

4G

Growing in
Grace;
Glorifying
God

Spiritual Formation

Evergreen Valley Church



4 G *Spiritual Formation is about
Growing in **G**race and **G**lorifying **G**od.*

*As we grow in grace with God, the joy
and thanksgiving that feels our lives will
change the way we live our lives.*

*It is my hope and my prayer that as you
begin this **4 G** Spiritual Formation
study; it will provide you with the tools
to grow deeply in His grace.*

*When we accept and embrace grace, we
fall deeply in love with Jesus Christ. We
were made to love Him and be loved by
Him. And when we truly love Jesus the
way we were made to love Him, we will
want to obey Him and live for Him in
complete surrender. Only then will our
lives bring glory to God.*

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

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This **4G** Spiritual Formation guide has been inspired by the Holy Spirit and dedicated to our Lord Jesus Christ.

May it serve only to bring Him glory and honor forever and ever.

Insights and contributions for this guide came from the Holy Bible; both New International Version and the New Living Translation, *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby, *Disciples Cross* by Avery Willis, *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan, *Ministering through Spiritual Gifts* by Charles Stanley, S.H.A.P.E. by Erik Rees.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

4G - Spiritual Formation

Welcome to EVC's 4G Spiritual Formation - Growing in Grace; Glorifying God. 4G is centered on 2 Peter 3:18 which instructs us to "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever!"

The purpose behind this study is to help you grow in grace so that in your life God will be glorified. The way we grow in grace is in essence a divine partnership with God in which we come to the Lord completely dependent upon Him.

When I say partnership, I want to be clear that is a partnership in which we bring nothing to the table except our will. That is something we will explore more deeply during the next couple weeks of 4G.

Each week we will study one subject from the topic of Spiritual Formation. Let me begin by saying this is not meant to be an exhausted study on Spiritual Formation but rather a starting point to begin to understand and apply some important Spiritual Truths.

These are the seven topics we will be discussing during this 4G study in your private devotional time, from the pulpit and in your small group meetings:

Week of...

Oct. 3: Getting Started-Small Groups
Oct 10: Confessing Jesus as Lord
Oct 17: Trusting God for Everything
Oct 24: Bearing Fruit
Oct 31: Obedience to God
Nov 7: Praying in Faith
Nov 14: Living in the Word
Nov 20: Gifts of the Spirit

Each week you will go through one week's session materials. You should read the daily comments on the week's subject and respond to any questions or thoughts accordingly. Always take time to read the daily scripture verses presented that day.

You will be asked to meditate on that verse and then respond to God in prayer on what you just read. You will be challenged on how God wants you to respond and asked to act on that challenge.

When you meet during the week with your small group, you will have a chance to view a DVD presentation from one of our Pastor/Elders. You will listen to some insight from others in your group and share what God has been saying to you. You can discuss further some of the truths you are discovering from scripture.

I am challenging each of you to memorize 2 Peter 3:18, our focus verse for 4G.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

So let's start this memory process right now, say it out loud a couple of times and then fill in the missing words to complete the verse on the lines below.

But _____ in _____

and _____ of our
_____ and _____ Jesus Christ.

To him be _____ both _____

and _____! Amen.

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Getting Started: 4G Spiritual Formation & Small Groups

During our 4G series we want everyone to join up and meet with a small group of people. A small group can be 3 or it can be 15 people or anywhere in between. Of course I recommend a smaller size group, 6 to 8, as the intimacy and your ability to share is far greater.

If you have not yet joined a group, then contact the church and we will help you or better yet, call some people and start a group in your home. This workbook will be your guide. You don't need to be a Bible scholar, an experience teacher, or a seasoned group leader to start a small group. Just meet and share and let the group develop naturally.

In fact, even as I write this it is my hope that many of you will start your own group and invite friends and co-workers to your group. The first small group I started many years ago was a combination of co-workers, friends from outside of the church, and a couple of people from the church. God can use you to reach out through a small group. So pray about it and do whatever God leads you to do but join a group no matter how you go about it.

Your First Small Group Meeting:

So before you begin take time in your first meeting to get to know everyone. Not just your name but a little about one another.

Let me help you get started. Go around the room and introduce yourself. Assuming you don't already know everyone, tell the group about yourself by addressing the points that follow.

Share with the group:

- Are you married? If so to whom? How many years?
- Do you have children? If so how many? How old are they? What are their names?
- Have you been in a Small Group before?
- What do you hope to get out of this small group experience?

My Small Group:

Write the name, phone number, and email address for each person in your group below.

After everyone has been introduced, move on to the discussion of small group principles and priorities in the next section.

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Developing a Healthy Small Group: Principles & Priorities

One of the important keys of being in a successful small group is that everyone is actively involved and engaged.

This group is not your group leader's small group, but rather it belongs to the entire group. The Bible says that we are the body of Christ and each of us belongs to one another and we need one another.

So as a group, I would like you to read and discuss these important priorities and come to an agreement on how you will proceed with your group gatherings by making these principles a priority.

Developing an Eternal Relationship with God:

- ❖ This means that each day I will set aside time for God.
- ❖ This means that each day I will come to God in prayer asking Him to strengthen my love relationship with Him.
- ❖ This means that as God convicts me of sin, I will repent and turn to Him for direction.
- ❖ This means as God leads my life and gives me direction, I will follow.

Developing an Eternal Relationship with God's Word:

- ❖ This means that I will take time to read and meditate on the Bible each day.
- ❖ This means that as God shows me truth from His Word, I will take it seriously knowing God is speaking directly to me.
- ❖ This means that as God reveals things in His Word that need to change in my life, I will listen and respond to Him out of love and obedience.

Developing an Eternal Relationship with People:

- ❖ This means that I will make group attendance a priority in my life.
- ❖ This means that I promise to help create a safe environment for sharing. I will try to be open and transparent and I will not judge or attempt to fix others.
- ❖ I acknowledge that each of us will have our day (the time you feel a need to share what is going on in your life) but no one will have every day. (AKA: I will not dominate the group's time each week)
- ❖ I will listen to Godly advice from others.
- ❖ I promise to keep confidential anything that is shared within the group by others.
- ❖ I will make an effort to get to know others in the group
- ❖ I will pray for the people in my group during meetings and regularly throughout the week.
- ❖ This means that as God leads us, we will reach out to a world in need of God's grace.

Small Group Housekeeping Guide:

Schedule: (Day & time?)

Location: (Same location or rotation?)

Refreshments: (Who, what, when?)

Childcare: (Needed or not?)

Prayer: (Share in group or by email? Who?)

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Small Group Session #1:

Take a moment to open in prayer asking God to lead your discussion and guide your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

View and discuss video clip for session #1

Read 2 Peter 3:18 again as a group

Discussion Questions:

1. What if anything is God saying to you through that verse?
2. What does it mean to you to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?
3. What does it mean to you to glorify God with your life?
4. As you look over the next seven topics of 4G Spiritual Formation, which one do you think will be the most difficult subject for you to wrestle with and why?

During 4G each week you will be asked to communicate with God, we are calling it 4G Text Messaging with God just for fun. Actually, I don't text anyway so it is rather odd that this is what I came up with. It must be from God. Anyway I want you to take a moment each day to communicate with God by reading, meditating and responding to through the form of journaling.

To get started, take the time to read Jeremiah 18:1-6 and then respond accordingly. Then each week when you see this text box, do the same.



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**Text
Messaging
With God**

Jeremiah 18:1-6

Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?

Final Thought: As you begin this study think about this; first, clay has no real beauty of its own; it has to be molded to become something valuable and beautiful. Second, clay must remain in the potters hand to become what the Potter intended it to become. It cannot do it alone. So as you begin this study I encourage you, remain moldable and remain in the Potters hand.

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Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Confessing Jesus as Lord

Day #1

Philippians 2:9-11 tells us that because God has exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave Him a name above all names, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. These are words to take seriously.

Philippians 2:9-11

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord is the single most important thing you will ever do in your life. Yes, it is a more important life event than you marriage. More important than the birth of your child. More important than your graduation. More important than your retirement. More important than your promotion... well you get the picture.

Confessing Jesus as Lord is by far the pinnacle event in your life. Many of you as you read this have already experienced the joy of your salvation and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord. But some of you are holding back. Why?

I ask you this week to pray about that and continue on with this study each day.

As we begin the process of 4 G, I want you to focus on Philippians 2:11 specifically and how it reveals that when we confess Jesus Christ as Lord, it is to the glory of God the

Father. How do you glorify God in your life? The first and most essential way is to confess Jesus as Lord.



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Philippians 2:9-11

Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?

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Confessing Jesus as Lord

Day #2

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans declares the way of salvation and leads us to an understanding of truth, that is we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart we shall be saved. He goes on to instruct us that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Take a moment today and reflect on the first time when you can say for certain that you believed in your heart and confessed Jesus as Lord with your mouth.

What was going on in your life at the time?
How has that moment changed your life?
And if it hasn't changed your life, why do you think that is the case?

Romans 10:8-13

⁸"The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."



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Romans 10:8-13

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

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Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Confessing Jesus as Lord

Day #3

Most of us claim to be Christians and perhaps we once said a prayer declaring that very fact. But I ask you this; does your life look like you confess Jesus as Lord? Before you can answer that maybe we should first determine what it means to confess Jesus as “Lord” anyway?

The word for “Lord” used in Philippians 2:11 and again in Romans 10:9 is the Greek word *kyrios* which is understood as the person to whom you belong. This is the person who has power of decisions over you and he is your master. He owns you! So could you describe your relationship with Jesus in that way?

Is your life being lived out in such a way that those around you know that you belong to Jesus as Lord of your life, that He is the one that makes all your decisions for you and you submit to Him as your master?

Look, it is OK if you say no. In fact it is a really good start. The truth is very few people who claim to be Christians submit to Jesus’ Lordship over their lives. But our first step is admitting it. But don’t stop there.

As I was praying about the teaching on this topic, God gave me something to share with all of you. I want you to consider your relationship with Jesus Christ and ask yourself, is He really your Lord? Does He have all of your heart? God isn’t satisfied with being a part of your life; He wants to be all of your life. He wants you to be all in for Jesus as Lord!

So here is my challenge church. I am asking you to humbly submit to Jesus as Lord, Master, Owner of your life and simply pray

to Him right now turning your life completely over to Him. I don’t care if you have done it before, do it now. Can you imagine the kind of worship experience we will have together next Sunday if each and every one of us turned our lives over to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine how God will be glorified in His Church is we all go all in for Jesus?

And if you have never decided to confess Jesus Christ as Lord, then I hope and pray that today is the day.



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**Text
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Acts 2:38-47

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I’m going to respond?

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Confessing Jesus as Lord

Day #4

It is interesting how in so many parts of the world, when a new believer decides to follow Christ and confess Jesus as Lord through Baptism or perhaps through a public confession of their faith, the severe the ties to their family, they may lose their jobs, they may be ostracized or alienated and in some cases they may even put their own life at risk.

Yet for those followers of Christ, they willingly respond in obedience out of love and thankfulness to Jesus. I'm curious, if you or I were put into their position, would we still publically confess our faith? How do you respond to that question?

Francis Chan, in his book *Crazy Love* (I highly recommend reading it by the way) makes a great comparison as an example to consider using the Marines.

When you decide to join the Marines, you do so knowing that you will be one of the few and the proud, but you also know that there is a cost to being a Marine. Not only will you put your life on the line someday, but before that happens, you will have to work hard and follow orders. No one in their right mind becomes a Marine expecting that when he gets to boot camp, the Sergeant is going to allow you to sleep in late, skip the exercises and running, and frankly do as you please. That seems ridiculous. No, you are now a Marine and you are going to work hard and follow orders and in the end, you will be recognized as one of the few, the proud, the Marines.

We will discuss obedience later, but right now I want you to consider the cost to following Jesus with your life. Then, count the reward and decide how you will proceed.



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**Text
Messaging
with God**

Luke 14:25-34

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

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Confessing Jesus as Lord

Day #5

I hope this week God has been speaking to you. I hope that this week you have thought intensely about how you are following Jesus and confessing him with your life.

Baptism is such an important part of our declaration to being a follower of Jesus. I want to encourage each and every one of you, if you have not already been baptized, then now is the time. For a few of you, maybe you have been baptized but this week God has revealed to you the need to re-commit your life to Him and confess Him publically through baptism once again. If so, I say let's do it!

The early church was known for immediately getting baptized after confessing Jesus as Lord and putting their faith in Him.

Today, I want to encourage you to consider getting baptized and contact one of the Pastors or Elders to discuss it.

Maybe you are not sure why we baptize people. Let me share some very brief but highly important truths from God's word about baptism.

Why Should I Be Baptized?

To follow the example set by Jesus

"At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river." *Mark 1:9*

Because Christ command it

"Jesus said, 'Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the

Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.'" *Matthew 28:19-20*

It demonstrates that I really am a believer

"...many of the people who heard Him believed and were baptized." *Acts 18:8*
"We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands." *1 John 2:3*

What is the meaning of Baptism?

It illustrates Christ's burial and resurrection.

"Christ died for our sins...He was buried...and He rose again." *1 Corinthians 15:3-4*

"For when you are baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ." *Colossians 2:12*

It illustrates my new life as a Christian.

"When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!" *2 Corinthians 5:17*

"By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead. so also we may live a new life!" *Romans 6:4*

Baptism doesn't make you a believer - it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not "save" you; only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring - it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." *Ephesians 2:8-9*

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Why Baptism By Immersion?

Because Jesus was baptized that way

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water." *Matthew 3:16*

Every baptism in the New Testament was by immersion. (Example)

"...then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water..." *Acts 8:38-39*

The word "Baptize" means to dip under water". The Greek word baptizo means "to immerse or dip under water".

It best symbolizes a burial and resurrection!

Who should be baptized?

Every person who has believed in Christ

"Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized.." *Acts 2:41*

"Simon himself believed and was baptized...." *Acts 8:13*

"But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." *Acts 8:12*

I encourage you, if believe in your heart and have confessed with your mouth that Jesus is Lord; then get baptized. Call any one of our Pastors at the Church at 408-274-7422.



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**Text
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with God**

Ephesians 4:1-6

Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?

PRAYER: Jesus, I pray this day that you would take over my will and guide my life as I desire to live for you alone. I trust and believe in you alone for the salvation of my soul and I commit this day that you are my Lord and Savior. I belong to you Jesus. Show me how to walk in your ways and draw near to you in truth and love. Amen

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Small Group #2: Confessing Jesus as Lord

View and discuss video clip for session #2

Begin your group session by reflecting on our 4G study memory verse, 2 Peter 3:18 and this week's focus verse Philippians 2:11.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Philippians 2:11

And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Small Group Discussion:

1. What do you think it means to confess Jesus as Lord of your life?
2. Why do you think confessing Jesus Christ as Lord brings glory to God?
3. On day #2, you were asked to reflect on the first time you believed in your heart and confessed with your mouth Jesus as Lord and what was going on at the time and how that did or didn't change your life. Share with the group your experience.
4. On day #3, I challenged the Church to humbly submit to Christ. What do you think would happen to our Sunday morning worship experience, to our Church fellowship, to your small group if each and every one of us humbly submitted our lives over to Jesus as Lord?
5. Share one thing that you read and reflected on this week in which God spoke to you?
6. How is God asking you to respond to His Word to you?
7. Share one thing that your group can pray about for you this week?

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Notes:

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Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Trusting God for Everything

Day #1

“Some trust in Chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” Psalms 20:7

How does this verse speak to you about trusting God?

Oh, it is so easy to say I put my trust in God. But it is an entirely different thing altogether, to actually let go and let God be God. Our pride, our pursuits, our selfishness, our doubts, our fears, our insecurities... they all keep us from trusting in God for everything. But God calls us to have faith in Him alone.

Trusting God means that my faith in Him is far greater than the worries of my life. The Bible says, “The Lord is near, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” Philippians 4:5-6

This week during your private time with God in His word, we are going to look closely at the life and faith of Abraham, a man of God who has shown us just a little bit of what it means to trust in God for everything.

As you read each day ask yourself, “would I do that if God told me to or would I make an excuse why I shouldn’t?” Ask yourself, “would I be at peace or would I be anxious?” Abraham followed one day at a time. Are you ready to trust God like that?

The Faith of Abraham



4G

Text
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with God

Genesis 12:1-4

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

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Trusting God for Everything

Day #2

Abraham was called by God to follow His lead one step at a time. Faith is just that, following God one step at a time. As Americans, we are used to having the future laid out for us and we want to see the road map, the complete plan, all the way through to the end. The only problem is that God rarely works that way. Instead, God tells us to trust Him and to follow after Him. He says, I am going to take you to a place I will show you. We have to trust and obey.

But here is where the good part comes in, God always keeps His promise. Here is His promise to you from Hebrews 13:6, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.’ Faith is demonstrated through trust.

I challenge you to memorize Proverbs 3:5-6 this week.

Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”

Have you ever faced an issue that seemed hopeless that you had to rely completely on God to come through for you? What was that like?

Today in your reading you will have a few more verses than normal but it is for the benefit of understanding how God answers prayers of those who trust in Him. Sometimes he responds immediately and at other times he takes us down a long journey of trust. But make no mistake, He is always with you.

And so we say, “we live by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7

The Faith of Abraham



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Text
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Genesis 15:1-6, 17:1-8, 21:1-5

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

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Trusting God for Everything

Day #3

Don't worry, be happy. Sounds like a song from the 80s huh. But have you thought about that statement as it applies to trusting God?

Take a moment to read Jesus' words from Matthew 6:25-34.

²⁵"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

²⁸"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

How does your life measure up on the worry scale?

How much would things change in your life if you suddenly quit worrying about things; your life, your health, what you will eat or drink, what you will wear or where you will live, where you will work or what you will do? Is it possible that you are not trusting God for everything?

The Faith of Abraham



Genesis 22:1-14

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Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

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Trusting God for Everything

Day #4

Let me tell you a quick story. In 2007, twenty three South Korean people (mostly women) on a short term mission trip were captured by the Taliban in Afghanistan and held hostage.

One of the women somehow got a Bible through to the place they were being kept before they were sent off to different locations (mostly small holes in the ground).

They prayed together to put their trust in God and then they tore the Bible into separate pieces so that each would have the Word of God as their comfort as they endured as prisoners alone and awaited what they thought could be their death sentence. They committed their lives to totally trust in Jesus Christ and His Fellowship as their comfort and strength expecting to be put to death one at a time. As it turned out, only two were killed and the rest eventually released and returned to South Korea.

But what is amazing is that through trusting in God alone, they found comfort and strength that over road their circumstances. And now that they have returned home, members from the group on occasion will express to one another a desire to return to that place, not because of prison, not because of the country, but rather because in those dark times when it would have been easiest to give up, they experienced the closeness of trusting in Jesus Christ. They experienced the power of His resurrection to overcome fear. They experienced fellowship with Jesus in a way that brought so much peace that they now long for that even more.

This should be a lesson to all of us that rather than choosing to give up and quit, we should press on and draw near to Him and begin trusting God for everything.

Today read from Hebrews and be encouraged by the great crowd of witnesses that have gone before us. There is something very special about enduring hardship and persecution to the end and experiencing the blessing of the presence of God. But we must have faith, without faith it is impossible to please God.



4G

Text
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Hebrews 11:1 – 12:3

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

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Trusting God for Everything

Day #5

Trusting God for everything also means you believe He can and will use your life to do great things in His kingdom. Do you believe God can use you?

Henry Blackaby in *Experiencing God* says, “When you believe that nothing significant can happen through you, you have said more about your belief in God than you have said about yourself.” *(If you haven’t already you should take the Experiencing God study someday)*

Ordinary people are the ones God uses to do amazing things. Paul teaches us that God deliberately uses the weak and foolish things in this world (sorry that is you and I) so that everyone knows it is He that is at work and not us. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.

If you feel weak, limited, ordinary, you are the best material through which God can work. He doesn’t need your abilities! He needs you to trust in Him alone! Remember the memory challenge, Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.” It is worth meditating on right now.

Later in *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby says this, “The world comes to know God when they see God’s nature expressed through His activity. When God starts to work, He accomplishes something that only He can do. When God does that God’s people and the world come to know Him in ways they have never known Him before... The reason much of the world is not being attracted to Christ and His Church is that God’s people lack the faith to attempt those things that only God can do.”

We must have faith, because “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Hebrews 11:6



Daniel 3

4G

Text
Messaging
with God

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I’m going to respond?

PRAYER: Lord God Almighty, forgive me for placing my trust in my own abilities. Forgive me for depending on my own strength. Give me the strength and courage to trust in you, knowing that you are always with me and that you will never leave me or forsake me. In Jesus Name I pray, Amen

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Small Group #3: Trusting God for Everything

Begin your group session by reminding everyone of our 4G study memory verse found in 2 Peter 3:18 and this week's focus verse, Proverbs 3:5-6.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Proverbs 3:5-6

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.”

View and discuss video clip for session #3

Small Group Discussion:

1. Back on day #1 of this week you were asked how Psalm 20:7 speaks to you about trusting God. Share what you came up with and wrote down with the rest of the group.
2. As you read about the faith of Abraham this week, what challenged you the most about your own trust in God?
3. Which issues do you find it the most difficult for you to trust God with; your children, your finances, your home, your job, your health...?
4. Have you ever faced an issue that seemed hopeless that you had to rely completely on God to come through for you? What was that like?
5. How much would things change in your life if you suddenly quit worrying about things; your life, your health, what you will eat or drink, what you will wear or where you will live, where you will work or what you will do? Is it possible that you are not trusting God for everything?
6. Trusting God for everything also means you believe He can and will use your life to do great things in His kingdom. Do you believe God can use you?
7. Share with your group how they can pray for you regarding your trust in God and make a note of how you can pray for others in your group.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Notes:

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Bearing Fruit

Day #1

Have you ever studied John 15:5 before yourself? It is my personal life verse. In other words, it is a verse in which God spoke loud and clear to me and it has forever changed the way I live my life in Christ. Try to meditate on this verse every day and memorize it this week. It may not be your life verse but I know it will have a huge impact on you as you grasp the truth Jesus is teaching us in through these words.

John 15:5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

What does this verse say to you?

To me, Jesus is revealing such a powerful direction for my life. In the KJV the Greek word *menō* translates, "abide" while in NIV it translates "remain". This word means that I will not move on from His presence but rather to endure with Him at all times, never changing, never moving from my connection to the Vine, Jesus Christ.

The first step in abiding is to trust Jesus, we talked about that last week, knowing that remaining in Him is the best place to be.

And I learn an important truth in this passage, that when I remain in Jesus, my life bears fruit to glorify God. When I do not remain, I bear nothing that is recognizable as good fruit to God and He will not be glorified in my life.

Later in verse 8 of John 15, Jesus goes onto to declare that when our lives bear fruit showing ourselves to belong to Him, it is always to the Father's glory. "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

How does that truth fit in with your understanding of the topic 4G?



4G

Text
Messaging
with God

John 15:5

Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Bearing Fruit

Day #2

I want you to go back to the beginning of John 15:1 starting today read all the way through John 15:1-17 each day for the rest of this week. *(Yes that is extra work, sorry)*

But first let me set the stage, this is the very night Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. He implemented what we know as the Lord's Supper in the upper room and now when we get to John 15, He and his disciples have left the upper room and are on the journey to the Garden where Jesus would later be arrested that evening. It is possible, although not recorded in the Bible, that as they walked toward the Garden, they passed by a vineyard and Jesus took this opportunity to teach them an object lesson that we would later come to know and understand.

This setting is important because we now know that this is the very evening that He knows will be His last opportunity to be alone with His disciples to teach them before He would be arrested and crucified. Jesus knew what was coming and so you can almost think of this passage as the final words from the death bedside of one friend to another. Those words are always remembered because they are so important. So let's begin by looking at the first words...

In verse 1 we see that it is God the Father who is the Gardener. The Gardener has the responsibility of producing an environment that will make for a healthy vine.

Think about this, the first step a Gardener does in gardening is to break up the hard ground, remove the rocks and thorns and till the soil so the seed might root. God is the one who will break up hard hearts so that

His Word will take root in our lives. Jeremiah 4:3 this is what the LORD says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: "Plow up the hard ground of your hearts! Do not waste your good seed among thorns. And again in Jeremiah 23:29 God says, "is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Take a moment today to read and meditate on what Jesus says about soil and crop production from Matthew 13:1-23 and then ask yourself, "is my heart good soil?"



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

Matthew 13:1-23

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Bearing Fruit

Day #3

It is God's desire that you bear much fruit and He will keep pruning away until you do.

The Gardener also has the job of inspecting the branches and making decisions that will make the vine healthy and allow the branches to produce fruit. In John 15:2 it says he cuts off every branch that doesn't bear fruit. The Greek word is *airō*, it is also translated "lifts up" which is what God does. He lifts us up out of the dirt and mire of our lives and he cleans us up. A Vineyard Vinedresser does the same. He knows that if he leaves the branches laying in the dirt it will become infected with disease so he lifts it up, cleans it off, and ties it to the trellis where it can once again grow, thrive, and bear fruit.

Sometimes the disease has set in and then the Vinedresser has to prune the branch back. This happens to us as well and at times God has to cut back that which needs to be removed from our lives so that we can once again become fruitful. Let's call this God's loving discipline in our lives. Proverbs 3:11-12 says, "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in."

What do you think God wants to prune from your life so you might become more fruitful?

There is one more thing I want to point out. In John 15:2 Jesus points out that even when our lives bear fruit, He will prune us to make us more fruitful. The term used here for "prunes" is different than "cuts off." Jesus is referring to the process of removing shoots

that are just growing and growing and actually take away from the fruitfulness of the Vine. Think of it this way, if a Vine were growing and growing big, long and beautiful filled with so many big green leaves it may produce fruit but much of the nutrients of the Vine are being used for non-fruit bearing purposes. So if the branches are trimmed back over and over again as the shoots appear and grow the Vine will produce much bigger and better tasting fruit.



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

John 15:1-8

Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Bearing Fruit

Day #4

As soon as we begin to talk about our lives bearing fruit we immediately begin to think about doing things for God. But fruit bearing is more about being than doing.

God is not nearly as concerned about what you do as he is about who you are. The Bible says we are to “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Ephesians 5:1-2

The problem is, that being like God is not something you and I can do on our own. Perfect, that isn't how God planned it anyway. He wants to transform our lives as we remain in Christ and let His power work through us. When we connect with Jesus Christ, His Spirit in us, He transforms us and our lives produce fruit.

Just like the branch doesn't bear fruit apart from the vine, so our lives will never bear Spiritual fruit apart from the Vine.

So what is Spiritual Fruit, Galatians 5:22-23 says, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Do you see Jesus demonstrating any of these fruits in His life on earth?

Is it possible that as you remain in Him, and He in you, this Spiritual fruit might begin to produce in your life?

In another study I am doing right now the author says, “it's our task to do the connecting, God does the perfecting.”



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

Galatians 5:22-23

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

To end this day's meditation, invite Jesus to remain in you and ask Him to help you remain in Him so that He might produce the fruit of the Spirit in you.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Bearing Fruit

Day #5

Yesterday we talked about the Fruit of the Spirit which could be referred to as attitude fruit but don't get me wrong, fruit bearing is also about action fruit. But action is always through the power of God at work.

When we try to do things for God it just doesn't work. Instead as Henry Blackaby says in *Experiencing God*, "we watch and see where God is already at work and we join Him" Jesus taught in John 5:17 "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." He went on to say in verse 19, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

Jesus speaks of being obedient to His Words. Next week we are going to focus on obedience so get ready but for today just know this, all fruit bearing requires obedience to and through Jesus at work in you. Everything else is nothing! Don't forget, He chose you to bear fruit.

In John 15 Jesus says, "Remain in my love" what a great command from Jesus Christ to obey. He goes on to say, "obey my commands and you will remain in my love" and "my joy will be in you and that your joy may be complete." Are you willing to obey that command?

The first fruit of the Spirit listed Galatians 5:22 is love and in John 15 Jesus makes it clear that love is an action. He tells us to love one another. He even shows what great love looks like, "Greater love has no one that this, that he lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13

I have so much more to say about this topic but for now let me encourage you to consider picking up a copy of the book, "Secrets of the Vine" by Bruce Wilkinson. It may be one of the best "little" books you ever read.

The most important point I wanted to make this week to you is this; "God doesn't want you to do more for Him, He wants you to be more with Him." And when you remain in Christ, your life will naturally bear fruit which in turn will bring glory to God. Stop trying to glorify God and just love and obey Him. It kind of takes the pressure off you to perform doesn't it?



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

John 15:9-17

**Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?**

**Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?**

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Small Group #4: Bearing Fruit

Begin your group session by reminding everyone of our 4G study memory verse found in 2 Peter 3:18 and this week's focus verse, John 15:5

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

John 15:5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

View and discuss video clip for session #4

Small Group Discussion:

1. What did you read this week that most impacted you?
2. Since you have read studied John 15 this week, how would you explain what Jesus is teaching us?
3. Have you ever thought about bearing fruit in your life before this week? How has this week's study affected your thoughts about fruit in your life?
4. "God doesn't want you to do more for Him, He wants you to be more with Him." What does that statement mean to you?
5. What do you think God is trying to prune from your life so you might become more fruitful?
6. On day two you were asked, if you think your heart is good soil? How did you respond to that question?
7. Before we move onto the next section of obedience, pause a moment and review what you have been writing down in the 4G text messaging with God notes and share with the group what one thing God has been saying to you in your quiet time with Him so far in this study and how you feel Him leading you to respond.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Notes:

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Obedience to God

Day #1

Before we begin this topic of obedience, I want you to take a moment to write down whatever thoughts come to your mind when you stop and think about the word, “obedience”?

Did the thoughts that came to mind seem positive or negative?

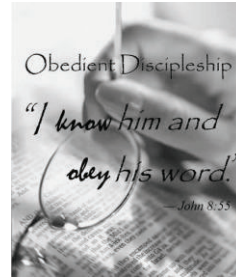
Does obedience feel restricting or freeing?

Listen, God loves you intensely. And because He loves you, He has given you guidelines for living so that you won't miss the experience and the depth of His love.

Look, because we live in a fallen world and because evil is real and active in this world, our lives are surrounded by land mines that are intended to destroy or reek havoc on our lives.

Suppose you were in a country riddled by wars and you had no choice but to cross a field full of land mines. There is one person who knows exactly where every single mine is buried and he offers to guide you through safely. Would you say to him, “I don't want you telling me what to do!” Of course not, you would stay close to that person. You would be careful not to wander off course but rather take the narrow way he shows you to go.

Jesus taught us to “Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it.” Matthew 7:13-14



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

Psalm 119:33-35

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Obedience to God

Day #2

If you were to mark yourself on an obedience measuring scale from 0 to 10 where would you fall?

Complete Disobedience Perfect Obedience

0—1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10

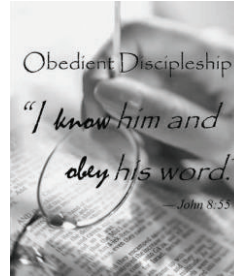
Why did you rate yourself in that way?

After Moses had brought back the commandments of God down from the mountain to the Israelites, God gave him the words to speak to His people found in Deuteronomy 6. Referred to as the “Shema” this is Hebrew for “Hear”! It is a proclamation, a declaration, and a confession of faith to love one God and to obey all of His commands.

God tells us to write His commandments on our hearts. He instructs us to impress them on our children and our families. He tells us to talk about them at every opportunity so they become a part of us and we begin to live them out in obedience.

As you read through Deuteronomy 6 today you will notice that there is a promise to obedience. See if you can discover what God promises to those who obey Him.

After you read this passage, consider whether the disobedience areas in your life are keeping God from pouring out the fullness of His blessings over your life.



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Obedience to God

How do you come to love God more?

Day #3

1 John 5:3 says, “This is love for God; to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome.” As we read this verse and as we studied last week from John 15, we discover that obedience and love go hand in hand. The two are inseparable in our relationship with Christ

“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” John 14:15

I would like you to memorize and meditate on these simple words of Jesus Christ from John 14:15 this week.

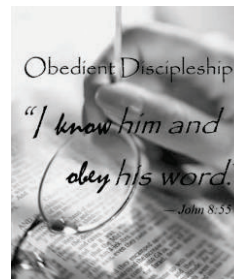
Think about these two truths in light of Jesus’ teaching in John 14:15:

- Obedience is an outward expression of your love for God
- If you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem.

How do you respond to those two statements?

Have you ever thought of obedience as an outward expression of love for God?

Based on this truth in John 14:15, if you are struggling with disobedience what should you be your next step to overcome disobedience?



4G

Text
Messaging
with God

John 14:15-26

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I’m going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Obedience to God

Day #4

Henry Blackaby explains in the seven realities of Experiencing God; When God invites us to join Him at His work we will always face a crisis of belief that requires faith in action. We must then make major adjustments in our lives to join God in what He is doing so that we might experience Him through obedience as He accomplishes His work in and through us.

Look over the types of adjustments God may require to change in your life of obedience:

- In your circumstances
(Your job, home, finances)
- In your relationships
(Family, friends, business associates)
- In your thinking
(Prejudices, methods, your potential)
- In your commitments
(Family, church, job, plans, traditions)
- In your actions
(How you serve, give, and pray)
- In your beliefs
(About God, His purposes, His ways, your relationship to Him and others)

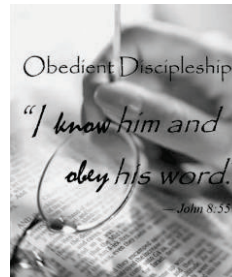
What do you sense God is inviting you to do with your life?

How is He prodding you to adjust your life?

Read Luke 9:23-24, what does Jesus ask of us?

Is Jesus worth adjusting your life to follow Him?

Are you willing to become obedient to His commands?



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

Luke 6:46-49

**Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?**

**Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?**

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Obedience to God

Day #5

God's commands are designed to guide you to life's very best. But when you come to a moment of truth when you must choose whether to obey God, you cannot obey Him unless you believe and trust Him. You cannot believe and trust Him, unless you love Him. You cannot love Him, unless you know Him.

If however, you really come to know Him as He reveals Himself to you, you will love Him. If you love Him, You will believe and trust Him. If you believe and trust Him, you will obey Him.

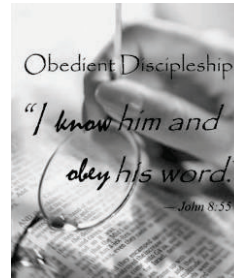
Remember these principles for living:

- Know Him
- Love Him
- Believe Him
- Trust Him
- Obey Him

During the next couple weeks I want to focus on coming to know God in a deeper way that develops a love relationship which is real and personal.

Write a prayer to God expressing your heart's desire to know Him, love Him, believe and trust Him, and to obey Him. That is the type of sincere prayer the Father will honor.

MY PRAYER:



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

1 John 2:3-6

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Small Group #5: Obedience to God

Begin your session by asking someone to say the 4G memory verse, 2 Peter 3:18.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

This week we also asked you to memorize a simple verse in John 14:15. Ask someone who remembers it to recite it and explain it in their own words what they have come to learn from these words of Jesus.

“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” **John 14:15**

View and discuss video clip for session #5

Small Group Discussion:

1. At the beginning of this week you were asked to write down whatever thoughts come to your mind when you stop and think about the word, “obedience”? Where your thoughts negative or positive?
2. Where the restrictive or freeing?
3. Have your thoughts toward obedience changed during your study this week?
4. Have you ever thought of obedience as an outward expression of love for God?
5. On day #3 you were asked, based on this truth in John 14:15, if you are struggling with disobedience what should you be your next step to overcome disobedience? How did you respond to that question?
6. What is God revealing to you to adjust in your life?
7. What did you read that most impacted you this week?
8. How does the 4G theme of “Growing in Grace; Glorifying God” fit with the topic of obedience?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Notes:

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Praying in Faith

Day #1

This week we will dig in and explore prayer and what scripture teaches regarding the subject.

In John 15:7 Jesus said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you.” How does remaining in Christ and letting His Word dwell in you direct your prayers?

Avery Willis, in *The Disciple’s Cross* tells the story of how God impressed on his heart to pray that someone be saved that night. Through a series of unique circumstances that followed that day in a miraculous way, sure enough he had an encounter with a young man who gave his life to Christ.

Then the next weekend God impressed upon him the number five. He believed God was telling Him to pray for five people to be saved. That Sunday, following his message, five people came forward for salvation.

So the next week he decided to take his prayer up one step further and ask God to save ten people that weekend. But nothing happened. Surprised? Avery came to understand an important lesson on prayer. This time people were not being saved because he had begun to tell God what he wanted rather than praying on the basis of what God revealed to Him. He learned that prayer is intended to involve us in God’s plan and for His purpose rather than involving God in our plans and for our purposes.

God delights in answering a prayer that is asked according to His will. Therefore, as Avery Willis says, “We need to hear God’s voice so that we will know what to pray.”

Special Assignment: Sometime this week I want you to take one day to be alone with God for at least one hour (although 3 hours would be recommended). Get away from people, phones, email and all distractions and be in quietness to hear from God alone.



4G

Text
Messaging
with God

1 John 5:14-15

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I’m going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Praying in Faith

Day #2

To begin today's devotional time; meditate on this week's verse below.

John 14:13-14

¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

What do you think Jesus means when He says "you may ask anything in my name, and I will do it?"

It has been said that what is more important than the words of your prayer is the object of your prayer. In other words, it is more important to whom you are praying, than it is what you are praying. Praying the right prayer to the wrong person is foolishness. But when we seek our God in prayer, we know that He hears us and He answers us.

Praying in Faith means that I accept God at His Word, I trust in His promises and I believe with all my heart that He will listen and answer me. Therefore, I can confidently claim my prayer led by His will when I go to God in faith.

The Apostle Paul reveals to us that the Spirit is active during our time of prayer to God. When our hope is in God and we remain in Christ's Words, He remains in us and His Spirit serves as our intercessor to God.

Romans 8:26-27 says, "²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the

Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."

What do you think that means? How does that verse connect with John 14:13-14?



4G

Text
Messaging
with God

Romans 8:26-27

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Praying in Faith

Day #3

The Bible teaches us to pray at all times (1 Thessalonians 5:17), in all circumstances. (Philippians 4:5-7). But we have reasons not to pray about our issues, don't we? For example: God couldn't possibly understand my struggles. Or, I can't pray to a Holy God, I am so unworthy. Or maybe, I feel like I let Him down, I'm too ashamed to pray. Besides, God won't listen to me anyway. Why bother, how could God even help me at this point, I have tried everything.

These thoughts invade our minds. They serve as a barrier between God and you. But let me be perfectly clear, those thoughts are lies from Satan.

The word of God says we are to "be joyful always, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. The Bible also says that "The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:5-7

God already knows what you are going through. He knows your struggles. He knows you sin. You are carrying a burden you were never meant to carry. Hebrews 4:13 says nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. So quit trying to hide your hurt, your fears, your failures. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Prayer is the act in which God instituted for us to approach Him. And the word of God in

Hebrews teaches us that we have a Great High Priest who has been through what you are going through. And He now sits on the Throne of Grace awaiting you to approach Him so He might pour out His mercy and grace upon you.

It has been said that; mercy is not getting what is deserved while grace is getting what is undeserved. Jesus gives us both. When we approach the Throne of Grace with confidence in prayer, Jesus pours out His gift of mercy, the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and He bestows on us His gift of grace, the blessing of His eternal presence and unimaginable peace.



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

Hebrews 4:13-16

**Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?**

**Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?**

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Praying in Faith

Day #4

No teaching would be complete on prayer without going directly to the words of Jesus on the subject. In Mathew chapter 6, Jesus takes on the subject in a clear and direct way. He starts out talking about the fact that we need to be careful that all things we do, giving to the needy, praying, fasting... needs to be done in the privacy of your own relationship with God. Why do you think Jesus was so concerned about that?

That doesn't mean we never pray together (or serve or fast together) but it does mean that these things are intended to be between you and God. So even your prayer as a group should remain focused on God. Don't pray to one another. Resist allowing your group prayer time to become a fix it session where everyone voices his or her opinion. Instead, take it to God.

Regarding prayer, it brings me to another important truth, "everyone can pray". I hear often, "I don't know how to pray". Or "I can't pray like you do." The question I have it this, do you know how to talk? Then have a talk with God. Prayer is a conversation. You speak to God and He will speak to you.

Prayer is not a show. It's not about the sound of your voice. It's not about the religious words you use. Prayer is about a conversation with a person whom you are in a love relationship with, God.

In Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus taught us how to pray. This is "how" not "what" you should pray Jesus said. And in it he gives a model for prayer. We call it the Lord's Prayer.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Our Father in heaven. | → | RELATIONSHIP: Jesus knew God as His Father |
| Hallowed be your name. | → | WORSHIP: Jesus honored the name of the God |
| Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. | → | LORDSHIP: Jesus desired God's will |
| Give us today our daily bread. | → | SONSHIP: Jesus recognized our dependence on God |
| Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. | → | FELLOWSHIP: Jesus knew we needed to be in relationship with God and people |
| And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. | → | LEADERSHIP: Jesus wanted God to direct our lives. |



4G

Text Messaging with God

Matthew 6:5-18

Growing in Grace:
How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:
How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Praying in Faith

Day #5

There is so much more to learn about prayer and we have just scratched the surface. But I want to conclude with this thought. Jesus, taught us to trust the Father and believe in His promises, because God is good all the time. We have been given a great privilege we call prayer. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 7 that we should ask, seek and knock, because God wants us to do so and He wants to answer us. If we don't ask, if we don't seek, if we don't knock on the door of heaven, how will it ever be opened to us and how will we find and receive the great gifts God has in-store for our lives. Check out Ephesians 3:20-21.

He went on to explain that God is good and He provides in ways that are far beyond our request. We simply have to love, trust, and come to Him.



4G

Text
Messaging
with God

Matthew 7:7-12

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

Is praying kind of new to you?

If having a regular prayer life is new to you let me give you a simplistic model for prayer which may help you get started. It is called the ACTS of prayer. By remembering this simple acronym when you pray it is my hope that you will eventually begin to pray in a much more comfortable and natural way. Remember God is not judging your words or your approach to prayer. He just wants you to come to Him uninhibited.

ACTS of Prayer

A – Adoration:

Begin by praising God for who He is and for the great things He has done.

C – Confession:

Come clean before the Lord admitting your sins and asking for His forgiveness.

T – Thanksgiving:

Acknowledge His forgiveness and thank God for His mercy and grace. Thank Him for all the amazing blessings He has poured out into your life.

S- Supplication

Also called intercession we come to God and express our needs and the needs of others knowing God is the only one who can really help.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Small Group #6: Praying in Faith

By now hopefully everyone knows our 4G memory verse, 2 Peter 3:18. What is that verse revealing to you?

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

The Weeks Focus Verse

John 14:13-14

¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

View and discuss video clip for session #6

1. Did you spend some time alone with God as assigned this week? How was that for you?
2. How is your prayer life? If you struggle with a regular prayer life why do you think that is?
3. How have you experienced God through your prayer life? How has God responded to your prayers?
4. Jesus seemed to say often, as He did in John 14, that we could ask for anything. Is that our ticket to use Jesus as a sort of Genie to supply our wants?
5. On day #1 of this study you read a quote from Avery Willis, "We need to hear God's voice so that we will know what to pray." What do you think of that comment?
6. What do you think Jesus means when He says "you may ask anything in my name, and I will do it?"
7. Read Romans 8:26-27. What does that verse teach you? How does that help you in your prayer life?
8. Jesus indicated in John 14:13-14 that our answered prayers bring glory to God. How can your prayer life glorify God?

Take some time praying together this week in the Word, the Will and the Name of Jesus Christ.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Notes:

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Living in the Word

Day #1

What is truth? Those are the words of Pilate as he interrogated Jesus before His death sentence was declared. But Jesus had already answered that question before. In John 14:6 Jesus says, "I am the Way and the Truth, and the Life."

John 8:31-32

To the Jews who had believed him Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Jesus teaches Truth and Jesus is Truth! Jesus is the very Living Word of God (John 1:1, 14). In John 15 Jesus spoke about remaining in Him and having His Word remain in us. When we live in the Word we are living in Jesus and Jesus is living in us.

But Jesus also makes it clear, it is not enough just to read the Word, we must obey it!

This week we are going to focus on important role the Word of God plays in your life.

Throughout this study I have asked you to read, sometimes memorize, and always meditate (or think about) on what the Word of God is saying. Avery Willis says, "Memorizing puts God's Word in your head. Meditating puts it in your heart." What do you think of that statement?

Why memorize scripture?

Why meditate on scripture?



4G

Text Messaging
with God

John 8:31-32

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Living in the Word

Day #2

When trying to discover a truth from God we should take the time to read slowly and repeatedly and meditate upon the Word of God until the Spirit of Christ puts a truth into your heart.

I have often fallen into the trap of reading for the sake of getting through a chapter or a book or even the whole Bible in a certain time frame and then a few years ago it occurred to me, what's the rush? The Word of God never changes; it is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I should slow down and take it in and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to me through His Word.

Now when I read the Word I choose to read for the message that God has for me that day. As soon as God speaks to me through His Word, I stop and meditate on it and begin to pray about it in response back to God. Also, I have found it very beneficial to read the Word of God with a highlighter and pen in hand. I think it is a good thing to write notes and highlight verses in your Bible when God speaks to you.

I also find it helpful to have a journal. It can be one designed for that purpose which you can purchase at a store or as simple as a spiral bound notebook. A bookmark can also be useful so you can quickly return to where you left off.

Henry Blackaby writes, "Understanding a spiritual truth does not lead you to an encounter with God, it is the encounter with God." When God speaks to you through His Word you have just had an encounter with God. Wow, think about that, God is speaking directly to you. Do you believe that

when the Bible touches you with a message, that God is speaking directly and personally to you?

How does knowing that God is speaking directly and personally to you when you read the Word change the way you approach Bible study?



4G

**Text Messaging
with God**

Hebrews 4:12

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Living in the Word

Day #3

Whenever you begin to read from the Word of God, first pause and simply ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what He wants you to hear that day. Then, by spending just a few focused minutes every day in the Word of God with a mind that is open to learn and a heart that is willing to change, God works His transforming power on your life. Romans 12:2 says we are to, “be transformed by the renewing of our mind.” Reading and responding to the Word of God is how our mind is renewed and our hearts are transformed. How has reading and responding to the Word everyday for the last few weeks impacted you?

Henry Blackaby says, “When the Spirit directs my attention to a truth, I write it down, meditate on it, and adjust my life to it. I alert myself to watch for ways God may be that way in my life during the day.”

What has God been saying to you the past few weeks? Have you adjusted your life accordingly? If so, then how? If not, why?

Paul reveals some important and basic truths about the Word of God in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Take a moment to read it and then write down five things you can discover from this scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



4G

Text Messaging with God

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Living in the Word

Day #4

Perhaps the most complete teaching on the Word of God comes from Psalm 119. At one hundred and seventy six verses, this is the longest chapter in the Bible. It deals very directly with the power and purpose of the Word of God.

Knowing it is a long chapter, today I am going to ask you to spend a little more time than usual in the Word. I encourage you to read through the entire chapter, but not straight through. Instead, along the way stop whenever God reveals something to you or whenever a word or a phrase stands out to you, write it down and meditate upon it. Turn your meditation back to prayer and response to God. Before you begin reading Psalm 119, take a moment to ask God to reveal what He wants you to know this day. *(I encourage you to use another journal for this)*



4G

Text Messaging
with God

Palms 119

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

Here are some verses that have captured my attention from Psalm 119.

- Verse 2: Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.
- Verses 9-10: How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.
- Verses 33-34: Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.
- Verse 81: My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.
- Verse 89: Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.
- Verse 103: How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- Verse 105: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
- Verse 133: Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.
- Verse 138: The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy.
- Verse 140: Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.
- Verses 143 -144: Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my delight. Your statutes are forever right; give me understanding that I may live.
- Verse 156: Your compassion is great, O LORD; preserve my life according to your laws.
- Verse 159-160: See how I love your precepts; preserve my life, O LORD, according to your love. All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.
- Verses 173-175: May your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen your precepts. I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight. Let me live that I may praise you, and may your laws sustain me.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Living in the Word

Day #5

As we read in Psalm 119 God's Word is what we need most to fight against sin and to be led by the Spirit. Without the Word of God we are defenseless. Ephesians 6 tells us to put on the full armor of God so that we can take our stand against the Devils schemes and all the forces of evil. We are to put on the belt of truth and breastplate of righteousness and we fit our feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. We take up our shield of faith and put on our helmet of salvation, and we carry the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. When we are prepared with these things which all come from the Word of God, then we are ready to stand our ground against every attack. Are you prepared for battle?

You may feel like your life is too busy for time with God in His Word but let me tell you something, we never know when the attacks of the enemy are going to come. Wouldn't it be wise, like a soldier to get in shape and get training now before the battle rages?

Jesus knew this very well and when He went to war against Satan in the desert He had all the weapons He needed. As Paul says in Romans 8, "if God is for us, who can be against us?"

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and

every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."



4G

**Text Messaging
with God**

Matthew 4:1-11

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

It is my hope that you will cherish living the Word of God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Small Group #7: Living in the Word

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

View and discuss video clip for session #7

1. What has God been saying to you this week? What has He been saying during this study?
2. How does knowing that God is speaking directly and personally to you when you read the Word change the way you approach Bible study?
3. Read 2 Peter 1:16-21 and discuss what message you get about God's Word from this text.
4. How do you feel about memorizing scripture? How does it prepare you for what is to come?
5. On day five we read about being prepared for the battle. Are you prepared for battle? If you are not how are you going to begin training and putting on the armor of God?
6. Share what you read and wrote about regarding your reading from Psalm 119.

Thoughts to consider about the Bible:

- Forty different authors writing over a period of 1,600 years penned the 66 books of the Bible. Four hundred silent years separated the 39 books of the Old Testament from the 27 of the New Testament. Yet, from Genesis to Revelation, they tell one unfolding story and together they give consistent answers to the most important questions we can ask.
- Just as the modern state of Israel was emerging from thousands of years of dispersion, a Bedouin shepherd discovered one of the most important archeological treasures of our time. In a cave of the northwest rim of the Dead Sea, a broken jar yielded documents that had been hidden for two millennia. Additional finds produced manuscripts that predated previous oldest copies by 1,000 years. It revealed a document that is essentially the same as those we already possessed. It discredited the claims of those who believed that the original Bible had been lost to time and tampering.
- Down through the ages, many have doubted the historical and geographical accuracy of the Bible. Yet modern archeologists have repeatedly unearthed evidence of the people, places, and cultures described in the Scriptures. Time after time, the descriptions in the biblical record have been shown to be more reliable than the speculations of scholars.
- The books of Moses were written 500 years before the earliest Hindu Scriptures. Moses wrote Genesis 2,000 years before Muhammad penned the Koran. During that long history, no other book has been as loved or as hated as the Bible. No other book has been so consistently bought, studied, and quoted as this book. While millions of other titles come and go, the Bible is still the book by which all other books are measured. While often ignored by those who are uncomfortable with its teachings, it is still the central book of Western civilization.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Notes:

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Gifts of the Spirit

Day #1

Every believer in Christ has been given Spiritual Gifts. A Spiritual Gift is a gift from God designed to be used as part of the body of Christ and for the purpose of assisting others. These gifts reside in a person from the time he/she accepts Christ. They are intended to be the main avenue by which a person ministers to others.

It is extremely important to our personal Spiritual lives as well as the life of the Church as a whole, that each and every one of us discover and utilize our Spiritual Gifts within the Church. In essence, your Spiritual Gift is “who you are” in the Church. It is literally what part Jesus made you to be in His body.

1 Peter 4:10-11

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

The Church was never meant to be made up of spectators. God never designed you to be the audience. Your purpose in life as a believer is for the greater good of God’s people and for the advance of God’s Kingdom. You were meant to love others as you love yourself. Love is a verb!

This week I hope you will discover or be re-motivated in the use of your Spiritual Gifts all to the glory of God.



4G

**Text
Messaging
with God**

1 Peter 4:10-11

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I’m going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Gifts of the Spirit

Day #2

The Apostle Paul identifies seven gifts in Romans 12.

Read the passage and find those seven gifts. What else does Paul say about the use of these gifts in Romans 12?

What are some attitude words you pick up in Romans 12 regarding use of gifts?



4G

Text Messaging
with God

Romans 12:1-8

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

Questions to consider about these seven Spiritual Gifts.

*A great help to me for the thoughts that follow was a book called *Ministering through Spiritual Gifts* by Charles Stanley.*

1. Prophecy (Speaking Truth from God)

Do you find that you cannot remain silent and uninvolved when you hear lies of Satan or are faced with evil? Do you clearly understand what God says is good and evil? Would you describe yourself as; bold, persuasive, black and white, desiring change, dependent upon scripture, loyal to God, broken, quick in judgment and speech? Maybe Prophecy is your gift.

- Prophecy goes head-to-head in confrontation of evil and false beliefs.
- Often reveals the character and false motives of others.
- Requires honesty about self and own error.
- Prophecy speaks in defense of the Church, God's people, and God's nature.
- Prophecy functions without concern of personal consequences

2. Serving (Ministering to Others Needs)

Are you motivated to meet practical needs of service to others? Do you enjoy doing things with your hands for others? Are you alert to needs, hospitable, generous, joyful, flexible, available, diligent? Maybe your gift is Serving?

- A person with the gift of serving is alert to the practical needs.
- Finds joy in serving to free up another person to do what they have been called to do.
- Tends to ignore his/her own needs to meet others needs.
- Needs to be confirmed about the value and benefit of their service to others.
- Desires to be with people.
- Feels they must respond to needs.
- Often feels unqualified and inadequate for ministry.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

3. Teaching (Imparting Instructions)

Are you concerned that the Word of God be taught accurately? Are you concerned that Truth be passed along? Do you desire to see lives changed by the Truth? You may be a person with the gift of Teaching.

- Show great concern for accuracy and facts.
- Delights in researching and reporting what you discover in the Word of God
- Has an interest in knowing as much as possible on a subject.
- Is a good communicator, open to various ways of presenting information.
- Open to Spiritual leading of God

4. Exhortation (Encourage and Counsel)

Are you vitally concerned about correcting error? Do you care deeply about people and hope to help them avoid making mistakes? Do you want to help lead those who have made mistakes to repentance? Maybe your gift is exhortation?

- The person with this gift desires to see others mature in their faith.
- Desires to see others discover Spiritual Truth.
- Quick to ask questions about another person's general welfare.
- Always points others to Christ for help.
- Can give precise instruction about how another might grow in his/her relationship with Jesus.
- Is concerned with the application of God's Word.
- Wants to be with people and see firsthand how they are growing in their faith.

5. Giving (Sharing)

Do you respond immediately to the presence of a need? Do you find yourself saying, "How can I help?" or "What can I do?" You may be a person with the gift of Giving.

- Usually has the ability to make wise investments in order to give more money.
- A desire to give quietly so as not to call attention to self.
- Does not respond to great pressure to give.
- Usually eager to motivate others to give.

- Can see financial and material needs that others might overlook.
- Rejoices when giving is an answer to someone else's prayer.
- Takes joy in being part of the ministry for whom they have given support.

6. Leading (To Preside Over and Protect)

Are you uncomfortable when no one steps up to lead? Are you frustrated with disorder and lack of organization? Do you like to see progress? Maybe you have the gift of leadership?

- This person can see the big picture
- Has the gift of organization and can break down large task into small chunks.
- This person is a self starter.
- Is aware of all the resources needed to accomplish the goal.
- Is very positive that God given goals can be accomplished.
- Knows how to delegate.
- Has little tolerance for all the details.
- Can receive criticism without crumbling.
- Has a need to know that those working with Him are committed to the task.
- Tends to move into leadership roles naturally whenever a leader is not present.
- Wants to see the goals reached and delights in seeing accomplishments.

7. Mercy (Help Those in Need)

Do you have a heart for people? Are you concerned with finding ways to show kindness? Do you desire to see love expressed to one another? Maybe your gift is Mercy?

- Those with the gift of Mercy feel either the joy or the distress of another person.
- They identify with others and what they are going through.
- They desire to see the hurts of others end.
- Are sensitive to words and actions that hurt others.
- Desire friendship.
- Is reluctant to speak against another person regardless of what has been done.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Gifts of the Spirit

Day #3

A number of years ago I was on a mission trip in Italy (I know what you are thinking, Italy isn't a mission trip). But really, we were doing a concert tour of the country and helping give a platform for the gospel to be shared. Needless to say, we took the time to do a little site seeing and I enjoyed the trip immensely. The history, the art and architecture is amazing. One thing specifically caught my eye and gave me a whole new appreciation for how God works in our lives.

We were at the Vatican in St. Peter's Basilica, which contains many pieces of artwork. Common are the Mosaic masterpieces of art. These are paintings made up of small chips of various colors and shapes. When you look at them from the correct location they are beautiful. But as I was looking at one very close, I noticed that the individual chips seem to be rather plain if not just ugly. It reminded me of Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) where it says, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." Did you hear that, we are the artwork of the Master, our God.

It got me thinking, many things happen in life, some good, some bad, some seemingly insignificant. But God is working in all of those things so that even the parts I wish I could forget end up becoming part of the Masterpiece He is creating in me.

So as you begin to search for how God has made you and the Spiritual Gifts He has placed upon you think about this thought from Rick Warren, "Instead of trying to reshape yourself to be like someone else,

you should celebrate the shape God has given you." You are not only a masterpiece shaped by God's own hand. You are a unique work of divine art. Think about that for a minute or two.

Or as Max Lucado puts it, "Da Vinci painted only one Mona Lisa, Beethoven created only one Fifth Symphony, and God made only one version of you." He goes on to ask, "Can you be anything you want to be? I don't think so. But can you be everything God wants you to be? I do think so. And you can become that by discovering your uniqueness." You have a contribution to the Kingdom of God that only you can give. Are you willing to use your gifts for God's glory?



4G

**Text Messaging
with God**

Philippians 1:3-11

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Gifts of the Spirit

Day #4

We have already looked at Romans 12 earlier this week. So now let's move on to the next major passage in 1 Corinthians 12 to continue seeking what God's Word has to say about Spiritual Gifts.

In this passage Paul makes it clear that no matter what the gift is, there is only one Lord and one Spirit and He gives all gifts and works through them all. And they are to be used for the common good of the body.

In this passage you find a number of new gifts as well as some already addressed. A simple description is listed later on in this study of those gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12.

Those Spiritual Gifts from 1 Corinthians 12 are; Administration, Apostle, Discernment, Faith, Healing, Helps, Knowledge, Miracles, Prophecy, Teaching, Tongues, Tongues Interpretation, and Wisdom.



4G

**Text Messaging
with God**

1 Corinthians 12

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

One other place we find teaching on the gifts God bestows and call us to use is found in Ephesians chapter 4:11-13.

Paul is clear that in this passage he is referring to gifts that are for the purpose of preparing God people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up and reach unity in faith and knowledge, becoming mature and attaining the full measure of Christ.

Spiritual Gifts from Ephesians 4:11

- **Apostle:** God given ability to strengthen the body of Christ and launch and lead Churches.
- **Evangelism:** God given ability to share the love of Christ in ways that draws people to respond and accept Jesus as Savior.
- **Pastor:** God given ability to Shepherd the flock and take on the Spiritual responsibilities for a group of believers.
- **Prophecy:** God given ability to bring the message of God to comfort, encourage, guide, warn, and reveal sin.
- **Teaching:** The God given ability to teach sound doctrine in relevant ways so that people gain spiritual education.

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Gifts of the Spirit

Day #5

Continuing on in 1 Corinthians, Paul teaches us how to use our Spiritual Gifts in the most excellent way, which is in love. We are to serve in love. It is the only way that God is glorified through our acts of service. Read 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:3. Also go back and continue to read in Romans 12, this time verses 9-16. What is God teaching us in these passages about the use of Spiritual Gifts?

Have you thought about how love fits into the use of your Spiritual Gifts?

How do you serve in love? How do you teach in love? How do you give in love? How do you depart wisdom in love? These are the questions we must ask ourselves. As you begin to discover your Spiritual Gifts ask God to reveal to you how He wants you to use your gifts in love.



4G

**Text Messaging
with God**

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

Growing in Grace:

How God has spoken to me?

Glorifying God:

How I'm going to respond?

Note: You may wish to continue reading on in 1 Corinthians to chapter 14 as Paul continues his teaching on the gifts of prophecy and tongues.

There are many things to learn about Spiritual Gifts and may I recommend a couple good books on the subject. One being the previously mentioned, *Ministering through Spiritual Gifts* by Charles Stanley and another being *S.H.A.P.E.* by Erik Rees. In his book Erik identifies how we find our SHAPE through examining and understanding our: **S**piritual Gifts, **H**earth, **A**bilities, **P**ersonalities, and **E**xperiences. Either of these books or a host of others could prove to be beneficial.

On the pages following the small group study you will find a manual Spiritual Gift Test. There are also numerous free online Spiritual Gift tests listed below you may choose to use as well. Once you take the test, ask God how He wants you to use your Spiritual Gifts within His Church.

Online Spiritual Gift Tests:

- <http://mintools.com/gifts-list.htm>
- <http://www.kodachrome.org/spiritgift/>
- <http://www.churchgrowth.org/cgi-cg/gifts.cgi?intro=1>
- <http://www.christianet.com/bible/spiritualgiftstest.htm>

4G – Spiritual Formation

Growing in Grace; Glorifying God

Small Group #8: Spiritual Gifts

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

View and discuss video clip for session #8

1. What did you discover this week about your Spiritual Gifts?
2. Going back to the gifts listed in day #2, which of those gifts did Jesus demonstrate in His earthly ministry?
3. What does that tell you about Spiritual Gifts?
4. What attitude should we have in the use of our gifts?
5. How does love fit into the use of Spiritual Gifts?
6. What did God reveal to you in His Word this week?
7. What Spiritual Gift do you think God has given to you?
8. If you have already taken the Spiritual Growth Evaluation in this book, or one online, share with the group what you discovered.
9. How does God want you to use your gift?
10. What fears do you have about using your gifts?
11. What reservations do you have about using your gifts?
12. Now that you have reached the end of 4G, what would you like to see happen within your small group going forward?
13. Share with the group how they have been an encouragement and help to you during your gatherings together.

Before you depart today, pray for one another as you continue on your journey of Growing in Grace and Glorifying God with your life.

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Spiritual Gifts Evaluation

All Christians have been given at least one spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit. Many Christians have several spiritual gifts, with typically one dominant gift; this group of gifts is called a gift cluster. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to unify Christians in their faith, build each other up, and to produce growth within the church, both numerical and spiritual. Spiritual gifts are to be used out of love for God and for others, and in service for God and to others.

Administration: the gift that enables a believer to formulate, direct, and carry out plans necessary to fulfill a purpose. Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:28, Acts 14:23

Discernment: the Holy Spirit given ability to distinguish whether someone or something is of God or not of God. Biblical References: John 16:6-15, Romans 9:1, I Corinthians 2:9-16, 12:10

Exhortation: The Holy Spirit produced ability to challenge, strengthen, encourage, and comfort believers. Biblical References: John 14:1, II Timothy 1:16-18, III John 5-8

Faith: the Holy Spirit given ability to trust God where others will not, and to see something that God wants done and sustain unwavering confidence that God will do it regardless of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Biblical References: Genesis 12:1-4a, Mark 5:25-34, I Thessalonians 1:8-10

Giving: the gift that enables a believer to recognize God's blessings and to respond to those blessings by generously and sacrificially giving of one's resources (time, talent, and treasure). Biblical References: Luke 21:1-4, Romans 12:8, II Corinthians 9:6-15

Knowledge: the gift that drives a person to learn, analyze and uncover new insights with regard to the Bible and faith. Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:8; I Corinthians 14:6, Romans 12:2

Leadership: the gift that gives a believer the confidence to step forward, give direction and provide motivation to fulfill a dream or complete a task. Biblical References: Romans 12:8, John 21:15-17, II Timothy 4:1-5

Mercy: the Holy Spirit given ability to see those who are in misery, have pity on them, and promptly & cheerfully seek to relieve them of their need. Biblical References: Matthew 25:34-36, Luke 7:12-15, 10:30-37; Romans 12:8

Prophecy: an ability given by God's Holy Spirit to proclaim God's truth publicly and to apply it practically, with a view to correction and edification. Biblical References: Romans 12:6, I Corinthians 12:10, 14:1,3

Service/ Helps: the gift that enables a believer to work gladly behind the scenes in order that God's work is fulfilled. Biblical References: Luke 23:50-54, Romans 12:7, 16:1-16, Philippians 2:19-23

Teaching: the Holy Spirit produced ability to effectively explain God's word and apply it. Biblical References: Matthew 5:1-12, Acts 18:24-48, Romans 12:7, I Corinthians 12:28

Wisdom: skilled in the application of Biblical truth; is able to take God's Word and apply it to everyday situations. Biblical References: I Corinthians 2:6-13, James 3:13-18, II Chronicles 1:7-11

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS EVALUATION

There are a total of 99 questions below, with 9 questions for each Spiritual Gift from the previous page. Answer each question with a “yes” or “no” answer. Then on the Gifts Profile Sheet at the bottom of this file, place a check next to the corresponding question number for all the “yes” answers. If you have 6-7 or more spaces of a specific gift checked, then chances are that you have that particular spiritual gift. The greater number of spaces that are checked in any of the gift lists, the greater the chance you possess that particular gift.

- Use the List of Spiritual Gifts for further reference
- Pause before you begin this test. Ask God to guide you and give you wisdom to help discern your gifts.

YES NO

1. Would you describe yourself as an effective public speaker?
2. Do you find it relatively easy and enjoyable to spend time in intense study & research of the Bible?
3. Do you enjoy sharing the personal and emotional problems of people?
4. Do you find yourself more concerned with how to apply God’s Word than in trying to understand it?
5. Have you sensed that God has given you special ability to learn & acquire knowledge of His Word?
6. Do you enjoy motivating others to various tasks and ministries?
7. Would other people describe you as a person who makes decisions easily?
8. When you hear of someone who needs help, do you immediately offer your services if it is possible?
9. Would you rather give money to help than perform some manual task?
10. Do you enjoy visiting people who are sick or disabled?
11. Do you find that you have the ability to believe things that other believers cannot seem to accept or see?
12. Have other believers told you that you seem to always know whether something is right or wrong?
13. When situations are not right, do you feel a burden to speak up about them in order to correct?
14. Do you love to prove and answer issues and questions?
15. Have you found that people often seek you out to have your advice about their personal problems?
16. Do you find that you often know immediately what to do in a situation where others are not clear about?
17. Do you find that people will often come to you with difficult problems and questions from the Bible?
18. Do you find yourself setting goals and objectives for yourself and for your ministry?
19. Do you usually have a great deal of joy in doing things that need to be done, no matter how small?
20. When you hear of someone in need, do you immediately think of sending them some money?
21. When you hear of someone in the hospital, does it challenge you to bring them encouragement?
22. When people say that something cannot be done or is impossible, do you still believe it and trust God?
23. Do you seem to have an understanding of people and their motivations that proves to be correct?
24. Do you have a tendency to speak up when issues are being dealt with in a group?
25. When you hear a question or problem, are you anxious to both find and give an answer?
26. Would you rather talk with someone about their problems rather than send them to someone else?
27. Do people often seek your advice in difficult situations as to what you would do to handle it?
28. In your study of God’s Word have you observed that new insights and understanding comes easy?
29. When someone is not doing a job well, do you feel concerned to help the person become more effective?
30. Do you see yourself more in a supportive ministry to others than in being in a leadership position?
31. Do you find yourself looking for opportunities to give your money without hearing any appeals?
32. Do you find it easy to express joy in the presence of those who are suffering physically?
33. Do you love to entertain people in your home regardless of how well you know them?
34. Do you find that you usually feel opposed to anyone who expresses that something cannot be done?
35. Do you sense often that what is being said is produced by the devil rather than by God, and are right?
36. Do people feel conviction about wrong practices or doctrinal error when you share what the Bible says?
37. Have people often said that to you that you have an ability to explain difficult problems to them?

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- ___ ___ 38. Do you get much joy out of encouraging people who are going through personal problems and trials?
- ___ ___ 39. Do you find that people usually ask what you think about a situation, thinking you know what to do?
- ___ ___ 40. Have you noticed that you have the ability to understand difficult teachings of God's Word?
- ___ ___ 41. Would you rather show someone else how to do a task than do it yourself?
- ___ ___ 42. Do you find yourself responding immediately to financial needs by giving your money?
- ___ ___ 43. Is it easy for you to talk with those who are suffering physically get a response on their part?
- ___ ___ 44. Have you discovered that you do not have to wait for clear direction before you make a decision?
- ___ ___ 45. Do you find that you often evaluate people and the things they say as to whether it is right or wrong?
- ___ ___ 46. When you speak God's Word do you usually think of how this is going to challenge & motivate people?
- ___ ___ 47. Have people expressed to you how much they appreciate the way you explain things from the Bible?
- ___ ___ 48. Do you find it easy to deal with people who are depressed or discouraged and have joy doing it?
- ___ ___ 49. Do other believers refer to decisions you have made or advice you have given as being best or right?
- ___ ___ 50. Do you seem to understand things about God's Word that others believers don't?
- ___ ___ 51. Do you have a special concern to train and disciple other believers to become leaders?
- ___ ___ 52. Do you believe that you would help almost anyone who had a need, if possible to do so?
- ___ ___ 53. Do you sense a great deal of joy in giving, regardless of the response of the person you are giving to?
- ___ ___ 54. Do you often think of ways to minister and help those who are suffering physically?
- ___ ___ 55. Do you feel that you are able to trust God in difficult circumstances without hesitation or indecision?
- ___ ___ 56. Do you feel a great responsibility toward God whenever you sense that something is not right that other believers do not seem to understand?
- ___ ___ 57. Have others shared with you that you have the ability to communicate God's Word effectively?
- ___ ___ 58. Do people come to you often, seeking your answers to specific questions or problems from the Bible?
- ___ ___ 59. Do you sense a great deal of love and compassion for people having personal & emotional problems?
- ___ ___ 60. When you give your advice to someone, do you seem to emphasize more in the area of "how" it should be done rather than the "why" it should be done?
- ___ ___ 61. Have others pointed out that you have an ability to know and understand the things of God's Word?
- ___ ___ 62. When you give your money, do you usually desire to avoid letting others know?
- ___ ___ 63. Would you enjoy a regular ministry to those who are suffering physically?
- ___ ___ 64. Do you look at having people into your home as an exciting ministry more so than as a responsibility?
- ___ ___ 65. Have other believers often shared that you seem to have the ability to trust God in difficult times?
- ___ ___ 66. Have people often asked your opinion of someone or of something that has been said as to whether you thought it was right or wrong?
- ___ ___ 67. Do you believe that you are gifted in communicating to others?
- ___ ___ 68. Would you rather explain the meaning rather than simply share a verse by quoting it to someone?
- ___ ___ 69. Do you usually desire to hear others share their personal problems rather than being able to share yours with someone else?
- ___ ___ 70. Do other believers seem to follow your advice in difficult situations?
- ___ ___ 71. Have you found in studying God's Word that you seem to know what a passage is saying before other believers discover it, even though you are studying it at the same time?
- ___ ___ 72. Do you usually take the leadership in a group where none exists?
- ___ ___ 73. Would you rather do a particular job than spend time talking with other people about their needs?
- ___ ___ 74. When you give someone money, do you find that you do not expect any appreciation in return?
- ___ ___ 75. Do you feel a great deal of compassion upon those who are suffering physically and want to help?
- ___ ___ 76. Do you feel a burden to encourage people to trust God when you see them defeated and discouraged?
- ___ ___ 77. Have you felt a responsibility to protect the God's Truth by exposing that which is wrong and sinful?
- ___ ___ 78. Would you prefer to speak God's Word without much explanation rather than taking the time to explain every detail?
- ___ ___ 79. Do you usually organize your thoughts in a systematic way?
- ___ ___ 80. When you hear of some believer who has sinned or fallen away, are you anxious to go to them immediately and try to help them?

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- ___ ___ 81. Have the decisions and advice you have given in difficult situations proven to be the right thing to do?
- ___ ___ 82. Do you have a great desire to share with other believers what the meaning of a difficult verse is?
- ___ ___ 83. Do you sense a great deal of joy in a leadership position, rather than frustration and difficulty?
- ___ ___ 84. Do you find that you enjoy doing things that need to be done without being asked to do them?
- ___ ___ 85. Do you find yourself looking for opportunities to help other people?
- ___ ___ 86. Do you see the matter of giving as a tremendous spiritual ministry and one God has given to you?
- ___ ___ 87. Do you find that when visiting those who are suffering physically that it brings you joy rather than depressing you?
- ___ ___ 88. Have you seen God do mighty things in your life that other believers said could not be done, but which you believed He would do?
- ___ ___ 89. Do you feel that you are helping other believers when you discern that something is wrong, and have they readily accepted your evaluation?
- ___ ___ 90. When an opportunity is given to you to speak to other believers do you find that you would rather share verses than to share your personal experiences?
- ___ ___ 91. Have others told you often that you should have a regular teaching ministry and you feel the same?
- ___ ___ 92. Do you enjoy a person to person ministry more than ministering to a group?
- ___ ___ 93. Have you sensed a special ability in your life to know what to do when dealing with difficult problems?
- ___ ___ 94. When you see other believers confused and lacking in understanding about some difficult teaching of the Bible, have you sensed a responsibility to speak to them about what it means?
- ___ ___ 95. Do you enjoy being the final voice or the one with the overall responsibility for the direction and success of a group or organization?
- ___ ___ 96. Are you really excited when someone asks you to help financially in some worthwhile project, seeing this as a great honor and privilege?
- ___ ___ 97. Are you willing and eager to spend time, money, and resources in order to help those who are suffering?
- ___ ___ 98. Have you discovered an effective prayer ministry in your life with many wonderful answers to prayer that from a human point of view seem impossible or unlikely?
- ___ ___ 99. Have you often made an evaluation of someone or something that was said that others did not see, but yet proved to be correct?

Spiritual Gifts Profile Sheet

Transfer your scores for each question into the following table, then, compute the sum of each row. This provides your score for each spiritual gift:

Prophecy # 1	___	# 13	___	# 24	___	# 36	___	# 46	___	# 57	___	# 67	___	# 78	___	# 90	___	Total	___
Teaching # 2	___	# 14	___	# 25	___	# 37	___	# 47	___	# 58	___	# 68	___	# 79	___	# 91	___	Total	___
Exhortation # 3	___	# 15	___	# 26	___	# 38	___	# 48	___	# 59	___	# 69	___	# 80	___	# 92	___	Total	___
Wisdom # 4	___	# 16	___	# 27	___	# 39	___	# 49	___	# 60	___	# 70	___	# 81	___	# 93	___	Total	___
Knowledge # 5	___	# 17	___	# 28	___	# 40	___	# 50	___	# 61	___	# 71	___	# 82	___	# 94	___	Total	___
Leadership # 6	___	# 7	___	# 18	___	# 29	___	# 41	___	# 51	___	# 72	___	# 83	___	# 95	___	Total	___
Helps # 8	___	# 19	___	# 30	___	# 33	___	# 52	___	# 64	___	# 73	___	# 84	___	# 85	___	Total	___
Giving # 9	___	# 20	___	# 31	___	# 42	___	# 53	___	# 62	___	# 74	___	# 86	___	# 96	___	Total	___
Mercy # 10	___	# 21	___	# 32	___	# 43	___	# 54	___	# 63	___	# 75	___	# 87	___	# 97	___	Total	___
Faith # 11	___	# 22	___	# 34	___	# 44	___	# 55	___	# 65	___	# 76	___	# 88	___	# 98	___	Total	___
Discernment # 12	___	# 23	___	# 35	___	# 45	___	# 56	___	# 66	___	# 77	___	# 89	___	# 99	___	Total	___

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Notes:

Well, we have come to the end of **4G** Spiritual Formation.

Thank you for taking part in this journey.

I hope and pray it has been a worthwhile study for you and that you have been blessed being a part of a small group.

I hope and pray you will continue.

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the day approaching.

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Numbers 6:23-25



4G Spiritual Formation

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Inspired by God's Word

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