project

- a. This week have the Team choose to do a service project together. (If you desire, bring family members along.)
- b. Call your church and see if you can help at the church (office, cleanup, bring food for the Youth Group, etc.)
- c. Choose a local Ministry in town. Contact them to find out how your team can help.
- d. Try to pick a service project everyone can attend.

4. Review Team Service Project Experience

a. Share what you learned from your experience together and what it taught you about serving together?

b. What problems did you experience and did any other team members experience the same?

c. What did you enjoy about serving and what did you find hard?

d. While you served, how did you seek to bring Christ into your experience?

d. What did serving teach you about Christ and people's needs?

5. Praying for Your Team:

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Team Names

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Team Discussion Guide



Training Session – Week 10

Goals: To consider the teaching of God's Word that tells us each Christian is called to join with Christ and His people in doing ministry to build up the Body of Christ; to explore what my spiritual gifts are and how I can use them for Christ and his people.

"...but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope." (Hebrews 3:6 NIV)

"...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:25 NIV)

Before Team Meeting:

Your team should complete this study at home to discuss at weekly team meeting.

1. Subject: Called to Minister

If I asked you how many ministers you have in your church, what would you say? I am sure the majority of people would answer by telling how many Pastors are on their church staff. Pastors on a church staff are indeed ministers, but they aren't the only ones. In fact, the word of God teaches that we are all ministers in the work of the kingdom of God.

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

Notice the Apostle Paul makes it clear that we are all called to ministry. We are all given spiritual gifts in order to minister in the Body of Christ and in the world. The aim of the ministry is building up...

"Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (**Ephesians 4:13** NIV)

We are all called to be in ministry. Our ministry will reflect our unique calling, personality, and season of life. The focus of this ministry is to complete what Christ is now doing to reach the world and to purify his people. We will not all be teachers or evangelists, but every Christian has a ministry.

What will this ministry involve? First, the ministry of God's people will always involve loving each other and loving our world. Loving our world starts with loving our next door neighbor. This love for others will fulfill God's command to love one another (Matthew 22:37-39).

Second, ministry must also answer the call of our Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples for Him wherever we live, work, or go. (Matthew 28:19-20). Our ministry is to become disciple makers. Christian ministry must involve the Great Commission, helping those we reach do everything that Jesus commands. Our ministry must assume that we can train one another to obey Christ and follow His example and lifestyle. All of this is what Paul means by "the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." (Ephesians 4:13)

Unfortunately, many people in today's churches don't have this understanding or vision for ministry. Too many Christians don't feel called or equipped and are unwilling to serve. When we understand and practice ministry together and take ownership in the work of bodybuilding, God's Spirit will raise up an army

of ministers for Christ. It is easy to get sidetracked when it comes to ministry today. Ministry is a vocation for all of God's people. We need to keep on course, doing what God has called and mandated us to do personally, in our local church and in our world, joining with other ministers of Christ all over this planet.

Questions:

a. How have you been equipped in your church community? Where could your church family help you to grow?

b. When you think about the phrase "all called to ministry" how does that make you feel? Rate your desire to be a person in ministry. (1 means low desire - 10 means very strong desire) What is your score: _____?

c. How have you understood the Great Command and the Great Commission as ministry in your life? How does it work in your local church?

d. Our church family has a responsibility to equip us but what responsibility do we have to equip ourselves?

e. Read the passages below and answer this question: What is our part in growing?

- 1 Peter 2:2

- Ephesians 4:16

- 2 Thessalonians 1:3

-Hebrews 12:15

-2 Peter 3:18

We do have a part to play in our growth as we respond to God's grace and love in our lives. God is always with us, helping in every way possible to bring about deep and true growth. This we can be sure of: All growth is "...from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." (II Corinthians 5:18)

2. Spiritual Gifts: God has given to the church, God's people, spiritual gifts for the work of the ministry to help us answer His call to serve Him and others. The spiritual gifts God's Spirit distributes will always reflect His grace-filled love for us and take into account our unique personality and temperament.

This week you are asked to take the spiritual gift assessment tool. It is free and you will find it by going to www.livinghopinfo.com and click on "Grow with Us" in the menu at the top of the page.

Question:

f. Share with your team the four gifts that were at the top of your spiritual gift assessment?

g. Have you ever had any ministry in the areas that showed up as your gifts in the spiritual gift assessment? What did you experience in those areas?

h. Were there any spiritual gifts you hoped would come up in the result but didn't? What attracted you to this gift or gifts? Share this with the team.

Review each week at Team meeting.

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- d. Try to pick a service project everyone can attend.

5. Review Team Service Project Experience

- a. Share what you learned from your experience together and what it taught you about serving together?
- b. What problems did you experience and did any other team members experience the same?
- c. What did you enjoy about serving and what did you find hard?

d. How did you seek to bring Christ into your experience?

6. Praying for Your Team:

Each week you are asked to pray for your team members. Training takes effort and dedication. Many times we get off track due to unimportant things. So let's uphold each other during the 90 Day Challenge. Each week share prayer requests and before you end, pray for them together.

Team Names

Date:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Team Discussion Guide



Training Session – Week 11

Goals: To explore the call of our Christ to go into all the world and be His missionaries; to examine the call of a missional lifestyle.

"If God calls you to be a missionary, don't stoop to be a king" – Jordan Grooms (variations of this also credited to G. K. Chesterton, Thomas Carlyle and Charles Haddon Spurgeon)

"The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we become." – Henry Martyn, missionary to India and Persia

"Since God is a missionary God, God's people are a missionary people." – Eddy Ho

Before Team Meeting:

Your team should complete this study at home to discuss at weekly team meeting.

1. Subject: Missional

The word "missional" and how one responds to it is all about perspective. This word has been known to bring warmth to some Christian souls, while it may

bring shivers down another believers' spine. Personally, I love the word and what it stands for in the Christian church.

The word "missional" is a term Christians use to refer to the adoption of a missionary lifestyle. Being "missional" means accepting certain practices of a missionary in order to reach others with the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Essentially, the idea of being missional is about taking the Great Commission of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20) seriously in our daily life. It doesn't mean we have to leave for a foreign country. It does mean we live in a way that focuses on reaching our friends, neighbors and co-workers with the Gospel story.

When we seek to be missional, we choose to engage the world around us in the same way Jesus did—by going out. Jesus never waited for people to come to Him, He went to them, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) The incarnation of Jesus is a model of how God does missions. The Word refers to the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, took on human flesh. John says "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us." (John 1:14)

So what was Jesus' purpose in becoming human? The purpose of the incarnation for Jesus was not to enjoy the scenery or have a new experience. The Son of God came in human flesh in order to identify with us and become the Savior of mankind.

Questions:

a. According to the passages below from God's Word, what are the reasons Jesus took on human flesh?

- Galatians 4:4

- Matthew 5:17

- Galatians 4:4-6

- Hebrews 2:14-18

- 1 Peter 1:18-23

Knowing who Jesus is and all He has done for us and for all peoples should help us answer the call to be missional. It explains why the Great Commission is Jesus' last word to His church, and why it must be a high priority for the people of God. We must understand that being missional is not an event we go to or add to our already packed lives. Following Jesus in his mission should be the way we live, not something we add on to life. God's Word says, "As you go, make disciples." It is not developing a new program or campaign, doing more or getting more involved. Missional is more about learning to live out the mission of Christ in the middle of our daily life. We can be missional in our everyday lives without overloading our schedules. Our vision needs to change from missions as an event or place to missions as a way of life. Jesus did tell us to go into all the world, but the world always starts inside our own home and out through our front door. Here are a few ways you can think about being missional today:

- In the normal rhythms of life, pursue meeting and engaging new people.
- Prayerfully watching and listening to the Holy Spirit to discern where God is working and look for His open doors.
- Look for opportunities to share the Gospel in word and deed to family, friends, and neighbors.
- Move beyond your comfortable circle of friends and join a group where there will be non-believers. Take a Christian friend with you and be Biblical by going in twos.

Let's not make the mistake of making "missional" another thing to add to your schedule. Instead, make your existing schedule missional. Build into your life a vision to see everything you are already doing as a place to answer the call to do God's mission.

Questions:

b. Make a list of places in your normal day where you are in direct contact with non-believers. How could you use those times to become missional? Share with your team some of your ideas.

c. Read **Romans 10:14**. In your own words what is Paul saying to all of us about our responsibility to be a witness for Jesus? How do you struggle with this in your life?

Review each week at Team meeting.

2. Training Plan

- a. How is your Training going and what difficulties are you experiencing? Share them with your team.
- b. What are you learning through your training about yourself and about staying close to Christ?
- c. If you have made any changes to your plan, share them with your team.

3. Team Exercise – Personal Service Project

- a. This week, choose a service project that you would like to do. (If you desire, bring your family members along.)
- b. Call your church to see if you can help at the church (office, cleanup, bring food for the Youth Group, etc.)
- c. Choose a local ministry in town and contact them to find out how your team can help.

d. Try to pick a service project everyone can attend.

4. Review Personal Service Project Experience

a. Share what you learned from your experience together and what it taught you about serving together?

b. What problems did you experience and did any other team members experience the same?

c. What did you enjoy about serving and what did you find hard?

d. How did you seek to bring Christ into your experience?

5. Praying for Your Team:

Each week you are asked to pray for your team members. Training takes effort and dedication. Many times we get off track due to unimportant things. So let's uphold each other during the 90 Day Challenge. Each week share prayer requests and before you end, pray for them together.

Team Names

Date:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Team Discussion Guide



Training Session – Week 12

Goals:

To celebrate your completion of the 90 Day Challenge with your team; to consider how you can make training with Jesus a lifestyle, not an event.

He (Jesus) matters because of what he brought and what he still brings to ordinary human beings, living their ordinary lives and coping daily with their surroundings. He promises wholeness for their lives. In sharing our weakness he gives us strength and imparts through his companionship a life that has the quality of eternity. Willard, Dallas (2009-02-06). The Divine Conspiracy (p. 13). Harper Collins, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

Before Team Meeting:

Your team should complete this study at home to discuss at weekly team meeting.

1. Subject: Training as a Lifestyle

a. When thinking back over what you learned during the last 90 days of the Challenge, what do you believe needs to become a practice or habit in your life?

b. What new spiritual exercises have you learned during this 90 Day Challenge that have helped you understand or experience more of Christ in your life?

c. How has training vs. trying made the following quote from Dallas Willard more a reality in your life? "Jesus does not call us to do what he did, but to be as he was, permeated with love. Then the doing of what he did and said becomes the natural expression of who we are in him." Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life In God*

d. As you reflect on this 90 Day Challenge, what were your biggest challenges and your biggest surprises?

e. As you think about being Jesus' disciple, who do you believe would be helped by a 90 Day Challenge in their life? Consider asking them to join you in a 90 Day Challenge.

Before the team Meeting:

2. Retake the Fit to Follow Assessment (Sharing with the Team)

a. What areas changed from the first time you took the assessment?

b. Did you learn anything new about yourself that you hadn't realized before?

c. In what ways do you most need to continue training in your life with Christ in the next months?

d. Are there any spiritual exercises you need to continue to practice after completing the 90 Day Challenge?

3. Praying for Your Team:

Each week you are asked to pray for your team members. Training takes effort and dedication. Many times we get off track due to unimportant things. So let's uphold each other after the 90 Day Challenge is complete. Share a few things you would like your team to be praying about for you in the next few months.

Team Names

Date:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

"Multitudes are now turning to Christ in all parts of the world. How unbearably tragic it would be, though, if the millions of Asia, South America and Africa were led to believe that the best we can hope for from the Way of Christ is the level of Christianity visible in Europe and America today, a level that has left us tottering on the edge of world destruction. The world can no longer be left to mere diplomats, politicians, and business leaders. They have done the best they could, no doubt. But this is an age for spiritual

heroes—a time for men and women to be heroic in faith and in spiritual character and power. The greatest danger to the Christian church today is that of pitching its message TOO LOW.”

—Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines : Understanding How God Changes Lives*

Appendix

Fit to Follow Assessment

Before starting this assessment, ask the Lord to fill you with his Holy Spirit and guide you through each of the questions. **Never** - means you on no occasion. **Seldom** - means rarely but sometimes. **Often** - means more often than not. **Consistently** - means happening or done repeatedly. Use the scale below to answer each question below

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”
(ESV) 2 Corinthians 13:5

Never - 1 Seldom - 2 Often - 3 Consistently - 4

CARDIO		Response
	CARDIO - refers to my heart, mind, and soul being connected to Christ.	
1	I have a daily time with Christ and enjoy it.	
2	I pray with Christ and find my guidance though these times.	
3	I enjoy a sense of God’s presence in my life and this gives me confidence.	
4	My relationship to Christ comes from a love for all that he is and has done on the cross.	
5	I read and explore the Word of God to help me know what God is asking of me in my life.	
6	In my life I have experienced God’s power working in me and helping to accomplish God’s purpose.	
7	My life is surrendered to Christ as my Savior and Lord.	
8	In my heart and mind, I am a person who seeks to follow and obey what Jesus teaches in his Word.	
9	Worship in my personal life happens throughout my day.	
10	I confess my sins to God and I am willing to forgive those who sin against me.	
11	I am the same person in public that I am in private.	
12	My desire is to grow in God’s grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.	

13	Living in God's presence is one of my deepest desires.	
14	I practice "abiding in Christ " as best I can each day.	
15	When I pray or seek to be silent, I sense God's nearness to me.	
16	I experience God answering my prayers.	
17	When I read God's Word the Holy Spirit speaks and guides my soul.	
18	I have learned that prayer can change my attitudes towards the world.	
	TOTAL	
	CORE	
	CORE - Learning to live by the teaching, principles and values of Christ.	
1	I practice being a person that is honest in my relationships.	
2	In my life I have learned to be patient in my relationships.	
3	Joy is something that I experience daily.	
4	Kindness is a behavior I seek to offer to people and animals.	
5	Peace is a quality of my mind and heart that God is helping me to experience.	
6	I practice I Corinthians 13 kind of love in my life.	
7	Gentleness is an attitude I seek to offer in my relationships.	
8	Humility is an important approach in my relationships.	
9	I am usually a person who has self-control.	
10	Living a godly life is a high priority in my life.	
11	I find my strength in Christ comes from being obedient to His teaching.	
12	I seek to reflect Christ's goodness in my life and relationships.	
13	I practice giving and sharing what I have with others.	
14	It is important to me to stay true to the teachings of Jesus when no one is watching but God.	
15	I choose to develop Godly character in my life by training in the Fruit of the Holy Spirit.	
16	I often think about how my inner life reflects the principles of Jesus found in the Gospels.	
17	I ask God's Spirit to explore my soul and test if there is any wicked way in me.	
	TOTAL	

	BODYBUILDING EXERCISES	
	BODYBUILDING EXERCISES - are those practices in my life that strength Christ Church and futures his Kingdom in our world.	
1	I use my time to serve Christ and others.	
2	I live as a person called to be a disciple-maker.	
3	I live with a sense of being involved in Christ’s mission in my community.	
4	Being a part of the Body of Christ, I practice using my gifts to help the church grow stronger.	
5	I pray that God will lead me to share my faith with those who don’t know Jesus.	
6	The local church is important to God’s call upon my life as a Christ-follower.	
7	Being a part of a small group helps me to use my gifts and grow stronger.	
8	I am able to share my faith and help others find answers to their questions.	
9	I am willing to go anywhere in the world to serve Christ.	
10	I am dedicated to help God’s people be all Christ desires.	
11	I live with a sense that all Christians are my brothers and sisters in Christ.	
12	When I hear the Church criticized, I am deeply saddened and believe I am called to make God’s people stronger.	
13	I make it a priority to go to those who offend me, so that a resolution can be found and healing begins in my life and the Body of Christ	
14	I make it a habit to encourage my brothers and sisters in my church family.	
15	I am confident that my life has impact upon God’s Kingdom growing stronger in my church and community.	
16	I live to serve, support, and encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ.	
17	I seek to have regular times of connecting to people in our church for support and accountability.	
18	I make it a priority to be in relationships for the purpose of making disciples for Jesus.	
	TOTAL	

A 90-Day Challenge - Commitment

Personal Commitment:

1. I make a commitment to God that I will seek to do the "90 Day Challenge of training with Jesus" for the purpose of growing deeper in my relationship to Christ.
2. I commit to giving my best effort of learning what it means to train with Jesus daily.
3. I commit to trusting in God's grace to empower me to do what I can't at present do by my own will power.
4. I commit to Jesus to learn and practice taking up " the easy yoke"; by doing the things Jesus practiced in his life.

Team Commitment:

1. I commit myself to actively participating and supporting each team member with my prayers and bring their needs to Christ.
2. I will be open and honest about my life and how I am doing with my training plan.
3. I will affirm and love each team member no matter what you say or have done in your life.
4. I commit myself to being prepared each week as best I can so I will be an example to my team.
5. I commit that what I hear or learn about my team members will stay with me and not be shared with anyone.

Signed _____ Dated_____

A 90-Day Challenge - Launching

Launching preparation:

1. Read over and sign "The 90 Day Challenge - training with Jesus" commitment.
2. Prayfully ask God to lead you to the right team members to join with you in the Challenge. Remember 2-5 members are ideal.
3. Complete the "Fit To Follow Assessment." Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what areas he desires you to focus upon during the 90-Day Challenge.
4. Plan a meeting with your team members before your launching date (February 8th). Be ready to share copies of your signed commitment; a copy of your "Fit to Follow Assessment."
5. Start thinking about sharing your personal testimony at the first team meeting. Your testimony should be about 5-10 minutes long. You can go shorter but try not to go longer. See My Testimony page in this packet to learn how to share your story with your team.
6. Set a time for the weekly team meetings.

Launching.....

Weekly Training Plan

WEEK :		M	T	W	Th	F	S	Su	Scripture verse
Cardio	Exercises								
	1								
	2								
	3								
Core	4								
	1								
	2								
	3								
Bodybuilding	4								
	1								
	2								
	3								
	4								

Make copies as need for each week of training.