

Triumphant 201

Spiritual Growth and Maturity in Christ

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” 2 Tim. 4:7

- Session 1: Seminar Introduction
Devotional Life - Introduction
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Conclusion – How to Start and Maintain Good Habits

All Scripture New King James Version unless otherwise noted

SESSION 1: Course Introduction
Devotional Life Introduction

The Purpose for this Class:

1. To become mature Christians

“...that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Col. 4:12

2. To grow in Christ

“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--...” Eph. 4:14, 15

The Focus of this Class:

We will focus on the Four Basic Habits every Christian needs in order to grow and mature spiritually.

We will learn the Habits of:

Time in God’s Word
Prayer
Giving
Fellowship

The Goal of this Class:

That I will **Commit** to the habits necessary for spiritual maturity.

“I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.” Rom. 6:19

What is “Spiritual Maturity”?

Spiritual Maturity is **Being Like Christ**

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Rom. 8:29

FACTS ABOUT SPIRITUAL MATURITY

1. It is not automatic
Problems do not disappear overnight
2. It is a process
Becoming like Christ is something that will continue through our lifetime
3. It takes discipline
It is not easy

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLESHIP

1. Mature believers are called **Disciples**
2. I cannot be a disciple without being **Disciplined**
3. The more disciplined I become, **God can use me**
4. The mark of a disciple is **Cross Bearing**
5. How often am I to do this? **Daily**

"Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23
6. What is involved in "cross bearing"? **Whatever it Takes** to give Christ first place in my life!

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR HABITS OF A DISCIPLE

1. Time in God's Word

"Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31,32

2. Prayer

“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” 8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” John 14:7,8

3. Giving

“So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:33

4. Fellowship

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34,35

DEVOTIONAL LIFE
Introduction

Devotional Time: “A Devotional or Quiet Time is a daily time I set aside to be alone with God to get to know Him through the Bible and Prayer.”

I. The Importance Of A Daily Devotional Time

Your time alone with God should be the top priority in your schedule for five reasons:

1. We were **Created** to have fellowship with God

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Gen. 1:27

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Cor. 1:9

2. Jesus **Died** to make relationship to God possible.

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Cor. 1:9

3. Personal time alone with God was **Jesus' Source of Strength!**

“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16; 22:39

4. Every person who has been effective in **Service** for God developed this habit. Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Paul etc...

5. You cannot be a **Healthy, Growing** Christian without it.

“But He answered and said, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.' ”” Matt. 4:4

“I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food.” Job. 23:12

II. The Purpose Of A Daily Devotional Time

1. To give **Devotion** to God.

“Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Ps. 29:2

“(Hezekiah) And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered.” 2 Chron. 31:21

God deserves our devotion! (Rev. 4:11)

God desires our devotion! (John 4:23)

2. To get **Direction** from God.

“Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths.” Ps. 25:4

Two things To Do in a Devotional Time

- Consider Your Way:

“Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established..” Prov. 4:26

“In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” Prov. 3:6

- Commit Your Day:

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” Ps. 37:4

3. To gain **Delight** in God.

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” Ps. 37:4

NOTE: The objective of your devotional time is not only to study about Christ, but to actually spend time with Him!

4. To grow **Daily** like God.

“as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” 2 Peter 1:3-4

How To Begin A Daily Devotional Time

1. Select a specific time.

The best time to have a devotional time is when I am **My Best: Physically, Emotionally and Spiritually**

Reasons for considering an early morning devotional time:

- The example of Bible characters (Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Hannah, Job, David, Daniel, Jesus, etc...).
- It seems logical to begin the day with it.

“The best time to tune your instruments is before you play the concert, not after.”

- It demonstrates that meeting with God is your first priority. You give Him the first part of your day.
- You are likely to be more rested, your mind is less cluttered, and it’s often the quietest time.

How Long Should A Devotional Time Be?

Three Guidelines:

- Start with 15 minutes and let it grow.
- Do not watch the clock.
- Emphasize quality, not quantity.

2. Choose a special Place.

“Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also .” (to pray) Luke 22:39

“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Mark 1:35

3. Gather the resources you will need.

- Bible with readable print
- Notebook: to write down what the Lord speaks to you about
- Songbook: if you want to sing

4. Beginning with the right attitudes:

- Reverence

“Be still, and know that I am God;...” Ps. 46:10

- Attitude of Expectancy

“Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.” Ps. 119:18

- Willingness to Obey

*“If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine...”
John 7:17*

5. Follow a simple plan

Fifteen Minutes with God

- **Relax** (1 minute)

Be still and quiet! Slow Down! Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.

- **Read** (4 minutes)

See the section on “How To Read God’s Word.”

Begin reading where you left off the day before. Read until you feel God has told you something. Then stop and think about it.

- **Reflect** (4 minutes)

See section on “How To Meditate On God’s Word.”

Think about what the passage means to your life. Write down your thoughts. Part of reflecting is memorizing verses that speak to you in a special way. See section on “How To Memorize God’s Word.”

- **Record** (2 minutes)

See the section on “How To Apply God’s Word.”

Write out at personal application statement that is practical, possible & measureable.

Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips.

- **Request** (4 minutes)

See the section on “The Habit of Prayer.”

Conclude your Devotional time by talking to God about what he has shown you and making your requests from your prayer list.

III. How To Overcome The Problems With Your Devotional Time

1. The Problem of Discipline

Your first problem in establishing a devotional time will face you the moment you wake up each morning: Am I going to get out of bed?

- Go to bed **On Time**
- Get Up **Immediately**
- Beware of “Quiet Time” **Robbers (Distractions)**
- Fall asleep thinking **Spiritual Thoughts**

2. The Problem of Distractions

Satan will try to use anything to get your mind to wander during a devotional time.

Suggestions:

- Get out of **Bed**
- Get thoroughly **Awake**
- Read & Pray **Aloud - It's harder to Fall Back Asleep**
- **Walk** during your prayer time.
- Keep a **Notebook Nearby**

3. The Problem of Dryness

Sometimes you will feel like you are not getting anything out of your devotional time.

NOTE: never judge your quiet time by your **Feelings**

Possible Causes of Spiritual Dryness:

- Your Physical condition
- Disobedience to God
- Rushing your devotional time
- Getting in a rut
- Not sharing insights with others

4. The Problem of Diligence

Your greatest problem will be your struggle to stay consistent.

It seems that Satan fights nothing harder than your devotional time.

Suggestions:

- Make a covenant or vow to God
- Schedule it on your daily calendar
- Be prepared for Satan's excuses
- Leave your bible open at night to the passage for the next day.

What if I Miss a Day?

Do not **Get on a Guilt Trip**

Do not **Be Legalistic - God Won't Condemn You**

Do not **Give Up**

It takes **Three** weeks for you to become familiar with a new task.

Then it takes another **Three** weeks before it becomes a comfortable habit.

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Gal. 6:9

A Prayer of Commitment

"Father I realize that I was created to have fellowship with you. Thank you for making this privilege possible through Jesus' death. I know that daily fellowship with you is to be the most important thing in my life. I now want to commit myself to spending at least some time every day with you in a devotional time of Bible reading and prayer. I am trusting in your strength to help me be consistent, in Jesus name, Amen."

SESSION 2: The Habit of Time in God's Word

I. How To Hear God's Word

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17

Ways to hear god's Word:

- The Bible on CD
- Church services & studies
- Sermon recordings
- Radio & TV teachers

Problem: We forget 95% of what we hear after 72 hours.

How to Improve Your Hearing

1. Be ready and eager to hear God.

"... He (Jesus) cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Luke 8:8

"...So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear..." James 1:19

2. Deal with attitudes that prevent hearing God. (Luke 8:4-15)

"Therefore take heed how you hear..." Luke 8:18

- A Closed Mind: Is fear, pride or bitterness preventing me from hearing God?
- A Superficial Mind: Am I really serious about wanting to hear God speak to me?
- A Preoccupied Mind: Am I too busy and concerned with other things to concentrate on what God has to say?

3. Confess any sin in your life.

"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls..." James 1:21

4. Take notes on what you hear.

“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.” Heb 2:1

5. Act on what you hear.

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”
James 1:22

“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”
James 1:25

II. How To Read God’s Word

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” Rev. 1:3

1. How often should I read God’s Word? **Daily**

“And it shall be with him, and he shall read it (The Scriptures) all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,” Deut. 17:19

Suggestions:

- Read it systematically
 - Read it in a Bible apart from notes
 - Read it in different translations:
Amplified, Interlinear
 - Read it aloud, quietly to yourself
 - Underline or color code key verses
 - Choose a reading plan and stick with it
2. If I read approximately **Fifteen** minutes a day, I can read through the Bible, once in a year.

III. How To Study God's Word

“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” Acts 17:11

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2Tim. 2:15

1. The difference between reading and studying the Bible is that you **Have a Pencil or Pen** when you study.
2. The secret of effective Bible study is knowing how to **Ask the Right Questions**.

Six Basic Questions:

- **Who is Writing This and to Whom?**
- **What is Being Said (Read Around the Verse for Context)?**
- **Where is it Written From and Where is Written to?**
- **When Was it Written - Major Events?**
- **Why Was it Written?**
- **How; What Style of Literature?**

Suggested Resources For Bible Study

Study Bibles:

The Best Personal Study Bible:

“The Spirit Filled Life Bible” (Nelson)

The Best Topical Study Bible:

“Thompson Chain Reference Bible” (Kirkbride)

Bible Handbooks:

“Richard’s Complete Handbook” (Word)

“Hayford’s Bible Handbook” (Nelson)

“Eerdman’s Bible Handbook” (Eerdmans’s)

Other Important study tools:

As many different translations as you can afford (these can be purchased in parallel editions)

A complete concordance to match your translation

“The Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible” (Baker)

“Baker’s Bible Atlas” (Baker)

“Vine’s Expository Dictionary” (Revell)

“Harper’s Bible Dictionary” (Harper & Row)

IV. How To Memorize God’s Word

“Keep my commands and live, And my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart.” Prov. 7:2-3

Benefits of Memorizing Scripture

1. It helps me resist temptation.

*“Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!”
Ps. 119:11*

2. It helps me make wise decisions.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.” Ps. 119:105

3. It strengthens me when I am under stress.

*“Remember the word to Your servant, Upon which You have caused me to hope.
This is my comfort in my affliction, For Your word has given me life!”
Ps. 119:49-50*

4. It comforts me when I am sad.

“Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.”
Jer. 15:16

“For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you; Let them all be fixed upon your lips.” Prov. 22:18

5. It helps me witness to unbelievers.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;” 1Pet. 3:15

- When to Memorize A Verse
- During your devotional time
- While exercising
- While waiting
- At bedtime (Ps. 63:6)

How To Memorize A Verse

1. Pick a verse that speaks to you.
2. Say the reference before and after the verse.
3. Read the verse aloud many times.
4. Break the verse into natural phrases.
5. Emphasize key words when quoting the verse.
6. Write down the verse and erase a word at a time.
7. Write out the verse on a flash card.
8. Carry some cards with you at all times for review.
9. Display your verses in prominent places.
10. Put the verse to music. Write a song!

11. Get a partner so you can check each other.

Suggested beginning rate: Two new verses a week.

Three Keys To Memorizing

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

We remember what is **Important to Us**.

“The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.” Ps. 119:72

Scripture Memory Course

[See Scripture Sheet Handout](#)

The following verses suggest a “balance” in scripture memory. The verses selected are key verses in understanding the foundations of the Christian Life & Christian Growth. Do not feel tied down to this suggested list. This is only a tool to lead you in an understanding of the importance of memorizing “key” verses.

V. How To Meditate On God’s Word

“But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.” Ps. 1:2,3

Meditation is focused thinking about a Bible verse in order to discover how I can apply its truth to my own life.

Why Meditate On Scripture?

1. It is the key to becoming like Christ.

“Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”
Prov. 4:23

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Rom. 12:2

2. It is the key to answered prayer.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” John 15:7

3. It is the key to successful living.

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Joshua 1:8

Six ways to Meditate On A Verse

1. Picture it! Visualize the scene in your mind
2. Pronounce it! Say the verse aloud, each time emphasizing a different word.
3. Paraphrase it! Rewrite the verse in your own words.
3. Personalize it! Replace the pronouns of people in the verse with your own name.
5. Pray it! Turn the verse into a prayer and say it back to God.
6. Probe it! Ask the following nine questions: (S.P.A.C.E. P.E.T.S) Is there any...

S.P.A.C.E. P.E.T.S Questions

Sin to **Confess**?

Promise to **Claim**?

Attitude to **Change**?

Command to **Obey**?

Example to **Follow**?

Prayer to **Pray**?

Error to **Avoid**?

Truth to **Believe**?

Something to Thank God For?

VI. How To Apply God's Word

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."
James 1:22

"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5:19

How To Apply Scripture

See "The Application Bridge" Handout

- What did it mean to the original hearers?
- What is the underlying timeless principle?
- Where or how could I practice that principle?

Most applications will focus on the one of 3 relationships:

- With God
- With myself
- With other people

Four Marks Of A Good Application Project

- It's Personal
- It's Practical
- It's Possible
- It's Provable

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." John 13:17

SIX WAYS TO GET A GRASP ON YOUR BIBLE

The Hand Illustration

On this page trace an outline of your own hand!

**SESSION 3: The Habit of Prayer
 The Habit of Giving**

“not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.” Rom. 12:11,12

How To Revitalize your Prayer Life:

I. Approach Prayer With the Right Attitude (Matt. 6:5-8):

Be **Real in Your Prayer - Prayer is a Conversation**

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” Matt 6:5

Do not try to **Impress Others**

Do not try to **Impress God**

Be **Relaxed**

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” Matt. 6:6

Be **Revealing**

“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.” Matt. 6:7-8

II. Use the Model Jesus Gave Us

Matthew 6:9-15 *“In this manner, therefore, pray...”*

The Six Parts Of Prayer

1. **Praise:** I begin by **Expressing My Love for God**

“Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”

Two Kinds Of Praise

“Adoration” – Praising God for who He is.

“Thanksgiving” – Praising God for what He has done.

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name.”

How to Praise God

1st: As you read your Bible, make a list of God’s character qualities that you discover and then review them with you pray.
(See Prayer Guide #1)

Examples:

- God is patient Num. 14:18
- God is merciful Num. 14:18
- God knows everything 1Sam. 2:2
- God is loving 1 John 4:8

Key: **God's Character** is the basis for our boldness in making requests in prayer. God answers the prayers that acknowledge who He is!

2nd: Remind yourself and affirm the promises God has made that are combined in the meaning of His names.
(See Prayer Guide #2)

3rd: Make a list of all that you are thankful for and review them when you pray.
(See Prayer Guide #3)

2. **Purpose:** I commit myself **To God's Will for My Life**

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven...”

Pray for God’s will to be done...in my family...my church...my ministry...my job...my future...my city...the Nation...the World.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Rom. 12:2

3. **Provision:** I ask God to **Provide for My Needs**

“Give us today our daily bread...”

What needs can I pray about **All Needs**

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Phil. 4:19

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Rom. 8:32

Key: **Be Specific in Your Prayer**. Write down your requests, with a promise you are claiming from the bible and expect an answer!

(See Prayer Guide #4)

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Phil. 4:6

4. **Pardon:** I ask God to **Forgive My Sins**

“And forgive us our debts...”

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to **Reveal** every sin.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.” Ps. 139:23,24

2. Confess each sin **Specifically**.

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” Prov. 28:13

3. Make **Restitution** to others when necessary.

“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matt. 5:23:24

4. By faith **Accept** God's forgiveness.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John. 1:9

5. **People:** I pray for **Other People**

"...as we forgive our debtors..."

Pray for others. (1 Tim. 2:1)

If you want to know how to pray for others...

Look at the Prayers of Paul

Eph. 1:15-19, Col. 1:3-12, 1 Thes. 1:2,3, 2 Thes. 1:11,12

Make a prayer list of people you want to pray for. You might pray for different people on different days of the week.

(See Prayer Guide #5)

6. **Protection:** I ask God for **Spiritual Protection**.

"And do no lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one."

Believers face a spiritual battle everyday. Satan wants to defeat you through temptation and fear. By praying for protection, you will have the confidence to face every situation during the day.

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." 1 John 4:4

Prayer Guide #2 The Names of God

Did you know that God has several names? They are all in the bible and each name describes a facet of his character. You can take each of these 8 names and focus individually on what God is really like! Pray the names of God as affirmations of praise!

8 Hebrew names of God – Declare who God is

Jehovah-Shammah: “God is Present with me” You are here! I am never alone!	Ezekiel 48:35
Jehovah-Rohi: “God is my Shepherd” You lead me and feed me and protect me!	Psalm 23:1
Jehovah-Jireh: “God is my Provider” You see what I need before I even ask!	Genesis 22:14
Jehovah-Rophe: “God is my Healer” You can heal my body, emotions and relationships!	Exodus 15:26
Jehovah-Tsidkenu: “God is my Righteousness” You accept me and forgive me!	Jeremiah 23:6
Jehovah-M’Kaddish: “God is my Sanctification” You make me holy!	Leviticus 20:8
Jehovah-Shalom: “God is my Peace” You give me peace in spite of circumstances!	Judges 6:24
Jehovah-Nissi: “God is my Banner” You are my victory in conflict and confrontation!	Exodus 17:15

Think on the implications of these names and you’ll have plenty to praise God for...

Prayer Guide #5 People I'm Praying For

Family:
Christian Friends:
Friends I'd like to see become Christians:
Spiritual Leaders:
Government Leaders:
Others:

The Habit of Giving

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” 1 Cor. 16:2

I. How My giving Reveals My Spiritual Maturity

“But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also.” 2 Cor. 8:7

1. Giving makes me **More Like God.**

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

2. Giving draws me **Closer to God.**

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matt. 6:21

3. Giving is the antidote to **Materialism.**

“Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” 1 Tim. 6:17-19

4. Giving strengthens **My Faith.**

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding.” Prov. 3:5

“Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the first fruits of all your increase.” Prov. 3:9

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38

5. Giving is an investment **For Eternity**.

"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." 1 Tim. 6:18-19

6. Giving blesses me **In Return**.

"He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor." Prov. 22:9

"The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself." Prov. 11:25

"A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion." Ps. 112:5

7. Giving **Makes Us Happier**.

"He (Jesus) said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

II. What The Bible Teaches About Tithing

What is tithing?

"Tithe" means "a **Tenth** part"

What is the difference between a "tithe" and an "offering?"

A "tithe" is giving **Ten %** of my income.

An "offering" is anything I give **In Addition** to my tithe.

Why should I tithe?

6 Reasons From God's Word

1. Because God **Commands It**.

"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year." Deut. 14:22

2. Because Jesus **Commended It**.

"... For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." Matt. 23:23

3. Tithing demonstrates that God has **First Place**.

"And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always." Deut. 14:23

4. Tithing reminds me that **Everything** was given to me by God.

"And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." Deut. 8:18

5. Tithing expresses my **Gratitude**.

"What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me?" Ps. 116:12

6. Tithing proves that I **Really Love God**.

"...in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others." 2Cor. 8:7b-8

What should I tithe?

The **First** part of what I earn, not the **Last**.

"Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the first fruits of all your increase." Prov. 3:9

Where should I give my tithe?

Where I **Worship**.

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it." Malachi 3:10

When should I tithe?

When You Gather to Worship.

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” 1 Cor. 16:2

Giving with the right attitudes.

Give **Willingly.**

“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity....” 2 Cor. 9:7

Give **Joyfully.**

“...for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Cor. 9:7

Give **Expectantly.**

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” 2 Cor. 9:6

The Key to Giving

“...but they first gave themselves to the Lord...” 2 Cor. 8:5

A Commitment Prayer

“Father I know you love me and want what’s best for me. I recognize that all I have, or will ever have, comes from you. I am more interested in pleasing you than in having more possessions. I want you to have first place in my life and I am willing to begin tithing as you have commanded. Out of gratitude for all you have done for me, and in expectation that you will continue to provide for me, I commit myself to returning at least the first 10% of all I earn back to you. I want to begin investing for eternity. Help me to remain faithful to this commitment. In Jesus’ name amen.”

**SESSION 4: The Habit of Fellowship = Participating in God's
Family
How To Start And Maintain Good Habits**

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”
Heb. 10:24,25

I. Why is fellowship so important?

1. I **Belong** in God's family with other believers.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Gal. 6:10

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” Eph. 2:19

“so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” Rom. 12:5

2. I need **Others Encouragement** to grow spiritually.

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.”
Heb. 10:24

“Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up... Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”
Eccl. 4:9,10,12

3. I need **Correction & Accountability** to grow spiritually.

“As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.”
Prov. 27:17

“but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Heb.3:13

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Gal.6:1,2

4. Christ is **Present** when we fellowship together.

“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” Matt.18:20

5. Fellowship is a **Witness** to the world.

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

6. I am **Obligated** to every other Christian!

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Pet. 4:10

The “One Another’s” of Fellowship (partial list)

- Serve one another Gal. 5:13
- Accept one another Rom. 15:7
- Forgive one another Col. 3:13
- Greet one another Rom. 16:16
- Bear one another’s burdens Gal. 6:2
- Be devoted to one another Rom. 12:10
- Honor one another Rom. 12:10
- Teach one another Rom. 15:14
- Submit to one another Eph. 5:21
- Encourage one another 1 Thess. 5:11

How can a large church maintain close friendships?

Every member needs to be a part of a **Small Group**

“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” Acts 2:46

Two types of church meetings

Large Group - Celebrations (Sunday Morning)

Small Group - Fellowship (Home Groups)

“Likewise greet the church that is in their house...” Rom. 16:5

II. What is the purpose of small groups?

Acts 2:42-47

1. Bible Study

“They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching...”

2. Fellowship

“...and to fellowship...”

3. Communion

“...and to the breaking of bread...”

4. Prayer

“...and to prayer...”

5. Support

“...they gave to anyone as he had need...”

6. Social

“...they ate together with glad and sincere hearts...”

7. Singing and Praising

“Praising God and enjoying the favor of all people...”

8. Outreach

“And the Lord added to their number daily those being saved.”

HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN GOOD HABITS

1. Desire

- You must start with a strong desire
- You must be internally motivated.
- If you start only half-heartedly, you will never make it to the success point.

2. Decision

- Begin right now! Do not wait. Do not procrastinate.
- You do not slide into a new habit. “one of these days” never arrives.
- You must have a starting point. It is easier to break a bad habit today than it will be tomorrow.

“He who observes the wind will not sow, And he who regards the clouds will not reap.” Eccl.11:4

3. Declaration

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

“Make vows to the Lord your God, and pay them;” Ps. 76:11

4. Determination

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

5. Do It

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

6. Double Up

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

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Heb. 10:24,25

“Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.” Eccl. 4:9,10

7. Depend on God

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

“for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Phil. 2:13

MATURITY COVENANT

LAS CRUCES FOURSQUARE CHURCH

As one who has completed Triumphant 201, I am now committing myself to the habits necessary for spiritual growth and personal maturity. With the strength and power that God provides, I am now committing myself to “The Habits of a Disciple.” By God’s grace, I will:

1. Spend time in God’s Word daily
2. Spend time praying to God daily
3. Give financially and of myself to the Lord.
4. Get involved in a meaningful small group.

Name (Please print carefully)

Signature

Date