



6 Pursuing Spiritual Growth

Main Goal: Students will learn about spiritual practices and develop a plan to help them continue to move towards Jesus in all areas of their life.

Prep & Prayer: The purpose of this guide is not simply to move students away from pornography, but to help them take steps towards Jesus in both the short and long term. Pray that God would guide your conversation and that the student you're meeting with would have a growing hunger to dive deeper in their personal walk with Jesus.

Review

Ask student the questions they suggested last week about "knowing", "being" and "doing".

What we talked about last week:

- Last week we talked about the importance of intentional accountability and worked on creating a holistic plan. We looked at knowing, being and doing and some practical steps we could put into action this past week.

Take-Home Follow-up:

- Were there any times this past week, where it didn't feel like, or you acted in a way that didn't represent the reality that you are God's workmanship, re-created in Christ Jesus? How did you respond?
- Did you have a chance to look at any of the accountability software options? If so, did you pick one and start using it? How did it go?

Intro

Share ways you connect with a close friend too.

We've covered A LOT over the past few weeks as we've met together. We've had some good, hard conversations, and talked through some really practical 'wise steps' towards purity in the struggle of pornography. The huge piece for us to remember is that this whole conversation isn't just about moving away from pornography, but more importantly, *it's about the journey towards Jesus.*

Today we want to talk about how we can be intentional about growing in our relationship with Jesus in *all* areas.

Warm Up Question: What are ways that you connect with your best friend? What do you like to do together?

When it comes to our friends and relationships, we need to be intentional about investing in them! When we meet someone, we need to spend time with them, ask them questions, and have shared experiences to get to know them and develop a friendship with them. The same is true in our relationship with God. In order to deepen our relationship with Him, we need to hang out with Him, get to know Him, and talk with Him!

Self-Assessment

Have there been practices in your life that have helped you grow deeper in your relationship with Jesus?

How consistently do you do those practices?

What makes it difficult for you to be consistent with these practices?

Read Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

Who do you think are the 'witnesses' this passage is referring to? (Hint: Look back at Hebrews 11!)

What are some examples of the 'weight[s] that slow us down and the 'sin that so easily trips us up'? Notice the author speaks of two different things...sin, as well as things that may not be sin, but "slow us down". An example could be something like time on the internet.

Why is it so important for us to 'keep our eyes on Jesus'?

What are some ways to do that?

How does remembering what Christ did for us on the cross encourage us in our journey towards Jesus?

Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus means finding ways that we can intentionally grow in our relationship with Him. While there are many ways we can do that (which we'll touch on later) three key foundations are always prayer, and the Word and community.

Read Colossians 3:16 (NLT)

Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

Where in this passage do you see the foundations of prayer, the Word and community?

Let's take a look at each of the three foundations.

Bible

How does spending time in God's Word help us grow in our relationship with Him?

Where do I start? Here are some ideas: John - then move on to Acts, Romans, etc. Read through the Psalms. Go back and read through Genesis, etc. Check out the Bible app for some great reading plans! Find a friend to do it with you!

Memorizing scripture is another beautiful spiritual practice! Knowing passages of the Bible can serve as a perfect reminder of God's truths in moments and situations when we need it most.

Prayer

What is prayer? (Talking to & listening for God)

How and when should I pray?

Get really practical here! You may want to refer back to the 5 areas in our lives we spent time reflecting on in the previous guide.

Prayer: It is important to talk about the difference between time set aside for prayer, and praying continually.

Prayer can be like going for coffee with a friend - a longer, intentional conversation.

This could be a great opportunity for journaling prayer. Writing our prayers out can help us stay focused (which sometimes can be really hard!) and provide really cool opportunities to look back and reflect on ways God answered prayers and has been at work in our lives.

Other times, it's like a text! A breath prayer - a short, 1-2 sentence prayer thanking God, or asking for His help or awareness of His presence.

Ex: "God, thank you for giving me the courage to stay out of that situation."

Accountability/Gathering in Community

Find a faith community and jump in!

Hebrews 10:24-25 says

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

We are created to do life together in community!

How does gathering in community (especially with others who can hold us accountable) help us grow in our relationship with God?

Response

Share ways that you connect with God too. What are some of your spiritual practices?

How do you best connect with God?

We are all created and wired differently. For some of us, the thought of having a quiet day to ourselves where we can sit in the silence, read, pray and meditate, is music to our ears! For others of us, just the thought of that makes us start to go stir-crazy! We'd much rather go for a hike or go do something active!

It's important for us to learn how we're wired to connect with God, and to also learn how to connect with Him in ways that may challenge us or take us outside of our comfort zone.

A helpful tool to get us started is to look at "9 Sacred Pathways" by Gary Thomas. Following God is the furthest thing from a formula, but this tool can help us learn how we're wired to relate to God in ways that are life-giving and will help us grow!

Take a look at the descriptions of the 9 Sacred Pathways on the last page of this session. You can download the pdf here (or check the resource for this session on truthmatters.ca/purity).

If you're interested in going deeper with the pathways, check out these resources/online assessments and reading:

- <http://rezchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Spiritual-Pathway-Assessment.pdf>
- <http://www.soulshpherd.org/2012/09/sacred-pathways-survey/>

As Jesus taught us, the real value of any pathway is not how it makes you feel about yourself, but the degree to which it helps you to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31).

Work together to create a "Spiritual Plan" on the next page. Remember - this isn't about a 'formula' - it's about finding ways to intentionally journey towards Jesus.

Author Eugene Peterson reminds us that our journey towards God is "**a long obedience in the same direction.**"

 **Take Home**

Take a look at the last page of this session called *Fun & Creative Ideas for a Day With God*, for some great ideas to get you started on spending time with God.

Set a short term goal for this week - what are two or three ways you can be intentional about connecting and growing in your relationship with Jesus in the next few days?

 **Fighter Verse**

Fight the Lie: I'll just naturally grow in my relationship with God, I don't have to actually be intentional about it.

Colossians 2:6-7 (NLT)

And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

PRAY to wrap up your time together!



My Spiritual Plan

Reading My Bible

Prayer

Community

Physical Health

How's it going these days?

What's my plan going forward?

1 month from now

6 months from now

1 year from now

Who am I going to do this with?