

Follow Jesus.

Our **pursuit** is guided by God's Spirit through community, prayer, and the Bible.

“How do I grow? What does a spiritually mature person even look like? Why does it seem so hard, and go so slowly? Will I ever be any different? To paraphrase Lew Smedes: If you have ever been frustrated with what you know of spiritual life, ever wondered if real change is possible, ever felt confused or stuck – you're my kind of person... The Christian gospel insists that the transformation of the human personality really is possible. Never easy. Rarely quick. But possible. I see it happening in people sometimes – occasionally even in myself. It begins to happen anytime people become intensely serious about learning from Jesus how to arrange their lives.”

John Ortberg (The Life You've Always Wanted)

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”

The Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11.1)

Who has mentored you in your faith? Who has been an example to you, and why?

What is a Spiritual Discipline?

A practice I engage in that I might position myself for greater cooperation with God in seeing His Kingdom come and will be done in my life.

“A discipline for the spiritual life is nothing but an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and His Kingdom. They enable us more and more to live in a power that is, strictly speaking, beyond us, deriving from the spiritual realm itself, as we ‘yield ourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God,’ as Romans 6:13 puts it.”

Dallas Willard

This set of discussion guides focuses on the following disciplines:

- **Inward:** Prayer & Fasting (others include meditation, Bible Study (later), etc.)
- **Outward:** Simplicity & Service (others include solitude, submission, etc.)
- **Corporate:** Worship & Celebration (others include confession, guidance, etc.)

Why doesn't God answer my prayers as I think He should?

- 1) Prayer is always answered, but not always the way we think it will.

“No” = Your request is not in God's will.

(2 Samuel 12:15-16; 22-23; Matthew 26:36-39)

“Slow” = Your request is not God's will at this time.

(Genesis. 15:2-6; 21:2; John 11:3,6,14-15, 17, 43-44)

“Grow” = Your motives are wrong.

(Numbers 14:26-45; James 4:3)

“Go” = Your request, timing and spiritual condition are OK - yes!

(1 Kings 18:36-39; Acts 12:5-7, 12-17; James 5:17-18)

- 2) Scripture is clear that God answers every prayer in some manner. Yet, there are some guidelines for effective praying - certain attitudes or practices can hinder prayers. The following passages help illustrate that we must be in right relationship with God and with others in order for our prayers to be effectively heard by God.

Psalm 66:18 - Harboring unconfessed sin creates a barrier between you and God.

1 John 3:22-23 - God hears the prayers of those who obey His commands.

James 4:3 - God will not hear prayers prayed with wrong or selfish motives.

1 John 5:14-15 - We are instructed to pray according to His will, not our own.

Mark 11:22-24 -When we pray, we are to ask in faith; unbelief will hinder prayers.

John 15:7 - Having regular fellowship with Jesus will enable your prayers to be heard. When fellowship is broken, so is communication with God.

Luke 11:9 - Sometimes we have no answer because we never asked. We are to pursue appropriate requests regularly and bring them to God.

Ephesians 6:18 - Prayer guided by the Holy Spirit is also a prerequisite. We must also persevere in our prayers and resist offering anything to God in the flesh.

Mark 11:25 - If you are unable to forgive someone, God will not forgive you. Restored and right relationships with others are essential for open communication with God.

Philippians 4:6 - We are to pray with thankful hearts. Ungratefulness will hinder being heard.