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STARTING POINT

SESSION 2

STARTING POINT 2 : **GROW**

Spiritual disciplines for growth include prayer, Bible reading, fasting, and service. The goal is to grow in your relationship with God and live out the truths of the Bible. Spiritual growth is measured by inner transformation, not external performance. Some indicators of spiritual growth include: love for others, hatred for sin, and hunger for truth. As we journey through these habits together, let us remember that it is from a heart of gratitude that we seek to know the Lord better. In the video session we only discuss a fraction of these vital elements of a believers life. Please use this guide to dig in deeper.



BIG IDEA:
Giving helps you grow.



SMALL GROUP OBJECTIVE:
We will help everyone determine what gifts God has given them and how they could best use those gifts to serve.



SCRIPTURE USED:
Exodus 4:2-4
1 Corinthians 12

THE BASIS FOR THIS SESSION:

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:5

We are to be constantly growing and building ourselves up in Wisdom and understanding so that we become the witnesses of Christ that we were intended to be.

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” Colossians 2:6-7

11Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13

UNDERSTANDING BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

1. In order to become devoted followers of Christ we have to establish what our identity is and where our identity is found.

Unfortunately, there are always two voices that are speaking to us on our journey.

Jesus used an illustration of sheep and shepherds in John 10.

4. When he has brought out all who are his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will flee from him because they do not recognize his voice.”

6 Jesus spoke to them using this illustration, but they did not understand what He was telling them. 7 So He said to them again, “Truly, truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. If anyone enters through Me, he will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. 10The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it in all its fullness.

The strangers voice is always speaking. (The enemy of our soul) And he speaks contrary to what God’s Word says about you and about the life God wants you to live.

Most Christians spend very little time in the Word or in prayer or doing the things necessary to grow... therefore they find themselves listening to the strangers voice rather than the voice of the Shepherd.

As followers of Christ we need to know who we are. In order to do that we must develop habits that will lead us to SPIRITUAL MATURITY. We cannot be swayed, discouraged, defeated, and forget who we are in Christ Jesus.

Spiritual Maturity comes through discipline, and discipline comes through daily decisions.



2. As disciples, we develop spiritual maturity through:

- **Bible study and prayer**

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching ... and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

- **Fellowship with other believers**

“They devoted themselves to...fellowship.” Acts 2:42

- **Living a Spirit-led life (Holy Spirit)**

“Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the Apostles.” Acts 2:43

- **Giving of Ourselves / Generosity and Serving**

“They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need” Acts 2:45

HABIT ONE: BIBLE STUDY & PRAYER

“The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God’s way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (LB)

A vibrant relationship with God is sustained through Bible study and prayer.

A . HOW DO I GET MORE FROM MY BIBLE?

1. I must accept its authority.

We believe that the Holy Bible, and only the Bible, is the authoritative Word of God. It alone is the final authority in determining all doctrinal truths. In its original writing, it is inspired, infallible and inerrant.

- a. **Receive** God’s Word with an open heart.

“Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root... Therefore consider carefully how you listen.” Luke 8:13-18

- b. **Respond** to God’s word with obedience.

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” James 1:22

2. I must absorb its truths.

- a. **Hearing** God’s Word.

“Faith comes by hearing the word of God.” Romans 10:17

- b. **Reading** God’s Word.

“Happy is the one who reads this book ... and obeys what is written in it!” Revelation 1:3 (GN)

- c. **Studying** God’s Word.

“...they accepted the message most eagerly and studied the Scriptures every day.” Acts 17:11

- d. **Memorizing** God’s Word.

“Guard my words as your most precious possession. Write them down, and also keep them deep within your heart.” Proverbs 7:2-3 (LB)

- e. **Meditating** on God’s Word.

“(Those) who are always meditating on His Laws ... are like trees along a river bank bearing fruit ... they never wither and whatever they do prospers.” Psalm 1:2-3 (LB)

3. I must apply its principles.

“Once you know these things you will be blessed if you do them.” John 13:17

Gather one truth from your reading to reflect on.

Record what you learn in a journal or share it with someone.

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” James 1:22 30

B. TALKING WITH GOD - PRAYER

“Always be joyful. Never stop praying.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17(NLT)

Jesus exemplified a personal relationship with God through prayer that gave Him great strength.

Every person who has ever been effective in service for God has developed this habit. The only way to be a healthy Christian is to spend time with God daily through prayer.

1. In my daily prayer time, I am:

a. **Giving** devotion to God.

“(Hezekiah) was successful, because everything he did ... he did in a spirit of complete devotion to his God.” 2 Chronicles 31:21 (GN)

b. **Getting** direction from God.

“Show me the path where I should go, O Lord; point out the right road for me to walk. Lead me.” Psalm 25:4-5 (LB)

c. **Growing** in my relationship with God.

d. To **Gain** delight in God.

“Delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4 KJV

“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.” John 17:25-26

2. How to begin a daily prayer time

A. Select a specific Time and Place.

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

B. Follow a simple plan. How to Spend Several Minutes with God:

1. Read a verse or chapter in the Bible.
2. Reflect on the verse.
3. Record what God desires of you.
4. Request from God.
5. Use Biblical Resources

“Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t get discouraged and give up.” Galatians 6:9 LB

3. Use the model Jesus gave us.

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’” Luke 11:1

This is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.” Matthew 6:9-13

1. Connect with God relationally .

“Our Father in heaven”

2. Run to His name .

“Hallowed be your name”

3. Pray His agenda first.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Surrender)

4. Depend on Him for everything .

“Give us today our daily bread”

5. Keep your heart right with God and people.

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”

6. Take your stand against the enemy.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Answer: The Bible tells us we need to attend church so we can worship God with other believers and be taught His Word for our spiritual growth. The early church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

We should follow that example of devotion—and to the same things. Back then, they had no designated church building, but “every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:46).

Wherever the meeting takes place, believers thrive on fellowship with other believers and the teaching of God’s Word.



Church attendance is not just a “good suggestion”; it is God’s will for believers. Hebrews 10:25 says we should “not [be] 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.” Even in the early church, some were falling into the bad habit of not meeting with other believers. The author of Hebrews says that’s not the way to go. We need the encouragement that church attendance affords. And the approach of the end times should prompt us to be even more devoted to going to church.

Church is the place where believers can love one another (1 John 4:12), encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13), “spur” one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24), serve one another (Galatians 5:13), instruct one another (Romans 15:14), honor one another (Romans 12:10), and be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32).

When a person trusts Jesus Christ for salvation, he or she is made a member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). For a church body to function properly, all of its “body parts” need to be present and working (1 Corinthians 12:14–20). It’s not enough to just attend a church; we should be involved in some type of ministry to others, using the spiritual gifts God has given us (Ephesians 4:11–13). A believer will never reach full spiritual maturity without having that outlet for his gifts, and we all need the assistance and encouragement of other believers (1 Corinthians 12:21–26).

For these reasons and more, church attendance, participation, and fellowship should be regular aspects of a believer’s life. Weekly church attendance is in no sense “required” for believers, but someone who belongs to Christ should have a desire to worship God, receive His Word, and fellowship with other believers.

Jesus is the Cornerstone of the Church (1 Peter 2:6), and we are “like living stones . . . being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). As the building materials of God’s “spiritual house,” we naturally have a connection with one another, and that connection is evident every time the Church “goes to church.”

2. Small Groups

At Montclair Tabernacle, we believe our church must grow LARGER and SMALLER at the same time.

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:46-47

“(They met) day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house.” Acts 5:42

“You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.” Acts 20:20

How can our church grow larger yet maintain close relationships?

Every member needs to be a part of a **Ministry, Discipleship Class, or a Growth Group.**

WHY ARE THESE GROUPS IMPORTANT?

Small Group settings provide opportunities for:

1. Bible Study .

I need people to strengthen and balance the Word of God in my life.

2. Fellowship .

I need people who really know me.

3. Prayer .

I need people to pray for me personally.

4. Support .

I need people who will protect me.

5. Outreach .

I need people with whom I can share my story.

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.” John 13:34-35 (NLT)

HABIT THREE: LIVING A SPIRIT-LED LIFE

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” 2 Corinthians 13:14

Having close relationships with other people is only part of God’s plan for our lives. He desires to be our most intimate friend.

HOW WAS THE HOLY SPIRIT FIRST REVEALED?

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” - Genesis 1:1–2

God’s Spirit is recorded numerous times in the Old Testament beginning in Genesis 1. However The infilling of the Spirit was first given on the day of Pentecost.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?’

Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ...we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’

Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’ Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’

“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Acts 2:1-17

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Genesis 1:2

“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”



John 6:63 (NIV 1984)

1. The Holy Spirit is a person .

*“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.”
John 14:16 (NASB)*

Many people find the doctrine of the Holy Spirit confusing. Is the Holy Spirit a force, a person, or something else? What does the Bible teach?

The Bible provides many ways to help us understand that the Holy Spirit is truly a person—that is, He is a personal being, rather than an impersonal thing. First, every pronoun used in reference to the Spirit is “he” not “it.” The original Greek language of the New Testament is explicit in confirming the person of the Holy Spirit. The word for “Spirit” (pneuma) is neuter and would naturally take neuter pronouns to have grammatical agreement. Yet, in many cases, masculine pronouns are found (e.g., John 15:26; 16:13-14). Grammatically, there is no other way to understand the pronouns of the New Testament related to the Holy Spirit—He is referred to as a “He,” as a person.

Matthew 28:19 teaches us to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is a collective reference to one Triune God. Also, we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). The Spirit can be sinned against (Isaiah 63:10) and lied to (Acts 5:3). We are to obey Him (Acts 10:19–21) and honor Him (Psalm 51:11).

The personhood of the Holy Spirit is also affirmed by His many works. He was personally involved in creation (Genesis 1:2), empowers God’s people (Zechariah 4:6), guides (Romans 8:14), comforts (John 14:26), convicts (John 16:8), teaches (John 16:13), restrains sin (Isaiah 59:19), and gives commands (Acts 8:29). Each of these works requires the involvement of a person rather than a mere force, thing, or idea.

The Holy Spirit’s attributes also point to His personality. The Holy Spirit has life (Romans 8:2), has a will (1 Corinthians 12:11), is omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10–11), is eternal (Hebrews 9:14), and is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7). A mere force could not possess all of these attributes, but the Holy Spirit does.

And the personhood of the Holy Spirit is affirmed by His role as the third Person of the Godhead. Only a being who is equal to God (Matthew 28:19) and possesses the attributes of omniscience, omnipresence, and eternity could be defined as God.

In Acts 5:3–4, Peter referred to the Holy Spirit as God, stating, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.” Paul likewise referred to the Holy Spirit as God in 2 Corinthians 3:17–18, stating, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is a person, as Scripture makes clear. As such, He is to be revered as God and serves in perfect unity with Father and Son to lead us in our spiritual lives.

2. The Third Person in the Trinity .

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” John 14:26 (NASB)

THE HOLY SPIRIT’S ROLE IN OUR LIVES

“Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”” Acts 1:4-8 (NASB)

3. The Holy Spirit enables us to know God’s:

a. Comfort .

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” John 14:16 (KJV) 35

b. Conviction .

“But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.” John 16:5-8 (NASB)

4. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live with Christ like:

a. Character .

“For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” 2 Corinthians 3:17-18(NLT)

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

b. Power .

“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

5. The Holy Spirit equips us with:

a. Spiritual Gifts .

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit... Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 36

b. Spiritual Direction .

*“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will **prophesy**, your young men will see **visions**, your old men will dream **dreams**. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Acts 2:17-21*

- 1. God’s dream** for my life.
- 2. Vision** to see the next steps.
- 3. Biblical truths** to effect an eternal result.

6. LIVING A SUPERNATURAL LIFE

One of the main purposes of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to connect us to the heavenly realms.

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” Ephesians 2:6-7

“However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” — but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:9-10

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Acts 2:17-21

God desires to give us:

1. ___DREAMS___

A dream is a picture you have in your mind of a desired future; that which gets inside of you and is beyond reason and is bigger than you on your own.

2. ___VISIONS___

A vision is that which is seen, an awake dream; you see something already done; you see something in "How to Steps".

3. ___PROPHECY___

To prophesy is to speak forth biblical truth in the mind and counsel of God that cannot be known through natural means.

HOW DO I RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a vital experience of the Christian life. It is a special work of the Spirit beyond salvation. On the Day of Pentecost, disciples who had already made a decision to follow Jesus "were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues" (Acts 2:4). Paul asked the Ephesians disciples if they had received the Holy Spirit, after which "the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues" (Acts 19:2). New Testament believers were constantly challenged to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 1:4,5; Ephesians 5:18). The Church of God is committed to the baptism in the Holy Spirit because the experience is such an important focus of New Testament Christianity.

Though many non-Pentecostals teach a baptism in the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues, the position of the Church of God is this: *"The baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial sign of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4)."*

Speaking in tongues is the only phenomenon mentioned every time Scripture supplies details concerning the Baptism experience. Of the five instances in Acts which recount the experience of believers being baptized in the Spirit, three supply details. Speaking in tongues is the only one that occurs each time (Acts 2, 10, 19). In the Acts 10 account, tongues is specifically mentioned as proof that "the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues" (Acts 10:45, 46). The relationship between the phenomenon and the experience cannot be ignored.

In the two cases where details are not supplied, circumstances strongly imply that speaking with other tongues accompanied the experience. In Acts 8 Simon saw something (most likely tongues) that prompted him to offer money for the power to impart such a gift. In Acts 9 Saul (who became Paul) is filled with the Spirit without the mention of any details. However, Paul later testified, "I speak in tongues more than all of you" (1 Corinthians 14:18). It is logical to conclude that he began speaking in tongues when he was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

We believe the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues is the promise of the Father to every Christian who desires the experience.



HOW DO I RECEIVE THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

1. **REMOVE** all barriers.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38

2. **REQUEST** the gift of the Holy Spirit.

"Now suppose one of your fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? "Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Luke 11:11-13

3. **RECEIVE** Him by faith .

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38

4. **RELEASE** your spiritual gifts with confidence

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

5. **RELATE** to Him daily .

"The amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you." 2 Corinthians 13:14 (Message)

give.live.grow.

HABIT FOUR: GIVING OF OURSELVES

“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 Gospel is the ultimate demonstration of God’s generous nature towards mankind. The Bible consistently teaches that God blesses us so that we may bless others.

THREE AREAS OF GIVING

1. Give of our time .

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.” Ephesians 5:15-16 (NASB)

2. Give of our talents .

“A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.” 1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT)

3. Give of our treasure .

“If your gift is... giving, give generously.” Romans 12:8 (NLT)

“Yes, you should tithe, but do not neglect the more important things” Matthew 23:23 (NLT)

BENEFITS OF GIVING

1. Giving draws us closer to God.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21

2. Giving is the antidote to materialism .

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to be generous and willing to share. In this way they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” 1Timothy 6:17-19 38

3. Giving strengthens our faith .

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding... Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of your income, and he will fill your barns to overflowing.” Prov. 3:5, 9-10

“Give and it will be given to you... For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38

4. Giving is an investment in eternity .

“Give happily to those in need, and always be ready to share whatever God has given you. By doing this, you will be storing up real treasure for yourselves in heaven - it is the only safe investment for eternity!” 1Timothy 6:18-19 (LB)

BIBLICAL GENEROSITY IS:

1. Willing .

“For if the willingness is there, your gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one doesn’t have.” 2 Corinthians 8:12

“Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion.” 2 Corinthians 9:7a

2. Cheerful .

“...for God loves a cheerful giver!” 2 Corinthians 9:7b

3. Sacrificial .

“They gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service.” 2 Corinthians 8:3-4

4. Expectant .

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly; and whoever sows generously also will reap generously.” 2 Corinthians 9:6

“They gave themselves first to the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 8:5 39



The Importance of Tithing

VIDEO: Trust God In Your Giving

Honoring God with the first fruits of your income.

The tithe is 10% of your income, and it should be given to God faithfully. Tithing honors the Scriptural principles of generously providing for religious leaders, giving to those in need, and laying up treasures in heaven.

Throughout Scripture, we are encouraged to give the first part of our resources to God as an expression of honor and gratitude. “Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine” (Proverbs 3:9–10).

Understand the Biblical Basis for Tithing

Tithing is mentioned throughout the Old Testament, particularly when God commissioned the Israeli tribe of Levi to serve by caring for the tabernacle and providing spiritual leadership for the nation of Israel. Since the tribe of Levi was given these two unique responsibilities, God did not assign to them a portion of land (as He had assigned portions of land to the other tribes of Israel), but He instructed the rest of the Israelites to bring tithes of their increase to provide for the priests and Levites. (See Numbers 18.)

In the New Testament, Jesus affirmed the practice of tithing (see Matthew 23:23), and the Apostle Paul encouraged Christians to give to those in need and to those who were ministering in the Gospel (see II Corinthians 9:6–15). When you tithe today, you enable those whom God has called to serve as pastors, missionaries, and ministry personnel to faithfully build up the Church and expand the kingdom of God.

Put It Into Practice

Tithing is one way to worship God—to honor Him as your provider and remind yourself that all of your resources belong to Him and are provided through His grace. As you give away that first 10% of your income, you set your course to honor God in the way you handle the rest of your finances.

- **When to Give**

Consider your pay schedule, and establish a pattern of giving when your resources increase. This habit allows you to regularly remind yourself of God's faithfulness and to express gratitude to Him by giving to meet the needs of others.

- **Where to Give**

Typically, the tithe should be given to the local church where you worship. These gifts support your church and ministry staff members who are actively serving you, and they help maintain the work of the church in your community. As God prospers you and directs you, additional gifts can be given to other ministries that are advancing the Gospel.

- **What to Give**

The tithe is 10% of your gross income. In addition to giving 10% of your monetary income, consider giving God the first fruits of other resources as well, such as your time (giving Him the first part of your day in a quiet time and taking one day in seven to focus on worship and rest) and energies (investing your gifts and abilities in your church and community).

- **How to Give**

Your motives for giving are important to God. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (II Corinthians 9:7–8). Give with the expectation that God will faithfully supply whatever you need so that you can abound in good works!

Grow in the Fear of the Lord

The practice of tithing provides a regular reminder of your dependence on God. In good times, tithing helps you remember that God is the source of all blessings, and it allows you to demonstrate your gratitude for His care. In hard times, tithing motivates you to remember God's faithfulness, and it enables you to demonstrate trust in God to provide for all of your needs. In Deuteronomy 14:22–23, God instructed the Israelites: "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed . . . of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always." Whatever your current situation, tithing is a key to learning to live in the fear of God.

Store Up Treasure in Heaven

As Christians, we are challenged to set our hearts on what truly matters, not on the frivolous things of the earth. (See Colossians 3:1–2.) Jesus challenged His disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19–21).

Giving a tithe and giving beyond the tithe are ways that you can honor God and reach out to meet the needs of others. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

1. GOD IS PROVED
2. GOD IS HONORED
3. KEEPS PRIORITIES STRAIGHT
4. POSITIONED FOR BLESSING
5. GUARDS FROM MATERIALISM
6. GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER
7. SUPPORTS CHURCH'S MISSION
8. ENSURES YOUR NEEDS WILL BE MET
9. MEETS NEEDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE
10. REMINDS THAT GOD IS OWNER & PROVIDER OF ALL WE HAVE

ESSENTIAL HABITS OF A HEALTHY BELIEVER

Personally and Corporately

"But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations." Psalm 33:11

"For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep." Acts 13:36

1. Bible Study and Prayer: Daily Disciplines
2. Fellowship with Others: Small Groups .
3. Living a Spirit-led Life: Spirit Led .
4. Giving of Ourselves: Serving .

HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN GOOD HABITS

Step One: Desire

You must start with a strong desire. You must be internally motivated. External motivations don't last. If you start only half-heartedly, you will never make it to the success point.

Step Two: Decide

Begin right now! Don't wait. Don't procrastinate. You don't slide into a new habit. "One of these days" never arrives. You must have a starting point. It's easier to break a bad habit today than it will be tomorrow!

Step Three: Declaration

Announce your intentions publicly. Make a covenant or resolution. The power of a vow is awesome. It is particularly powerful if you put your commitment in writing.

Step Four: Determination

Never allow an exception until the new habit is securely rooted in your life. Each lapse will be fatal. A single slip unwinds many turns at first. Continuity and success at the start is essential. Never be swayed by “just this once”. The act of yielding weakens the will and reinforces your lack of self-control. It takes 3 weeks to become comfortable with a new habit and it takes another 3 to 4 weeks (doing it daily) for it to become a part of your life.

Step Five: Just Do It!

Whenever you feel the slightest urge or prompting to practice this new habit - DO IT THEN! Don't wait. Seize every opportunity to reinforce your habit. Those feelings will not last, so whenever you feel inclined to perform your new habit, do so!

Step Six: Double Up

Get a partner who will support you and encourage you. Find someone who is willing to hold you accountable and check up on you especially in the early days before the habit is firmly rooted in your life.

Step Seven: Depend on God

Rely on God's power to help you establish the habit. Remember, Satan does not want you to develop habits that help you grow spiritually and make you like Christ so he will do all he can to tempt you, cause you to slip, or discourage you.

END OF SESSION 2



**REACHING PEOPLE.
CHANGING LIVES.**

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