

# 6 Pursuing Spiritual Growth

## REVIEW

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

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?

## GOD'S VIEW

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?

## 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?

How do you best connect with God?

## RESPONSE

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.

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!



# Reading My Bible

## Community

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?

## **Nine Sacred Pathways**

Spiritual temperaments that God creates in human beings so that we can connect and worship Him in unique ways. (Based on *Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God* by Gary Thomas © 1996)

1. **Naturalists** — love God best outdoors. These people worship in the midst of God's creation. They celebrate His majesty and discover spiritual truths through nature
2. **Sensates** — love God through their senses. These people worship through sensual experiences — sights (like art), sounds (music), smells, and more
3. **Traditionalists** — love God through religious ritual and symbols. These people worship through traditions and sacraments of the Church. They believe structure, repetition, and rigidity, like weekly liturgy, leads to deeper understanding of God and faith
4. **Ascetics** — love God in solitude and simplicity. These people worship through prayer and quiet time, and the absence of all outside noise and distraction
5. **Activists** — love God through confrontation, fighting for godly principles and values. They worship through their dedication to and participation in God's truth about social and evangelistic causes
6. **Caregivers** — love God by serving others, and worship by giving of themselves. They may nurse the sick and disabled, "adopt" a prisoner, donate time at a shelter, etc.
7. **Enthusiasts** — love God through mystery and celebration. These people worship with outward displays of passion and enthusiasm. They love God with gusto!
8. **Contemplatives** — love God through adoration. These people worship by their attentiveness, deep love, and intimacy. They have an active prayer life
9. **Intellectuals** — love God with their mind and their hearts are opened up to a new attentiveness when they understand something new about God. These people worship through intense study, apologetics, and intellectual pursuits of their faith.

Please note:

- **We are a mixture** — we rarely rely on a single approach or temperament to connect with God every time; we are more likely to be a mix of several
- **Temperaments change** — spiritual temperaments evolve over time, much like couples love each other differently over the course of a marriage. We are likely to find different ways to connect with God during our lifetime

# Fun & Creative Ideas For A Day With God

Go for a long drive & listen to worship music, a podcast, or sermon | Spend an afternoon at a really neat coffee shop doing a word study | Spend a day at an art gallery with your Bible | Go to a monastery for a day | Go for a bike ride or hike and bring your Bible or worship music | Try Sabbath with a friend (Head to a nearby city, take some time apart to spend time with Jesus reading, praying, or doing listening prayer and then come back and talk about what God was saying to you.) | Go for a walk in the woods | Rent a treehouse for a day (I know someone who actually did this and loved it!) | Paint a picture that represents a lesson God has been teaching you recently. | Write God a song | Write him a poem | Look up creative ways to read your Bible, different methods, and try a new way to read. (Maybe it's the colour coding method, mediation method, journaling method, etc.) | Start journaling | Memorize scripture that reminds you of an attribute of God | Questions to ask God: What did I do that made you smile this week? What do you like about me? What did we do together this week that we both enjoyed? When have I felt close to you? | Questions to ask yourself (reflect on your week): Who did I encourage this week? How have I honoured God with my time? Money? Words? Parenting? Etc. Who made me laugh this week? What did I learn about myself this week? (Is there a pattern?) | Ask God to give you an open door to share your faith that day and see what He does | Read about church fathers and ask God to speak to you through their lives | Take your camera and ask God to show you the world through His eyes | Journal things that you are thankful for | Look up different ways to pray | Get a newspaper and pray for what is going on in the world | Look at a map and pray for different cities and countries | Pray for the leadership in your church | Pray for your youth | Pray for your family | ABC prayers (go through the alphabet and pray for something specifically, starting with each letter, A-Z.) | Pray scripture | Pray some of the ancient prayers | Do a character study | Do a study about a character trait of God | Pray a worship song or hymn instead of singing it | Memorize a scripture in an area you are struggling in