

# Spiritual Life Journey Map

Beginning With The End In Mind First

CORE Discipleship is a faith-based, Christian organization. Our mission is to help you make disciples of Jesus. We provide a simple and reproducible discipleship process based on Jesus' "inner circle" or "core" comprised of Peter, James, and John. We also provide discipleship training and free discipleship resources as free downloadable eBooks.

Just like you, Father God is using the many events and circumstances of life's journey to mold and shape me into the person He desires. Occasionally, I've cooperated completely. It's in those rare moments when something extraordinary takes place - Heaven touches earth, mountains are moved, a part of me is transformed.

Through His infinite patience and unfathomable love I am learning to become the man He created me to be. As I daily surrender my life to Him through His precious Holy Spirit, I see more clearly life eternal.

My hope and prayer for you are that you too will discover God's purpose and become exactly what He has planned for you all along - His son or daughter.

May God grant that we become His disciples by His grace,

*Doug Morrell*

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Doug is a seasoned discipler and small group leader. Since graduating from Texas Tech University in 1984, he's worked in a dual capacity -- working within for-profit businesses around the country while also serving the church in various pastoral roles. Additionally, he and his wife Suzie are the founders/directors of CORE Discipleship, a ministry dedicated to making disciples who make disciples. Doug and Suzie have three children: Katheryn, Hannah, and Nathaniel.

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# BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

## AN INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL LIFE STAGES

For true discipleship to take place, we must invest our lives in the life of another just as a father and mother does with a newborn baby - this includes nurturing, equipping, and eventually releasing that person once they have come to maturity. They must be grounded in the faith until Christ is formed in them, and they must come to the understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. They must fully comprehend that they have a destiny apart from their own eternal rights with God - they are here to minister to God and for God.

Discipleship is one of five key purposes of God. Jesus modeled the process of discipleship with His disciples, and commands us to do the same. We learn in Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus' final instruction called the Great Commission:

*“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’”*

Without trying, we model our values - we are what we believe. Parents in particular demonstrate to their children what they consider important and valuable. ‘Like father, like son’ is not just a well-worn cliché; it is a truth repeated in our homes. Experience proves that children often imitate the life-styles of their parents, repeating their successes and mistakes. Likewise, the preservation and transmission of the gospel as intended by God is person-to-person without addition or alteration.

It must be understood that every Christian is in a continuing education program - it is a journey, a process. The more we know of Christ and His work, the more we can choose to “walk in the Spirit,” the more we will become like Him. This process is a lifelong journey - we must never stop learning and obeying. There is no justification for drifting along, but there is an incentive to find the rich treasures of growing in Him (see John 10:10).

*“and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” (Colossians 3:10)*

What does it mean to “put on the new self”? It means that our conduct should match our faith. Simply put, if you are a Christian, you should act like it. To be a Christian means more than just making good resolutions and having good intentions; it means taking the right actions. This is a straightforward step that is as simple as putting on your clothes.

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)*

As Christians, we are called to “not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,” with its behavior and customs that are selfish and corrupting. We must go beyond the superficial level of external behavior modification. To be truly “renewed” we must “be transformed by the renewing of our minds.” It is possible to be a Christian for a lifetime, avoid most worldly customs and still be angry, proud, covetous, selfish,

stubborn, and arrogant. It is only when we willingly surrender our will to the control of the Holy Spirit that He then can renew, reeducate, and redirect our minds. It is then that we can be truly transformed.

*“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” (Romans 8:5)*

Moment-by-moment we must consciously choose to center our lives on God. To continuously move forward through the various levels of spiritual maturity we must ask ourselves, “What would Jesus have me do?” It is precisely at that moment, when the Holy Spirit points out what is right, that we do it eagerly (Romans 6:6-8, Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:3-15; Galatians 5:16-25). It is then that we can discover God’s will.

*“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” (Galatians 5:16)*

As believers, we are to be led by the Holy Spirit. Being Holy Spirit-led involves our desire to hear, the readiness to obey God’s Word, and the sensitivity to discern between our subjective feelings and the Holy Spirit’s promptings. We are to live each moment controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit. It is then, through the disciplines of our faith, growing in Christ-likeness, that the words of Christ can be in our minds, the love of Christ behind our actions, and the power of Christ available to help curb and control our very selfish natures.

**The maturing process includes these basic steps:**

- 1) Learning to stand (childhood stage where we learn our position in Christ);
- 2) Learning to walk (adulthood stage where we learn to practice what we’ve learned in Christ);
- 3) Learning to engage in battle (fatherhood where we teach others what we’ve learned in Christ - the process begins again with another believer).

True spiritual power comes only as we obey God’s Word, His Holy Spirit, and as we maintain right relationship with both God and man. What we do - our conduct - is the single most evidence of a transformed life.

Godly character is essential for growth. When we are born again, we are spiritual newborn babies. If we are healthy, we will desire to grow to become spiritual “fathers” or “mothers” in the faith. Once we see our need for God’s Word and begin to find nourishment in Christ, our spiritual appetite will increase, and we will begin to mature.

**True Spiritual Power & Authority Comes Only As We Maintain Right Relationships:**

- Godliness is living the way God wants us to (Ephesians 4:1; 5:1, 2; 5:18-20; 6:18-20).
- Our behavior - how we act especially when no one else is around - should be just like Jesus.
- A healthy, balanced life is both vertical (with God) and horizontal (with man).

Now that we’ve laid the biblical groundwork for discipleship, let’s find out where we are...

**“Where am I in my spiritual growth?”**

A passage we will use that will help evaluate where you are spiritually is found in 1 John 2:12-14:

*“I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because*

*you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”*

The apostle John divided spiritual growth into three stages: children, young men, and fathers. We also learn from the writer of Hebrews 5:11-14 that knowledge of God’s Word, our experiences, or time does not guarantee spiritual maturity. From the apostle John’s writings, we can identify where we are in our spiritual growth.

## 4 KEY CONCEPTS:

### 1. **The Christian life (spiritual) parallels the physical life (natural):**

- a. There are definite stages in life;
- b. Each stage of life in the Christian journey builds upon the other;
- c. Just as there are natural parents, there must be spiritual parents;
- d. Only through “growth” does a person pass from one stage to the next;
- e. When growth does not occur, it is a sign of a serious problem.

### 2. **There is a major difference between physical growth and spiritual growth:**

- a. Physical growth usually takes place with little to no effort on our part;
- b. Spiritual growth must be nurtured and overseen by more spiritually mature “fathers” or “mothers” who understand the process as being intentional, relational and that the process is 100 percent spiritual.

### 3. **From the mature writings of the apostle John we discover several truths (1 John 2:12-14):**

*“I write to you dear children...young men...fathers”*

- a. There are different stages in the Christian life not necessarily dependent upon chronological age. The apostle John provided three stages of spiritual maturity:

- Children (boys and girls in the faith - “childhood” those just entering the journey of faith).
- Young Men (young sons and daughters in the faith - “adulthood” those growing in the faith).
- Fathers (fathers and mothers in the faith - “parenthood” those who are spiritually mature).

- b. In each stage there are blessings to be enjoyed and instruction/virtues to be realized and learned.
- c. Children need to become young men or young women, and young men or young women need to become fathers or mothers.

### 4. **Spiritual Transformation:**

- a. Simply getting people to go to church regularly is not the answer to becoming a spiritually mature Christian.
- b. Spiritual transformation requires a more extensive investment in one’s ability to interpret all life situations in spiritual terms.

## LIFE APPLICATION:

1. Thinking about discipleship, what does it mean “like father, like son”? Why is it important to have a seasoned, mature “father or mother” in the faith discipling others? Explain:

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2. Are you submitting to the control of the Holy Spirit in your daily walk with Jesus? Why or why not? Give some examples where you are failing to walk in the Spirit:

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3. What does it mean that true spiritual authority comes only as we obey? Are you walking in obedience to the Word of God? Are there areas where you simply refuse to obey God’s Word? What does this say about your walk?

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4. What are the three levels of spiritual maturity according to the apostle John? Where would you say you are based on those levels? Explain your answer:

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5. All of us have heard it said, “Do what I say, not what I do.” Likewise, how has this negatively impacted your life as a Christian? In other words, have you been told that you must do certain things as a Christian, but have not seen others willing to actually put into practice what they are teaching? How has this impacted your walk? What is God’s answer?

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**Now let’s take a look at spiritual disciplines ...**

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

The following disciplines help train, correct, mold, and perfect character. The degree we practice these disciplines determines the depth and quality for the following spiritual life assessment.

1. Filled With The Holy Spirit: Moment-by-moment, I am learning to be filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit; my life demonstrates this reality by the evidence of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in my life (Gal. 5:16, 22-25; 1 John 1:7). I am walking in the Spirit and as such, not fulfilling the lusts of my flesh (Galatians 5:16, 22-25; 1 John 1:7).

Not at all      Occasionally      Sometimes, but irregularly      Consistently      Continuously

2. Committed To The Great Commandment: I love God and because I love God, I understand that love for others is the hallmark of my life in Christ (John 13:34, 35; 15:9-13; 1 John 4:7-11). I display submission (Luke 22:42; John 4:34; 5:30), acceptance (John 8:11), compassion (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34) and forgiveness (Matthew 9:2; Luke 5:20). I fully know that I cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit and manifest the character of Christ without being spiritually joined to Christ (John 15:4, 5) and without having the seed of the Word planted in my heart (John 15:3, 1 Peter 1:22, 23).

Not at all      Occasionally      Sometimes, but irregularly      Consistently      Continuously

3. Committed To The Great Commission: I am either being discipled or I am discipling others. Jesus' final instructions to the disciples before departing back to Heaven was to make disciples. I am reaching out and partnered with a few other Christian friends helping them grow and mature in every area of life.

Not at all      Occasionally      Sometimes, but irregularly      Consistently      Continuously

4. Committed To Spiritual Disciplines: Spiritual disciplines include such practices as prayer, praise, worship, confession, fasting, meditation/quiet time and the study of God's Word. I know that the practice of Christian disciplines and virtues begins at home (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7). My family has devotions and we try to provide a Christian environment in the home (1 Timothy 3:3, 4; 5:8). I am actively, daily practicing these disciplines.

Not at all      Occasionally      Sometimes, but irregularly      Consistently      Continuously

5. Committed To My Local Church & Church Authority: Because I realize that the church is God's Body - a group of people living out their relationship with Jesus - I am actively involved in my church in fellowship, encouragement, and worship in ministry and mission. I understand and am submitted to the leadership of my local church (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17) in the spiritual grace of humility (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5, 6).

Not at all      Occasionally      Sometimes, but irregularly      Consistently      Continuously

6. Committed To Personal Ministry: I agree with the Bible that tells me that every Christian is a priest - a person set apart to serve God and others (1 Peter 2:5). Every Christian offers spiritual sacrifices and worships with praise and prayers. I understand that as a Christian, I am a minister (the word "minister" simply means "servant"). I am actively involved in a ministry within the church and either developing a ministry or co-laboring in an existing ministry outside the church (Eph. 2:10).

Not at all      Occasionally      Sometimes, but irregularly      Consistently      Continuously

7. Committed To Godly Stewardship: I understand that everything belongs to God and that I am simply a manager of His resources. I realize that I will be held accountable for how I use my time, talent and money. As a good steward I recognize that how I use money is directly related to my life in Christ. My life is not opulent. I am faithful in giving, providing for the financial needs of my local church through tithes and offerings.

Not at all      Occasionally      Sometimes, but irregularly      Consistently      Continuously

8. A Quiet Life: I purpose to lead a quiet life. I am generally calm and peaceable. My ambition is not for fame, glory, riches, and honor but learning to be calm and quiet in my mind, in patience to possess my own soul, and to be quiet toward others. My life is characterized by meekness and mildness, gentleness and a peaceable disposition, not given to worldly busyness, strife, contention, or division.

Not at all      Occasionally      Sometimes, but irregularly      Consistently      Continuously

Now let's take a look at spiritual character ...

# SPIRITUAL LIFE/CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

No one is perfectly perfect - each of us have weaknesses as well as strengths. The following Spiritual Life Stage Assessment is a tool that can help you determine where you are spiritually by using the qualifications that the apostle Paul provided for those in the final stages of spiritual maturity (qualifications for overseers). These are character qualities to which all Christians should aspire, but which should be modeled by those being considered for leadership and especially elders (at home or in the church). The cultural setting, size, age, and current understanding of God's Word by the individual or the church will all have a bearing on what is or is not acceptable and level of adherence. It is not to be used as a "pass or fail" test.

As a tool, it is designed to help you realize where you are on your journey compared to Christ Jesus. It can also be used to assist in the selection of leadership in the church, to determine educational resources for ministry, and for strategic planning. These 22 immutable characteristics are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and are the "measuring stick" for a believers speech, life, love, faith and purity. All believers should desire these virtues because they are consistent with what God says is true and right; these are the "end product" of a life lived in the fullness of God's Holy Spirit.

## Instructions:

1. On a scale from 1 to 9 where 1 = weak and 9 = strong, circle the number that best represents how you view yourself in each area compared to Jesus, not someone else. Be honest and transparent.
2. Ask at least three others who know you best (mentor, pastor, spouse, a close friend, others in ministry, your oldest son or daughter if they are no longer in your home) to complete an evaluation about you, too. This will help promote accountability.
3. To allow for an honest evaluation, ask each person to complete an evaluation about you and have them anonymously forward their evaluation to a third party (your mentor or other spiritually mature person such as your pastor).
4. Your mentor or pastor should then tally all the responses, taking the overall average, and can then assist you in areas of needed growth. NOTE: This spiritual mapping is only a tool. It is specifically designed as a gauge and should only be used to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Heb. 10:24; 3:13; 10:25; 1 Thess. 5:11).
5. Assessments should be held in the strictest of confidence and used only as a tool to identify areas of needed growth and affirmation of strengths. It should be used to restore, build up and never, ever used as a weapon to assault another's character.

1. I am above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2): I am someone marked by honesty and integrity in my approach to life, especially in dealing with people. I am trustworthy and careful to be perceived as such. I earn respect by how I conduct myself, but at the same time, I am not a victim of my insatiable desire for the approval of others. I am well thought of. I have a good reputation among people in general. I am not aware of anything that anyone could use as an accusation against me. I have forgiven any and all who have offended me and those I've offended. I do not know of any broken relationships in my life. I stand blameless before God and man. When I discover that I've hurt or offended someone, I deal with him or her immediately, openly, and humbly giving every indication of desiring to be a godly, righteous person, someone who is above reproach.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

2. I am the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2): If married, I am a committed spouse to my partner. I am not flirtatious. I am committed to meeting the needs of my marriage partner physically, emotionally and spiritually. I enjoy my spouse's company and speak tenderly and gently. I develop and maintain an atmosphere of encouragement and acceptance through continual affirmation. I love my spouse deeply and express that love in every possible way. My marriage exhibits the grace of God. I have one spouse (the opposite sex). I am not physically or mentally promiscuous. If single, I am not promiscuous and I am not overly attracted to the opposite sex, i.e., I am not a philanderer, not attracted to every guy or girl that walks down the street, not constantly eyeing the opposite sex. My physical and mental life is pure. (\*This quality does not exclude divorced, single or widowers, etc, but is designed to describe the quality of a person's relationship with their spouse).

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

3. I am temperate (1 Tim. 3:2): I am someone who is not carried away to extremes, but whose life is marked by balance and stability. I am not swayed by adulation nor crushed by criticism. I am not volatile but even-tempered. I am not carried away by power, title, or position. I am easily regenerated and refueled for ministry. I am a well-balanced, well-adjusted person who is not flighty or nervous, constantly jumping from one thing or project to another. I do not overdo anything in my life. My life is balanced. I am not excessive in any area of my life. My response to most of life's situations would be considered by others to be average, normal, calm.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

4. I am sensible (1 Tim. 3:2): I am a prudent person whose judgment enables me to discern the effects of extremes. The foundation of the decision making process in my life is humility, a recognition of God's grace and a desire to be a good steward of what God has given. I have committed my position as subordinate to God's authority and my prudence is seen in my continuing commitment to make God look good and never myself. I show good judgment in my life and I have a proper perspective regarding my abilities and myself. I don't take myself too seriously. People see me as a humble person (that I know God is God and I am not). I am self-controlled; a kind of "inner peace" governs my life. My life is pretty much level and steady.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

5. I am respectable (1 Tim. 3:2): I am a person who lives so as to be respected by others. I have a well-ordered life which, when interfacing with others, attracts them rather than repels them. I am perceived as being winsome and my life adorns the Gospel; it does not detract from it. Because my life is ordered, it reflects that God is a God of order. As a respectable person, others find my being with them a joy and a blessing. I conduct my life, work, and ministry in an honorable way, and people have and show respect for me. My life is orderly and not helter-skelter. I am aware of what's going on around me and I am not overly moved by life's events and circumstances.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

6. I am hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2): I understand that what I enjoy in stewardship is really a gift from God and that my role is a custodian of His resources. I administer these resources given to me by God in such a way as to reflect the character of God. I use my home for the benefit of others to show God's love and display a freedom from the accursed love of possessing. I have come to terms with the difference between earthly possessions, which are temporary, and spiritual possessions, which are eternal. I use my home and resources as a place and opportunity to serve and minister to Christians and non-Christians. As the

Holy Spirit leads, I open my home to strangers and to the people of the church.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

7. I am able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2): I have a teachable spirit, modeling God's truth in a humble and sensitive way. I am not quarrelsome but kind, patient and gentle, especially in correcting those who are in opposition. I am secure in Christ and secure in myself and in control of my personality (mind, will and emotions). I love God's Word and live by it and eager to help others understand the freedom of its principles. Others would say that I am an encourager, not a discourager. When I teach God's Word, I show an aptitude for handling the Scriptures with care and reasonable skill. I have a good understanding of the essential, foundational truths of God's Word. I am able to communicate the Scriptures to others in such a way that they "see" God and not me. I am able to gently and firmly correct those who are misusing God's Word and recognize error when it appears.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

8. I am not addicted to wine (1 Tim. 3:3): I understand that this quality has to do with inappropriate use more than a requirement to abstain from alcoholic beverages. I have learned to control my body and appetites so that I am not driven by any desires where excess would be perceived as improper behavior. I understand that any overindulgence could corrupt and cause another brother or sister to stumble in their walk of faith and as such, is always avoided because the welfare of the body of Christ is of higher importance than my personal freedoms. I am careful to encourage rather than discourage people in their walk with God. I am not addicted to alcohol or drugs of any kind. The Holy Spirit controls me - I am sober in my spirit. If I do drink alcoholic beverages or indulge in other legally acceptable but potentially addictive practices, I do so in moderation, never violating known, legal standards or God's commandments. I do not overindulge in anything. I fully understand that my body is not my own and is representative of the temple of God.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

9. I am not violent (1 Tim. 3:3): I know that physical violence will never mark a mature Christian. I understand that to be pugnacious is to exercise an uncontrolled personal vindictiveness toward another person, taking the form of physical attacks or even verbal or emotional abuse. I deal wisely with offences that might otherwise result in abusing the offender. I am in control of my own spirit. I am not someone who criticizes or attacks another person, family, business, or ministry either verbally or physically in any way. I am under control. I do not lose control to the point that I scream at another or strike another or cause harm to another person or their property. I do not resort to verbal, physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual abuse or violence. I do not engage in gossip or defame another person's character.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

10. I am gentle (1 Tim. 3:3): Others regard me as mild-mannered, characterized by meekness, forbearance and a servant's heart. I act and speak gently so that people are actually relaxed in my presence. I listen more than I speak. I am able to resolve problems without losing control of my emotions. I am not viewed as being authoritarian. I never retaliate when wronged. I have such a high view of other people that I would never abuse or take advantage of others. I am solution-oriented rather than problem-oriented. I am a kind, modest, patient person who does not insist on my rights. I am not someone who resorts to any form of violence (verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual).

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

11. I am not quarrelsome (1 Tim. 3:3): I do not do or say anything that would destroy unity. I am more interested in achieving consensus than forcing my own way. I am not threatened by competition. I am willing to bend and compromise when necessary. I lead with a servant's heart and do not resort to an authoritarian style of leadership. I am not stubborn, insisting on my own point of view at all costs. I am not argumentative. I am not divisive. A spirit of competition does not drive me. I am someone who upholds peace.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

12. I am not a lover of money (1 Tim. 3:3): I am free from the love of money; my priorities are straight. I seek first God's kingdom and I see things as gifts from God. I am not devastated by the loss of things. I hold everything loosely and live by heavenly values. I have learned the meaning of contentment for, like Paul, I know how to be content in every circumstance. My happiness is not the result of material possessions. I am not allured by money. I have achieved a balance between excessive frugality and excessive spending. I do not see money as a status symbol. I do not find my security in money. I do not measure other people by material things or by external measurements; like God, I look at the heart. I am not lazy but a diligent worker realizing that even my employment is a gift from God. I believe God owns everything and that I am simply a manager of His resources. I do not try and keep "up with the Joneses"; my life-style is simple. There is no evidence of undue affluence in my life. I am not money-hungry. I do not hoard up money. I do not spend an inordinate amount of time and resource attempting to make a lot of money. I am not attracted to get-rich-quick schemes. I fully believe that God is my provider. I have no problem disclosing my finances with more spiritually mature believers. Others recognize me as a giver.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

13. I manage my family well (1 Tim. 3:4): All the members of my family have a mutual respect and love for each other. My home is an expression of God's love and peace. Because I understand that this text assumes that my children are still at home, it is not to be applied to my children who have launched out on their own. I understand that because each child has a will to choose my values or not, the real evidence is how these times are managed. I have created an environment of peace in my home. It is a place where life's lessons are learned and the big decisions are made in the context of love. I fully understand that my children's experience with me at home determines their view of God. Therefore my home reflects the character of God. I understand that this does not suggest that a spiritually mature person must have a family in order to qualify as a leader, but that it simply refers to how my household is managed under God. If married and with children at home, I have a well-managed family and home. My children are obedient and courteous in their responses, learning how to address life. I am a parent who does not avoid family problems, but I gently, lovingly address my family concerns. I do not run from problems or refuse to face them. I learn how to deal with problems, and discover how to work things out in love and grace. If single, my home is well managed, I address problems head-on, I am a good steward of God's resources.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

14. I am not a recent convert (1 Tim. 3:6): I have learned the full effect of pride and other sins of the heart and how to cope with them. I understand that pride includes a thirst for attention and recognition and that immature believers are more susceptible to this, especially in positions of leadership. I have been tested and proven morally and ethically through my life-style and the handling of relationships. I understand that learning and applying Biblical principles and heavenly wisdom takes time. I understand that some will do it more quickly than others. I do not depend upon my strength to bring forth success. I do not control others to get my way. I do not manipulate, intimidate, or dominate others in any way. I do not count upon my personality, my magnetism, my education, my finances or my intelligence to achieve

what I think God wants. I fully believe and practice “that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God”. I have learned that God works with people of a humble and a contrite heart, who have learned not to exalt themselves. I am a servant to all, trusting in Christ.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

15. I have a good reputation (1 Tim. 3:7): I have a good reputation with outsiders and within my community. My neighbors, coworkers, acquaintances outside the church, business owners - though perhaps lost people who may not agree with my spiritual convictions - still respect me as a person.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

16. I am not overbearing (Titus 1:7): I am not self-willed and I easily submit to legitimate authorities in my life. I am recognized as a team player. I readily admit when I am wrong, gladly forgive and hold other people in high esteem. I am more oriented toward others than myself. I practice an honest piety rather than a pretentious self-righteousness. I am secure in myself and do not have to continually validate or justify myself in the eyes of others. I am not stubborn, or arrogant. I am not domineering nor controlling. Others find it easy to discuss their opinions and seek my counsel because they realize I attempt to be impartial and fair.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

17. I am not quick tempered (Titus 1:7): I understand that anger can never achieve the righteousness of God. I am not a person easily threatened (hence insecure). I am not quick to retaliate, and never use anger to intimidate and control others (physically, verbally, emotionally, financially, etc.). I do not hold grudges against others and do not have a bitter spirit toward any person. I have learned to release to God feelings that cause anger. I choose not to be offended when wronged, and never seek revenge. I am not inclined toward anger (an angry person), and I do not easily lose my temper. I do not have sudden outbursts of anger when something does not go my way. Others in my home, work, business, or church would say that I am not given to sudden outbursts of anger.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

18. I am not pursuing dishonest gain (Titus 1:7): I do not earn my living by producing, distributing, or selling anything that clearly violates God’s Word, His character, or will or legal authority. I am neither fond of nor involved in any wrongful practices that could result in fraudulent gain.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

19. I love what is good (Titus 1:8): Because I love God passionately and because God is good, I love what is good. I love the beauty of what God has made and what God has done. I enjoy His creation and am in awe of His plan of salvation. Because I love what is good I beautify my environment and am committed to making beautiful the inner person. I focus my every day on what is good. I love the things that honor God; I hate what God hates. I entirely agree with God’s Word.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

20. I am upright (Titus 1:8): I am known as being fair in my dealings with people and am always concerned that others perceive me as fair. I am concerned about giving a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay. I am concerned that each transaction in my life is fair to all concerned. I am respected and capable of

making wise judgments and regarded as spiritually mature by those in my community.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

21. I am holy (Titus 1:8): I go through life with a moment-by-moment awareness of the presence of God. My life is marked by a love for God that embraces each activity in life through Kingdom lenses. I am always sensitive to sin and avoid unholy behavior, while at the same time I enjoy being salt and light in the world. I know that it is possible to be in the world without being part of it. I walk through this world as though it were the temple of God. I carefully abstain from any and all things that could cause harm to my body, soul, or spirit. I fully believe and practice moderation in all things knowing that my life and body are not mine, but belongs to God. I live a disciplined life. I am a devout person. My life is generally pleasing to God. I walk in the Spirit with the demonstrated evidence that my life is servant-like and selfless (John 13:34, 35). The degree to which I've allowed the Holy Spirit to control my life is measurable by an ever-increasing depth of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23).

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

22. I hold firmly to the faith (Titus 1:9): I understand, hold to, and attempt to conserve God's truth. I also encourage others while refuting those who oppose the truth. Because I know God's love (vertical), I express that love to others (horizontal). My commitment is to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. I know that the pattern for the preservation and the transmission of the Gospel is to make disciples. I am either being disciplined or I am discipling others, teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded, until Christ is fully formed in them.

weak 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7 ..... 8 ..... 9 strong

# Your Personal Inventory

Now that you've completed your spiritual assessment and have received at least two other evaluations from those closest to you, tally each assessment and take the average of all three.

1. Each total assessment rating: \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_ / 3 = \_\_\_\_\_ Overall Average Assessment Rating
2. Use the following assessment rating to discover which spiritual stage you are in:

## **Assessment:**

(22 - 87: Child in the faith - the key areas of growth needed are in the areas of understanding your position in Christ (chosen, blameless, adopted, accepted, forgiven, predestined, and sealed with the Holy Spirit [Eph. 1] as well as foundational essentials of our faith [Heb. 6]).

(88 - 153: Young Adult in the faith - at this stage you should be actively engaged in ministry of some kind; you have learned how to be strong and defeat the enemy; you have learned that God is in control and have relinquished control to Him; walking more in the fullness of the Holy Spirit).

(154 - 198: Adult in the faith - you sincerely desire to be like Jesus; to do what Jesus did; daily, you are being conformed to His likeness; He is your focus and your bread for life; mostly walking in the Spirit; you are reproducing the life of Christ in others).

With this understanding, we can now begin moving forward building upon biblical foundations. Remember, there is no condemnation. If you uncovered areas where you and others indicate areas needed for growth, you are not alone. As said, the Christian faith is a journey and we all are in a continuous education process! These are opportunities for growth, not failure.

**Let's move on to the next section where you'll discover the three Biblical life stages and practical instruction, guidance, and application ...**

# I. CHILDHOOD

*“I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.” (1 John 2:12)*

## A. The Stage In Which Christians Are Spiritual “Boys and Girls”

1. Those who are new Christians, or immature Christians, are often times referred to as “babes in Christ”. This is not a negative term for EVERY Christian has been in this stage. The point is that no Christian should remain in this stage. Regardless of chronological age, these “boys and girls” in the faith are learning about Christ and are just beginning their spiritual journey. As spiritual children learn about Christ, they grow in their ability to win battles with temptation.

2. This can be a difficult time for both you and your mentor because:

- a. Though saved, a “child” in the faith lives much like an unregenerate person, is childish, and is evidenced by a selfish, jealous and divisive spirit. Newborns are very much “worldly,” controlled by their own desires:

*“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly - mere infants in Christ.” (1 Cor. 3:1)*

Spiritual children are not yet spiritually healthy and mature. The evidence of infancy is:

- Quarrelsome, divisive, competitive, self-centered;
- Worldly attitudes, words, or behavior (controlled by their own desires);
- Not in tune with God’s desires;
- Led by natural response (subjective feelings) more than the Holy Spirit.

- b. Can be a source of anxiety for those trying to lead them along:

*“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,” (Gal. 4:19)*

The apostle Paul led many people to Christ and helped them mature spiritually. Perhaps one reason for his success as a spiritual father was the deep concern he felt for his spiritual children; he compared his pain over their faithlessness to the pain of childbirth. We should have the same intense care for those to whom we are spiritual parents. Just as is true in the birth, growth and release of natural children, spiritual dads and moms are to stand by their spiritual children throughout life until Christ Jesus is fully formed in them.

- c. Characteristics of those in spiritual childhood. These are the areas we will begin to address in later sections:

- Marginal desire for God’s Word (very little Bible knowledge);
- Walks in the flesh; does not know the difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit;
- Few works of faith, i.e., no evidence of being filled with God’s love to serve others, giving, etc.;
- Easily swayed or deceived by false doctrines;
- Stuck in the basics - no growth;
- Limited desire for fellowship with other believers; would rather pursue “worldly” activities;
- Strong desire for worldly possessions; selfish ambitions; spirit of competition;
- Difficulty in repenting/forgiving others;
- Lacking compassion for the lost;
- Not actively assisting in the spiritual development of others;
- Limited sense of God, His character or His will;
- Life filled with fear, anxiety, absence of peace;
- Often covetous, boastful, prideful, manipulative, etc.;

- Ongoing financial difficulties; living far beyond means; out of balance debt;
- Seekers of pleasure;
- Lives marked by lack of discipline (physically, mentally, and spiritually);
- Partial victory over sin;
- Nonexistent or lackluster prayer life;
- Little or no time or sincere interest in worship;
- Not accountable to anyone for anything;
- Small degree of grace and mercy toward others or self.

d. Needs to focus on the “milk” of the Word:

“In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness.” (Hebrews 5:12, 13)

In order to grow from infant Christians to mature Christians, we must learn discernment. We must train our consciences, our senses, our minds, and our bodies to distinguish good from evil. The most important lesson at this point in your spiritual development is to understand your position in Christ - you are forgiven. Mentors, you should be teaching your student how they can begin to recognize temptation before it entraps them as well as being able to discern between a correct use of Scripture and a false one.

## **B. Nurturing & Encouragement:**

1. Because their sins have been forgiven in Christ.

*“I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.” (1 John 2:12)*

- a. Forgiveness is not based upon maturity or perfection.
- b. Forgiveness is based upon the blood of Jesus, and upon our willingness as Christians to confess our sins:

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)*

Confession frees us to enjoy fellowship with Christ. It eases our consciences and lightens our cares.

Most Christians at this stage have not learned how this works. They feel so “guilty” that they confess the same sins over and over; then they wonder if they might have forgotten something. Other new Christians believe that God forgives them when they confess, but if they died with unconfessed sins, they would be forever lost. These new believers do not understand that God wants to forgive us. He allowed Jesus to die just so He could offer us pardon. They must be instructed that when we come to Christ, He forgives all the sins we have committed or will ever commit. They must understand that we don’t need to confess the sins of the past all over again, and we don’t need to fear that God will reject us if we don’t keep our “slate” perfectly clean. They must be assured that we should continue to confess our sins, but not because failure to do so will make us lose our salvation. They must fully realize that their relationship with Christ is secure. These should know that confession provides for maximum fellowship and joy with God and man.

True confession also involves a commitment not to continue in sin. We wouldn’t be genuinely confessing our sins to God if we planned to commit them again and just wanted temporary forgiveness. We should also pray for strength to defeat temptation the next time we face it. If God has forgiven us for our sins because of Christ’s death, why must we confess our sins? In admitting

our sins and receiving Christ's cleansing, we are:

- 1) Coming into agreement with God that our sin truly is sin and that we are willing to turn from it;
- 2) Making sure that we don't conceal our sins from Him and consequently from ourselves, and;
- 3) Recognizing that our tendency is to sin - that we are truly dependent upon God and His power to overcome it.

2. Because they have "known the Father"

*"...I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father." (1 John 2:13)*

a. They have fellowship with the Father, which is John's definition of "eternal life":

*"For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:2,3)*

- Knowing God the Father Himself is realized through a living relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.
- Eternal life requires entering into a personal relationship with God in Jesus Christ.
- Christ's love lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

b. They may be "babes", but they have "eternal life" in Christ:

*"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:11,12)*

- Whoever believes in God's Son has eternal life.
- Eternal life is not something to wait for; it begins the moment you believe.
- Don't work for eternal life, it is already received.
- Don't fret and worry about your salvation; you have been given eternal life by God Himself - it is guaranteed.

c. John wants "children" in the faith to continue to believe:

*"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13)*

It is in this stage that a "babe in Christ" should receive from a more spiritually mature father or mother in the faith:

- Instructional nurturing/feeding upon the milk of the Word;
- An understanding and use of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ;
- Remaining in fellowship with the Father and sharing in "eternal life".

## LIFE APPLICATION:

It is necessary that believers in this stage be taught and become thoroughly grounded in sound Biblical doctrine and that they learn that all teaching must be tested by God's inerrant, infallible Word. It must be understood that a person's character, behavior and future are all shaped by what a person believes to be truth (review Acts 2:42; 5:28; 13:12; 17:19). They must understand that they have been forgiven and are accepted by God.

## II. ADULTHOOD

*“...I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.” (1 John 2:13)*

### A. The stage in which Christians are spiritual “young adults”

1. This refers to all, male or female, young or old chronologically, who are “strong in the Lord”
2. These are those “who have overcome the wicked one”

*“...I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father...I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” (1 John 2:13, 14)*

a. They are not perfect (not without sin), but are moving toward more Christ-likeness:

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8)

- Must be instructed that people have a natural tendency to sin, that we all are capable of sinning, that we do sin, and that God has provided a process of ongoing forgiveness;
- Sin must be taken very seriously;
- Confession and repentance is an ongoing process;
- What took place at Calvary is embraced and everything is evaluated through the Cross;
- Spiritual warfare - the reality of warfare (the tactics of our enemy regardless of origin: manipulation, intimidation, domination and learning to recognize each and not yielding to these);
- Spiritual armor, an understanding, availability and daily application;
- All people are sinners by nature and by practice;
- Process of conversion - all our sins are forgiven - past, present, and future;
- Understanding that even after we become Christians, we still sin and still need to confess;
- This kind of confession is not offered to gain God’s acceptance, but to remove the barrier to fellowship that our sin has put between us and God;
- It is difficult, however, for many people to admit their faults and shortcomings, even to God. It takes humility and honesty to recognize our weaknesses, and most of us would rather pretend that we are strong. But we need not fear revealing our sins to God - He knows them already;
- God will not push us away, no matter what we’ve done. Instead He will draw us to Himself as we confess our sins.

b. Their faith has had time to be tested, and they have demonstrated that they are truly “born of God”

*“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)*

- Since wickedness is all about us and life problems are overwhelming, we learn that while evil is stronger than we are, God is stronger than evil.
- The victory is won by sacrifice - Christ’s death in our place to pay the penalty for our sin, and the sacrifices we make because of our faith in Him. As we face the battle with Satan, we should not fear it or try to escape from it, but we should loyally serve Christ, who alone brings victory (see Romans 8:34-39). It is through God’s Word and by His Holy Spirit that we can overcome this world.

*“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” (Rev. 12:11)*

*“...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” (1 John 5:4, 5)*

- Obedience: Jesus never promised that obeying Him would be easy. But the hard work and self-discipline of serving Christ is no burden to those who love Him.
- Spiritual Stress Testing/Loadbearing: learning the rhythms of God's grace, His assignments, and realizing the difference between a Saul-type ministry and a David-type ministry:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

- These are those who have struggled with Satan's temptations and have won; they are becoming seasoned young warriors.
- As young adults move from victory to victory, they grow in their relationship with Christ as characterized by:

- Deepening desire for God's Word (reading their Bible daily is desirable as food for the body);
- Walks in the Spirit - from time to time in the flesh; but knows the difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit and desires the Spirit;
- Active in serving others, giving, etc.;
- Not easily swayed or deceived by false doctrines;
- Grounded in the basics - growth evident by the fruit of the Holy Spirit;
- Increasing desire for fellowship with other believers;
- Lessened desire for worldly possessions; selfless ambitions; spirit of competition greatly reduced;
- No difficulty in repenting/forgiving others;
- Increasing compassion for the lost;
- Actively assisting in the spiritual development of others;
- Growing sense of God, His character and His will;
- Life not filled with fear, anxiety, growing in continuous peace;
- Seldom covetous, boastful, prideful, manipulative, etc.;
- Seldom financial difficulties (living within means...limited debt);
- Seldom desires pleasure; sensational, roller-coaster type life;
- Life marked by growing disciplines (physically, mentally, and spiritually);
- Growing victory over sin;
- Growing, powerful prayer life;
- Sincere interest in worship;
- Accountable to leadership;
- Overall, balance life-style;
- Growing degree of grace and mercy toward others and self.

## **B. The source of their strength is the Word of God:**

1. Only as the Word of God “abides” (remains) in them are they strong:

*“...I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” (1 John 2:14)*

*“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” (John 15:4)*

2. Even as David saw the value of letting the Word of God abide in his heart:

*“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:11)*

- Hiding (keeping) God’s Word in our hearts is a deterrent to sin. This alone should inspire us to memorize Scripture. But memorization alone will not keep us from sin; we must also put God’s Word to work in our lives, making it a vital guide for everything we do.

3. For this reason, then, we need to heed the admonition of Peter:

*“Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.” (1 Peter 2:1-3)*

Evidences of healthy growth include:

- Less influenced by selfish desires and places an ever increasing measure of value in the well being of others; “I” and “Me” are increasingly being replaced with “You” and “Us”;
- More desirous of allowing God’s plans to be realized than self goals;
- Becoming more controlled by the Holy Spirit as opposed to fleshly desires.

### **Teaching:**

It is necessary that believers in this stage continue in the basic disciplines of the faith; they must be taught and be thoroughly grounded in sound Biblical doctrine and that they learn that all teaching must be tested by God’s inerrant, infallible Word. It must be understood that a person’s character, behavior and future are all shaped by what a person believes to be truth (see Acts 2:42; 5:28; 13:12; 17:19). The following serves as an overview of material that must be taught and lived out by the disciple.

1. God’s Word: the source of your strength;
2. The Source of Power: the Holy Spirit filled life;
3. The Enemy: we’re not alone;
4. God’s righteousness (the Book of Romans);
5. Promises Of God To Be Victorious: understanding Satan’s tactics and your weapons to overcome him;
6. The Disciplines of Our Faith: basic toolset;
7. Applied Kingdom Stewardship: fully understanding that we are managers, not owners.

It is only as young warriors have demonstrated time and again that they are in fact growing stronger in the Lord, as reviewed and confirmed by another more spiritually mature believer, that they then have progressed to the final stage of the Christian life...

### III. PARENTHOOD

*“I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning.” (1 John 2:13, 14)*

#### **A. The stage in which Christians are “fathers” or “mothers” in the faith:**

1. The term “father” is used figuratively.
2. It refers in this passage to Christians, male and female, who have reached the highest stage of the Christian life.
3. The term “fathers” suggests:
  - a. They have had experience, having progressed through earlier stages of the Christian life (infancy, strength).
  - b. They have produced spiritual offspring (disciples):

*“I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 4:14, 15)*

- The older men or women (“fathers”) are mature in the faith and have a long-standing relationship with Christ.
- Older adults, having known Christ for years, have developed the wisdom needed to teach young people and repeat the process (success being defined as having produced “successive” kind; again, having discipled others).

#### **B. They have “known Him who is from the beginning”**

1. Referencing Jesus, who “was from the beginning”:

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.” (1 John 1:1)*

*“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13).*

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” (John 1:1, 2)*

*“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30, 31).*

2. There is a distinction being made by John:
  - a. “Little children” have known “the Father” (1 John 2:13).
  - b. “Fathers” have known “the Son” who was from the beginning (1 John 2:13, 14).
3. This can be distinguished:
  - a. As babes in Christ, it can be said that even in our infancy we can “know” the Father - to have an intimate relationship with Him and experience the eternal life which He gives.
  - b. It is only with time, and with opportunity to “walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6), can it be said that a Christian has truly come to “know” Jesus:

1) Therefore the admonition of Peter is:

*“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen. “ (2 Peter 3:18)*

### **These are those who have grown in:**

1. Grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - whose lives are filled with grace and mercy;
2. Knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - whose lives are characterized by the virtues of our faith; whose knowledge comes only as they have developed the Christ-like graces found in 2 Peter 1:5-8:

*“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
(2 Peter 1:5-8)*

- These are those who know God;
- These are those who know that they have eternal life;
- These are those who know the reality of God in their life through faith in Christ;
- These are those who assure others that they have eternal life, and encourage them to remain in fellowship with God who is light and love;
- These are those who are overwhelmed by God’s love, and because of their confidence, pass on His love to others;
- These are those whose lives are characterized by love, grace, mercy, and truth (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:13).

While no one will ever reach God’s standard of absolute perfection from his or her own efforts, we are exhorted to grow in holiness by putting to death any sin in our hearts or minds as well as in what we say or do. However, we must realize that while this is a cooperative partnership and that we are to put forth effort, we must fully understand that it is only “by the Spirit” that we can succeed (Romans 8:13). Because the essence of the Christian life is love, our saving faith must be revealed in a transformed life. What we believe and practice determines our character; our character will determine our destiny. As we realize where we are in relationship to where God desires us to be, we can begin to realize that God will truly complete that which He has begun.

“As a man thinketh in his heart so is he,” not only embraces the whole of a man’s being, but is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of his life. A man is literally what he thinks, his character being the complete sum of all his thoughts.

As the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so every act of man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called “spontaneous” and “unpremeditated” as to those which are deliberately executed.

Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruit; thus does a man garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of his own husbandry.

Man is a growth by law, and not a creation by artifice, and cause and effect are as absolute and un-deviating in the hidden realm of thought as in the world of visible and material things. A noble and Godlike character is not a thing of favor or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in

right thinking, the effect of long-cherished association with Godlike thoughts. An ignoble and bestial character, by the same process, is the result of the continued harboring of groveling thoughts.

Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained, and man can find every truth connected with his being, if he will dig deep into the mine of his soul. That he is the maker of his character, the molder of his life, and the builder of his destiny, he may unerringly prove, if he will watch, control, and alter his thoughts, tracing their effects upon himself, upon others and upon his life and circumstances, linking cause and effect by patient practice and investigation. And utilizing his every experience, even the most trivial, everyday occurrence, as a means of obtaining that knowledge of himself which is understanding, wisdom, power. In this direction is the law of absolute that "He that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." For only by patience, practice, and ceaseless importunity can a man enter the door of the temple of knowledge." -James Allen

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:2)*

No matter where you are in your spiritual journey, there is always room for growth. We must never cease becoming all that God desires.

*"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)*

*"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins." (2 Peter: 1:5-9)*

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Grow in grace and truth,

Doug & Suzie Morrell  
Core Discipleship Ministry

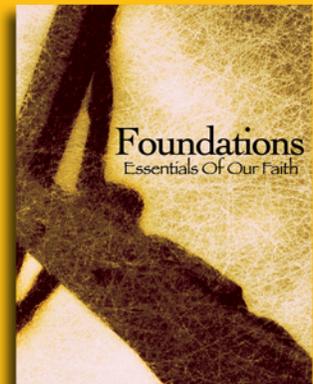
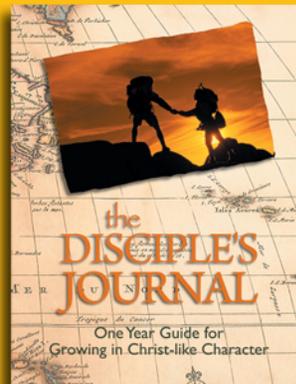
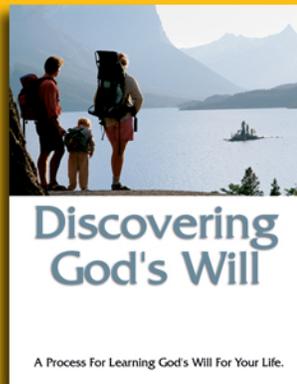
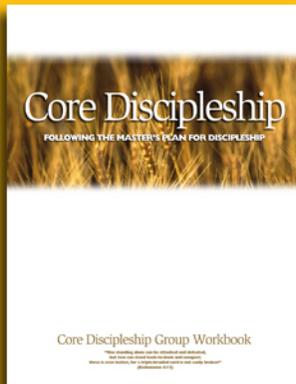


CORE Discipleship is a faith-based, Christian organization. Our mission is to help you make disciples of Jesus. We provide a simple and reproducible discipleship process based on Jesus' "inner circle" or "core" comprised of Peter, James, and John. We also provide discipleship training and discipleship resources available as free downloadable eBooks. CORE is a Biblical process that can help develop an unbelievable spiritual discipleship community where no one stands alone, struggles alone, develops alone or grows up alone.

May God grant that we become  
His disciples by His grace,

Doug & Suzie Morrell  
CORE Discipleship

## More Resources From Core Discipleship



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