

CONNECT IN MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD & OTHERS

Our hope for you is that you learn about and integrate some new practices into your life that will help you grow in your relationship with God.

The purpose of this step is to help you grow into a disciple (disciplined follower) of Jesus Christ. In this step, we will look at 4 practices of Jesus followers that will help you to grow in your faith.

A DISCIPLE IS:

- Someone who lives a disciplined life
- Someone who follows Christ daily

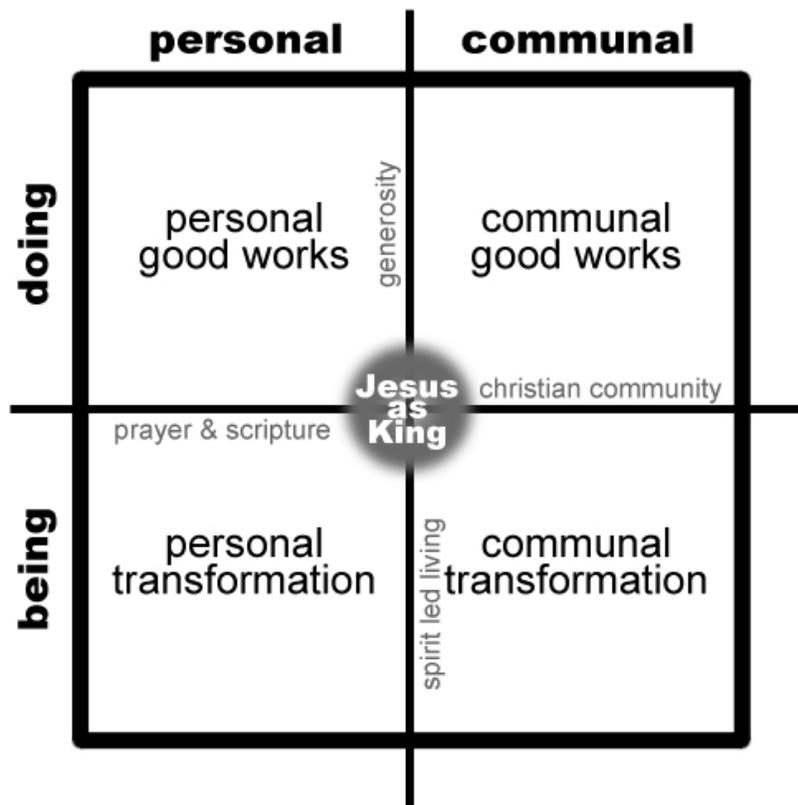
Luke 9:23

Then Jesus said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me daily."

Discipleship Journey Map

Use this tool as often as you feel necessary. Our hope is that it is helpful for you to identify how to move forward in your spiritual growth. Here is how to use it:

- Point out where you are at on the Discipleship Journey Map
- Make that point into an arrow pointing towards the center of Jesus as King.
- Look to see the opposite quadrant that your arrow is pointing towards.
- Identify some practices you might be able to live into that quadrant.



Personal Good Works

Be the change you want to see in the world

Ephesians 2:10

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.

Potential Pitfall - Works based spirituality, Check-List based Religion vs Spiritual Cooperation.

Personal Transformation

Become the best version of yourself

Romans 12:2

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Potential Pitfall - Individualism, Lone Ranger Christian, Consumer Christianity, Self-help Christianity

Communal Good Works

We can do more good together than apart, being the church involves teamwork.

Matthew 5:15-16

*You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let **your** good deeds shine out for all to see, **so that everyone** will praise your heavenly Father.*

Potential Pitfall - Corporate or Competitive Christianity, viewing everything and everyone as a project vs a person.

Communal Transformation

We become better together

1 Peter 2:5

And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ, you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God.

Potential Pitfall - Christian only life, the holy huddle, becomes all about creating, participating in and maintaining programs for other Christians.

4 Practices of Spiritual Growth

Practice 1 - Prayer & Reading Scripture - Spending personal time with God

Practice 2 - Christian Community - Gathering and worshiping together

Practice 3 - Spirit Led Living - Living a our life for God

Practice 4 - Generosity - Giving of our time, talent and treasure

We realize that in the beginning it may become difficult for you to integrate these new practices into your life, it may seem overwhelming. Especially if you don't currently practice them often, but don't give up! Experts say that it takes anywhere from 25-40 days to turn a new practice into a habit. We believe that the effort you put into developing your relationship with Christ is the most fulfilling investment you can make.

SOME SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER:

1 Timothy 4:7-9

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.

Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

PRACTICE 1:

READING SCRIPTURE & PRAYER

READING SCRIPTURE: HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF THE SCRIPTURES

How to read & apply Scripture: **SOAP Method**

S – Scripture, take some time to get into the Word.

O – Observe, pick a specific verse or theme to focus on.

A – Application, figure out how that specific verse or theme applies to your life that day.

P – Prayer, take some time to seek God through meaningful conversation.

PRAYER: HOW TO DEVELOP A CONVERSATION WITH GOD

The purpose of a daily prayer time:

- To express devotion to God.

2 Chronicles 31:21

Hezekiah was successful, because everything he did.... He did in a spirit of complete devotion to his God.

- To gain direction from God.

Psalms 25:4

Show me the path where I should go, O Lord; point out the right road for me to walk. Lead me...

- To express delight in God.

Psalms 37:4

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

- To become more like God.

2 Peter 1:4

Jesus has the power of God, by which he has given us everything we need to live and to serve God. We have these things because we know Him... With these gifts you can share in being like God.

How to begin a daily prayer time:

Select a specific place and time. Schedule a meeting..

Mark 1:35

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

Follow a simple plan: How to spend fifteen minutes with God:

- Read a verse (4 minutes)
- Reflect on the verse (4 minutes)
- Record what God desires of you (3 minutes)
- Request from God (4 minutes)

When to pray:

- When you need God's presence
Jeremiah 29:13
When you seek me you will find me when you seek me with all of your heart.
- Whenever & wherever
1 Thessalonians 5:17
Pray Continually
- When you are worried
Philippians 4:6
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
- When you need healing
James 5:16
Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Use the model Jesus gave us:

Matthew 6:9-15 *"This then is HOW you should pray..."*

- Praise: I begin expressing praise to God
"Our Father in heaven, holy is your name....."
- Purpose: I commit myself to doing God's purposes
"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven..."
- Provision: I ask God to provide for my daily needs.
"Give us this day our daily bread..."
- Pardon: I ask God to forgive my sins
"Forgive us our debts..."
- People: I pray for other people
"...as we have also forgiven our debtors."
- Protection: I ask for spiritual protection
"And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."

PRACTICE 2:

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY - GATHERING & WORSHIPING TOGETHER.

Hebrews 10:25

...not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

How can a church grow large yet people maintain close relationships?
Here is how the early church did it...

Acts 5:42

They met day after day, in the Temple courts and from house to house.

Acts 20:20

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

We believe that as our church grows larger it also needs to grow smaller. Find 6-10 people here at Society Church that you are connected to and church will always feel small and personal enough! Here are some avenues to help you find those people.

COMMUNITY GROUPS & SOCIETY CONNECT are the methods we currently use to stay SMALL even as we grow LARGER.

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

COMMUNITY GROUPS & SOCIETY CONNECT provide opportunities for:

Learning God's word "*They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching...*"

Authentic and meaningful relationships "*... and to the fellowship... they ate together with glad and sincere hearts...*"

Greater reverence for God "*Everyone was filled with awe...*"

Praying together "*... and to prayer...*"

Caring for others needs "*... they gave to anyone as he had need...*"

City Impact "*... the Lord added to their number daily..*"

HOW COMMUNITY GROUPS WORK

- **Open Groups** - Our groups start in the Fall every year and run for about 9 months. These groups are open so that people can sign up at any time.
- **Becoming a leader** - We believe that everyone has areas of strength and gifting that could benefit others. The first step in becoming a Community Group leader is to attend a Community Group Leader Orientation. These orientations are offered throughout the year to give you an overview of what it takes to start your group. You'll discover that it's easier than you think.

SOME SCRIPTURE TO CONSIDER:

John 13:34-35 *"I am giving a new commandment to you now- love each other just as much as I love you. Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples."*

PRACTICE 3:

LIVING A SPIRIT LED LIFE - LIVING OUR LIFE FOR GOD

Acts 1:4-5, 8

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.....but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit?

Spiritual Empowerment

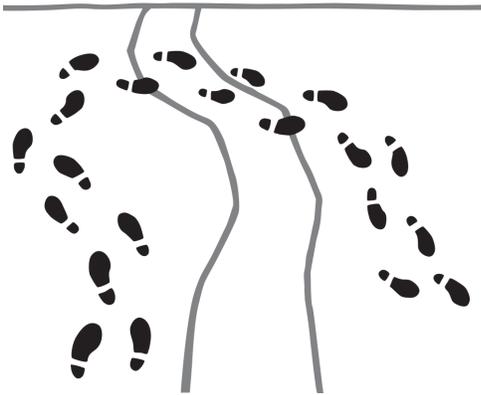
Acts 1:8- *“....you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...”*

Matthew 28:18- *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...”*

Personal Transformation

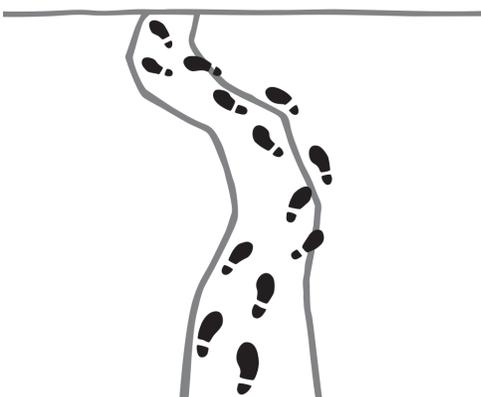
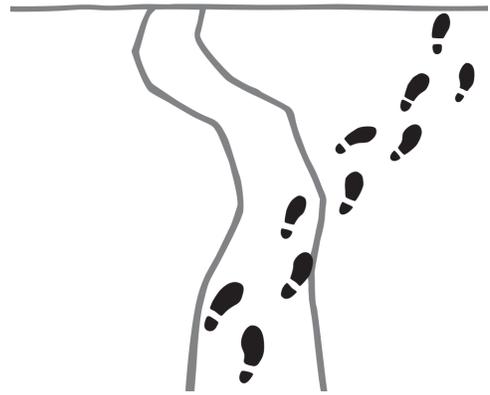
Galatians 5:22-26- *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”*

How do I live a spirit led life?



Not interested in God or what God might be doing in your life where interests are directed by self, often resulting in discord and frustration

Attempting to live the Christian life on your own strength where interests are still directed by yourself and will still lead to discord and frustration



Living a life where your interests are directed by the Spirit which will lead to harmony with God's plan

PRACTICE 4:

GENEROSITY

Giving is not easy, life gets busy, our schedules get filled and our pocket books get emptied faster than we like. Living our lives as followers of Jesus means not only believing in him but also allowing him to be Lord of our lives. This habit of giving of our time, talent and treasure is how we live with Jesus as Lord of our life.

2 Corinthians 8:7

Just as you excel in everything else.... In faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness... see that you also excel in the grace of giving.

THREE AREAS OF GENEROSITY:

- Giving of your Time
- Giving of your Talents
- Giving of your Treasures

Giving of your time:

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

How do I give of my time?

- By participating in opportunities for learning & spiritual growth with personal times of devotion and prayer, taking part in our Sunday Service, joining a community group and going to Society Connect
- By participating in opportunities for serving God and others by helping with community service events and projects or joining one of our serve teams.

Giving of my Talents:

1 Corinthians 12:7

Spiritual Gifts are given to each of us so we can help each other.

How do I give of my Talents?

Learn what they are

- Strengths Finder
- Spiritual Gifts Assessment

Use the gifts you have

Romans 12:6-8

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Giving my Treasure:

Matthew 6:21

Where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

How do I grow in giving of my treasure?

Give with joy and generosity

2 Corinthians 9:7

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Test God through tithing (Giving a tenth of your income)

Malachi 3:10

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

Set goals to grow in your generosity

Mark 12:43-44

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

What if I want to give, but can't?

Track your spending

Matthew 6:21

Where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

Set a budget

Proverbs 14:22

Do not those who plot evil go astray? But those who plan what is good find love and faithfulness.

Give sacrificially

1 Chronicles 21:24

...I will not take for the LORD what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.

Disclaimer

We'll be the first to admit it, there has been a lot of craziness and some shadiness with money and churches. The leadership of Society Church exercises full accountability, ethical business practices and wise stewardship with the resources we receive.

Our financial integrity is above reproach. The money received does not pad the pockets of anyone, but goes to further God's work through Society Church here in Sacramento.