

# A Study on Spiritual Growth

Bristol Road Church of Christ

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## Getting back to the basics

When I played sports, I can remember vividly my coaches trying to help me and my teammates by going over the 'fundamentals of the game.' Those fundamentals were always the key between our success and our defeat. When we remembered our fundamentals we functioned like a well-oiled machine. When our fundamentals were forgotten, however, it seemed like we were easy targets for our opponents. The same is true for our spiritual lives.

When we focus on the fundamentals of our faith, we grow and are prepared for the attacks of our enemy. So, lets get back to the basics with our spiritual fundamentals!

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# Speaking with God

A 'basic' or fundamental part of every relationship is communication. Without healthy and regular communication, a relationship quickly deteriorates. This same principle applies to our relationship with God - that is why our communication with God is so important.

## *Learning to speak with God - Luke 11:1-13*

- Jesus' disciples had to be taught much about prayer
- Learning to pray is a process
- What important truths about prayer and how to go about it do we learn from this passage?
- What are some ways that you could go about learning to pray effectively and consistently?

## *Speaking with attitude - Luke 8:9-14*

- What attitude does God want us to learn to have as we pray?
- What happens to those who exalt themselves?
- What happens to those who humble themselves?
- What does this teach us about prayer?

## *Speaking practically - Matthew 6:9-13*

What is commonly called the Lord's prayer was given by Jesus to his disciples, not as a prayer that should necessarily just be blindly repeated over and over again but it was a model for them how to pray

- "Our Father in heaven, your name honored as holy"
  - Praise and Honor:
    - Jesus opened the model prayer by recognizing the greatness of God as our Father and praising him
    - When we pray we can spend a few minutes at the beginning showing our gratitude for all that God has done and praising him for his greatness
- "Your kingdom come, you will be done on earth as it is in heaven"
  - Kingdom Living
    - For can pray that that more and more people would submit to the rule and reign in the hearts and lives of us and those in our world.
    - We want to make a list of the people, things, and events that we would like to pray for regularly just so that we don't forget
    - Don't forget as well to keep a journal of some kind of answered prayers; this will encourage you as go along in your kingdom living
    - Prayer is when we align ourselves with Gods' will and ask that he continue his work of expanding his kingdom more and more

# Speaking with God

## □ “Give us today our daily bread”

### □ Needs

- We are told that we can take everything to God as our Father; this is the time to do that
- We should be certain, however, that we are praying for things in such a way so as to align with God’s will and not ask for things for selfish benefit
- We can also ask that God provide for others whether it be through us or various other methods

## □ “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”

### □ Confession and Forgiveness

- It is important to confess our sin to God and seek to remain in his forgiveness in Christ
- This is also a good time to ask God to show us if we need to confess to others, ask their forgiveness, or make amends for something that we have done
- We should continue to pray that God continues to help us grow in our mercy, patience and forgiveness of others

## □ “Do not bring us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one”

### □ Deliverance and Purity

- Ask God to keep us from harm and temptation
- We should know that God will keep us from much temptation but that he will allow us to go through times of struggle - and that struggle can grow our faith and perseverance.
- When that happens we should ask that he deliver us, show us how to remain in him, and remain faithful to his will

# One Another Relationships

As a Christian, it is not only important to growth our relationship with God, but grow our relationships with others as well. We are called to live as a "body" that works in unison to share the message of hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

## *The basics of the body - John 13:34-35*

- We are best recognized as Christ's body when we participate in love for and towards one another.
- This kind of love goes beyond words and is, at its core, sacrificial (1 John 3:16).
- Why is this such an important message for the church?

## *Romans 12:1-16*

- What are we called to be in view of Gods incredible mercy?
- Why do you think that Paul connects being a living sacrifice with the call to be devoted to one another?
- What are the implications of "belonging to one another" on this verse?

## *Galatians 5:13-15*

- What type of behavior are we called to in this passage verses indulging in selfish interests?
- Why is the simple call to love one another more demanding than following religious rules?

## *1 Corinthians 12:25-26*

- What does it mean to you to honor and identity with one another?
- What we do within the body, even if that includes not coming to a gathering, effects everyone else in the body. How are you actively a part of the body of Christ?
- What sort of characteristics and values must we have in ourselves in order to embrace this kind of life?
- What sort of characteristics and values must we rid ourselves of so as to not stand in the way of being the body of Christ?

## *Caring for one another - Romans 13:8*

- What debt do we have in our relationships with one another?
- To whom do we owe this debt? Who is the recipient of our paying off this debt?
- How do we fulfill the law of Christ?

# One Another Relationships

## *Romans 14:13-19*

- It's easy to be judgmental towards one another but we are called to avoid that type of attitude
- If our freedoms should come in conflict with the sincere convictions of another brother or sister, which one should take priority?
- Why do you think that God values unity within our relationships above personal freedom?

## *Romans 15:1-7*

- All of our relationships with each other should be with the best interest of one another in mind.
- Even the words we speak to one another should be measured carefully to ensure that they are with the interests of one another placed in the highest priority and to build one another up into Christ (Ephesians 4:29)

## *Colossians 3:12-14*

- The reality is that we will have opportunities to have grievances towards one another. How have you handled grievances with others in the past? In what ways do you need to grow in this area?
- Our goal is to be prepared to forgive, love and live in peace with one another as much as is within our control (Hebrews 12:14-15).

## *Hebrews 3:12-14*

- What responsibility do we bear towards one another according to this passage?
- What are some practical ways that we can do this as brothers and sisters in Christ?

## *1 Peter 4:9-10*

- We should constantly look for ways to be hospitable towards one another, to give to one another, and to use our gifts to build one another up
- When we use our gifts what does that enable God to pass through us to others?
- If we do not use the gifts that God has given us we are denying that portion of God's grace to the rest of the body

# Forgiveness from the heart

Genuine forgiveness from the heart can be one of the most difficult things a person can do. And, at the same point, Jesus states that it is absolutely essential to being one of his followers. We are told that the way that we forgive others is the way that God will forgive us, therefore we must be marked as people who are rooted in forgiveness.

## *God as an example of forgiveness - 2 Chronicles 7:14*

- God has always set an example of forgiveness.
- Because of Gods forgiving nature, he calls his people to be forgiving.

## *Micah 7:18*

- What does this passage tell us about the nature of God?

## *Forgiveness from the heart - Matthew 18:21-25*

- What important principle about forgiveness and mercy does this parable teach us?
- What is most difficult for you about forgiving others?
- How many times are we to forgive others?
- Why do you think Jesus used such an incredible number?
- It is important to remember that the sins that others perpetrate against us, could never match up to the severity of our debts and sin against God.

## *Mark 11:25-26*

- We forgive others so that the reality of stepping into God's presence and connecting with his will through prayer is not interrupted.
- If we are not living a life of forgiveness then we step out of God's reality and his forgiveness.

## *Matthew 18:15-17*

- This passage is directly addressed to situations in which someone has personally sinned against us.
- First, we are to talk to the other person, which often times means putting their interests ahead of our own because confronting someone can be extremely uncomfortable.
- Why do you think it is easier to talk about someone than to talk with them?
- If the person does not listen, sit down in love with others. This is for the benefit of helping the one who has sinned. Why do you think it is for their benefit?
- At each step the willingness to put their interests first, find reconciliation, and offer genuine forgiveness are to have priority.

# Forgiveness from the heart

## *Colossians 3:12-14*

- We forgive because it is part of the life of Christ that we have put on when we died to self
- Withholding forgiveness to others demonstrates that we haven't really entered into the reality of the life in Christ nor fully understood what God has done for us.
- Forgiveness from the heart demands that we deal with the depths of our hurt and bitterness and keep working towards true forgiveness.

## *Moving from knowing to doing - Ephesians 4:29-32*

- What does it mean that we are told to get rid of anger, rage, and bitterness?
- It is important to note that forgiveness doesn't mean acting like something never happened or removing the consequences of their sin. It does mean that we will not be held hostage, nor hold others hostage, due to past hurts.

## *2 Corinthians 2:5-11*

- Paul gives a wonderful demonstration of the attitude of forgiveness in action. He had been wronged but is far more concerned with the good of the Corinthian's community from which the offender against him came and with the offender himself.
- Notice that Paul had embraced a heart of forgiveness so deeply that he wasn't even sure if had anything to forgive.
- What can you learn specifically from Paul's example here?

## *Acts 9:26-28*

- Less than three years before this Paul had been a persecutor of the church and had Stephen, a beloved brother in this church, killed before their very eyes. Despite all of that, the Jerusalem church quickly forgave and accepted Paul. This is a picture of God's loving and forgiving family of which we are called to be a part.
- What would it take for you to be willing to embrace that kind of radical forgiveness?

# Learning & growing together

In Matthew 28, Jesus called his disciples to not only go and make disciples but he also commanded them to an ongoing lifestyle of discipleship. This discipleship involved both continual learning from and teaching of one another. The Bible offers no specific, detailed plan of how to go about that but simply urges us within our own churches, cultures, and situations to be committed to some form of ongoing discipling or mentoring of one another. “Disciple” is a term that referred to being a learner so discipling is simply a form of ongoing learning.

## *Sources of learning & growing - Hebrews 3:12-13; 2 Timothy 2:2*

- What is the source of learning and ongoing discipleship in these passages?
- What are different ways that we can learn from one another?
- Discipling relationships will most likely take on the form of having a mentor relationship. Do you have someone who can teach you and hold you accountable?
- As you mature in the faith, discipling relationships take on more of a mutual learning form.
- What are your feelings about the process of continually learning from others and preparing to teach and mentor others as you mature in your faith and understanding?

## *Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16*

- What is the source of learning and ongoing discipleship in these passages?
- What are some of the different ways that we can learn from the Bible and grow in our understanding of it?

## *Titus 2:11-12*

- What is the source of learning and ongoing discipleship in this passage?
- Learning to be led by the Spirit is such a vital aspect of our Christian life and can often lead us to places that we would not choose on our own. How can you best decipher the Spirit leading you in your life?

## *Hebrews 5:11-14; 1 Timothy 4:7; 1 Timothy 6:11*

- What is the source of learning and ongoing discipleship in these passages?
- What role do we play in our own learning and spiritual growth?
- Although we have many sources for spiritual growth, the ultimate responsibility lies with us. We cannot put the blame on others if we fail to grow spiritually.

## *Cultivating the heart of a disciple - Colossians 1:28 - 2:1*

- The goal of discipling is to become fully mature (“perfect”) in the life of Christ. There will be times of difficult and disagreement in any relationship but we must remain focused on the goal and operate from a motivation of genuine love for one another.

# Learning & growing together

## *1 Corinthians 11:1*

- We want to follow the example of those that are showing us practically how to follow the example of Christ. No person is perfect and so we should only imitate them in the areas that they are following Christ.
- As we saw in 2 Timothy 2:2; discipling is a process of passing it on. Who are you passing what you know about Christ on to?
- We not only want to imitate those who are imitating Christ but we also want to be learning to set an example that others can follow. Who is seeing the example you are setting?

## *Proverbs 10:17*

- What does this verse call us to value?
- What warning does it give us?
- Have you valued a process like mentoring or discipling in your past or have you tended to stay away from such things?
- Why is it so important as a follower of Christ?

## *Proverbs 11:14*

- Why is it important to have advisors?
- Why is it important to have a few advisors?
- How often do you seek out advice and ask questions?
- How much of a part does humility play in all of this?
- What types of things do you think would be profitable to get advice on and learn to approach in a godly manner?

## *Proverbs 15:12*

- What motivation does this verse give us to go after discipling in our lives and make sure that we get it consistently?

## *Hebrews 10:24-25*

- We should try to maintain contact with one another in one form or another on a daily basis - but why is that important?
- As part of that, we should also have a regular time (even as often as weekly) to meet with a discipling partner. What steps do you need to take to put this in action?

# Temptations

No matter how old or young you are, how many years you have been a Christian, or how big your faith is, everyone will have temptations. Temptation is inducement to do something appealing that we know to be wrong or harmful. The reality is that every sin and rebellious action that we take against God starts with temptation of one sort or another. We are constantly at war with temptation but to be successful in that battle we must know what we are fighting and where we need to fight it.

## *You are facing a battle - Ephesians 6:10-18*

- We are in a spiritual battle whether we like it or not. We will all fight a spiritual battle and we need to know the truth that knowledge and its proper use wins battles (Hosea 4:6).
- God gives us the tools to defeat Satan but it is up to us to utilize them.
- Where does Satan most often attack you?

## *1 Peter 5:8*

- What does this tell us about Satan?
- Lions tend to hunt by separating one individual from the pack and Satan can and usually works this way too. How have you seen a temptation separate you from others or what you knew you were supposed to do?

## *2 Corinthians 11:3*

- How was Eve led astray?
- If we don't control our thought life we will be devoured by our temptations. What areas of your thought life can be the most difficult or tempting for you:
  - Anger over circumstances
  - Bitterness towards others
  - Lust
  - Etc.

## *Ephesians 4:22-24*

- To be Christ-like involves controlling our thought life. When we don't do that we become enemies of God (Colossians 1:21)
- Jesus tells us in Matthew 5 that sins of the heart and mind are just as serious as sins of action. Why do you think we don't confront the sins of our mind in the same way we confront the sins of action?
- What is the connection here between dying to self and putting on the life of Christ and the way that we think and control our mind?

# Temptations

## *2 Corinthians 10:4-5*

- What does this passage urge us to do with our thoughts?
- We have to measure every thought against the word of God like a ruler. While we cannot keep thoughts from coming into our conscience, we can keep from dwelling on them.
- Most of us go to great lengths to protect ourselves from viruses and sicknesses and we lock our doors to protect our belongings and yet we naively assume that we can expose our minds to anything we desire without having any negative effects whatsoever on us. Are there some current thoughts that might be having a negative impact on you?

## *Philippians 4:8*

- Before we allow ourselves to dwell on any thoughts they should meet the standards of all eight of these attributes in the passage.
- Something could be “true” (at least in our mind) and not meet the other seven criterion.

## *James 5:16*

- Why do you think that confession is listed here as a place for healing?
- Is there something you need to confess to someone but have been scared or afraid to do so?
- What steps do you need to take in order to be obedient to confession so that temptation no longer has mastery over you?

# The Spirits leading

One of the greatest gifts of being immersed into Christ is the promise of receiving the Holy Spirit within us. That is indeed good news but what does it really mean? How does that help to transform us on a day-by-day basis and be successful in living the life of Christ? In short, what does it mean to be led by the Spirit in this new life in Christ?

## *The need for the Spirit - Isaiah 55:8*

- What does it mean that God's thoughts are not our? How should that shape our need for the Spirit in our life?

## *Jeremiah 17:9*

- The "heart" in biblical times was considered to be the seat of emotions and the will, it was the deepest and most inner part of a person
- What does this passage teach us about the normal human "heart"?
- When was a time where your "heart" led you away from what you know God wanted?

## *Romans 1:18-32, Romans 8:5-8*

- What we allow to influence us (where we place our trust/security) determines the consequences of whether we are led by the Spirit or our flesh
- When we are not in Christ we are blinded in our thinking by Satan (2 Corinthians 4:4)
- How can we walk according to the Spirit and have our mind set on the things of the Spirit if we do not have the mind of God and do typically conform to the patterns of the world?
- Do you typically find that your mind focuses on temporal things such as happiness, comfort, and security or on the pursuit of holiness and righteousness of God?

## *The solution - Ezekiel 36:26-27*

- This passage is part of a prophecy of the coming of the New Covenant.
- What does it promise that God will do for those that are part of his New Covenant?

## *Psalms 37:4*

- What promise is given here to the one who commits himself to the Lord?
- People often read this as though it says that God will give us anything we want, but the promise here is that God will give us new desires in our heart; he will transform our hearts so that we want what he wants and can be led by the Spirit

## *Romans 12:1-2*

- What do we have to do in order to change our thinking and be led by the Spirit rather than our flesh?

# The Spirits leading

## *Acts 2:38*

- At the time of our immersion God came through on his promise to place his Spirit within his people
- Why is this so huge in our efforts to be led by the Spirit?

## *Ephesians 4:17 - 5:18*

- The goal of the life in Christ is to allow the Spirit to direct us in putting off the old life and put on the new life of Christ
- Paul gives us numerous examples of how are led by the Spirit to put off the old behaviors but also to replace them with the new behavior, led by the Spirit in the life of Christ
- In this passage, Paul stated that we should have such a filling of the Spirit that it overflows into how we talk and interact with one another. Do you tend to allow the worldly side of you to influence how you talk to others, or the Spirit-filled side?

## *John 15:1-17*

- “Fruit” here refers to the ability to keep God’s covenant and please God (the background for this passage comes from Isaiah 5:1-7)
- We must remain in Christ to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Notice that a part of growing in Christ is a pruning process. Many times, we see the pruning process as negative, however, Jesus communicates this pruning as necessary to our growth and relationship with God.
- How can/ does the Spirit help us do grow in Christ during the pruning process? How could this possibly relate to the verse we read earlier in Isaiah 55:8?

# The fruit of the Spirit

When we go into strict physical training we want to see the fruit of that. We look for things like a change in our body, a loss of weight, or increased stamina and strength. When we go into spiritual training we also want to look for the fruit of our efforts and to make sure that we are truly listening to our trainer, the Holy Spirit. In other words, we want to see the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. To see the evidence of the Spirit in our life, however, we must be familiar with the fruit of the Spirit so that we can recognize it.

## *Opposing forces - Galatians 5:16-18*

- What is the relationship here between the Spirit and the flesh (sinful nature)?
- As Christians we want to live according to the Spirit but how can we truly know if we are?
- The symptoms of a life in the flesh are listed next so that we can take stock and see if the works of the flesh are continuing to exhibit themselves as the predominant characteristic in our lives.

## *Galatians 5:19-21*

- Do you see any of these warning lights still flashing in your life? If so, what does 1 John 1:5-10 tell us about this?

## *The Fruit of the Spirit - Galatians 5:22-26*

- Our desire in being trained by the Spirit is to embrace these qualities and see them growing in our lives. While you might struggle in these areas, God wants you to grow in each rather than just state that they are "not what you are good at." We should be quite familiar with each of these aspects of the fruit of the Spirit so that we can follow the Spirit's prompting in our lives in each of these areas

## *Love*

- This does not refer to romantic or affectionate love but the perfect and complete love that comes from God himself. It is the sacrificial love that Jesus demonstrated to the world and that we are to embrace in our own lives.
- What does this kind of love look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of love?

## *Joy*

- This is the joy that comes from within based on relationship with God and does not rely on external circumstances. This is different than worldly happiness which does rely on pleasing external circumstances
- What does this kind of joy look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of joy?

# The fruit of the Spirit

## *Peace*

- This refers to living in a state of harmony and concord with others rather than in constant friction with and annoyance by others.
- What does this kind of peace look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of peace?

## *Patience*

- This patience actually refers to patient endurance, steadfastness, and perseverance, often in response to wrongs done against us.
- What does this kind of patience look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of patience?

## *Kindness*

- This kindness refers to a moral integrity in every aspect of one's life.
- What does this kind of kindness look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of kindness?

## *Goodness*

- This goodness refers to uprightness of heart and overwhelming good intentions to act for the benefit of others.
- What does this kind of goodness look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of goodness?

## *Faithfulness*

- Faith refers to both the conviction that God's promises are reliable and worthy of living by as well as having the character of one who lives this way and can be relied upon.
- What does this kind of faith look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of faith?

## *Gentleness*

- Gentleness is not being "soft" or "weak" but refers to a powerful force that is kept under control and restrained intentionally.
- What does this kind of gentleness look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of gentleness?

## *Self-Control*

- Self-control refers to one who masters his desires and passions according to the leading of the Spirit.
- What does this kind of self-control look like in your life?
- What things in your life or flesh can keep you from this kind of self-control?

# Apathy & Discipline

Training and discipline are an important part of our Christian lives whether it comes to growing in the Spirit or continuing to be a learning disciple. We need to be disciplined and for most people, that is something that we need to learn at one level or another. If discipline is a key then that means we must be on guard against apathy and idleness in our lives.

## *Apathy & Laziness - Proverbs 24:30-34*

- What are the dangers of living a lazy lifestyle?
- Are there any areas in your life in which you can tend towards or be tempted to laziness or apathy?

## *1 Thessalonians 5:14*

- Why do you think Paul gave such a straightforward warning about allowing laziness within the Christian community?
- What dangers could a group of lazy people within the church community present for the people of God who are attempting to live the kingdom life?

## *Hebrews 6:11-12*

- According to this verse, what is one of the things that can lead to laziness?
- The point is that if we lose sight of the hope of resurrection and living the resurrected life now, we can become quite lazy and full of apathy.
- If lazy here is used as in the opposite of the resurrected life, then what might the author mean by laziness specifically in this context?
- What are some of the other ways that we can be lazy and what can cause those types of laziness?

## *1 Thessalonians 4:10-12*

- We are called to be communities of people that work hard avoid idleness as a way of life. What are ways that we can be idle?

## *2 Thessalonians 3:6-13*

- The word that is at the heart of this passage can be translated “idle,” “irresponsible,” or “out of step.” It was actually a word that referred to a marching soldier or dancer being out of step with everyone else
- What does this passage teach us about the dangers of being idle?

## *Discipline - Hebrews 12:11-12*

- What fruit does discipline and training bring into our life?

# Apathy & Discipline

## *1 Corinthians 9:24-27*

- What does this passage teach us about self-control and discipline?
- Why is discipline necessary in the life of Christ and following the Spirit?

## *Proverbs 12:24*

- What is the difference in outcome between the diligent person and the lazy person?

## *2 Timothy 2:15*

- What goes into being “diligent” here?

## *1 Timothy 4:7*

- We are called to train ourselves to be godly according to the training plan of the Holy Spirit, our personal trainer.
- The Christian life is a life that demands discipline and commitment.

# Confessing

One of the most important ongoing actions that we can take as Christians is regularly confessing our sin both before God and other Christians. The problem is that this action, especially to other Christians, is one of the most unnatural things that we can do. Human instinct tends toward self-preservation and rationalization not humility and confession. Yet, God tells us that if we regularly confess our sin, he will forgive us. Confession is vitally important to understand and to engage in as a regular discipline.

## *Luke 11:1-4*

- When Jesus taught us how to pray, it included confessing our sins to God. Confession is a part of our life in Christ. Confessing our sins to God shows that we recognize our own sin and our constant need for him. Is confession of your sins a regular part of your dialogue with God?

## *Why confession is important - Proverbs 28:13*

- When we confess our sins honestly, we renounce them and show that we want to get rid of them.
- Why is this a valuable step?

## *Psalms 32:1-5*

- How do we remain in God's forgiveness?
- When we don't confess our sins we show that we are still clinging to them (and some aspect of our old lives outside of Christ) and put ourselves in danger of moving outside of the life of Christ where we have forgiveness.

## *1 John 1:5-10*

- When we have fellowship with one another, the blood of Jesus cleanses us and the word comes to life. If we do not confess, it is the same as saying that we are without sin. Our lives in Christ should be transparent –there is no hiding (darkness) in God.
- Confession should be a part of our daily life – in our prayers and in our conversations with one another. Do you make confession a part of your every day life?

## *James 5:16*

- Why do you think James encourages us to confess our sins to one another?
- Outside of Christ there is fear of being transparent and talking about sin for fear people will hold it against us or feel differently about us. In Christ, we help each other with our struggles and sin through prayer, the word and relationship
- A refusal to confess our sins to others demonstrates usually creates a secrecy where sin runs rampant. Have you experienced a time where the secrecy of sin continued because you felt like you could not confess those sins with someone else?

# Confessing

## *Acts 19:18-20*

- A community of believers that engages regularly in confession shows that they value God's love, redemption and transformation over the power of sin and death.
- A community that confesses will put itself into position to be used powerfully by God.

## *Psalms 44:20-21*

- How does it make you feel to know that God knows the secrets of our hearts and the motives behind them?
- Does it give you any assurance to know that God knows these things, yet still loves you?

## *Philemon 1:6*

- We are called to share in the partnership or sharing of our faith as a community with other believers and part of that partnering is confessing our sins to one another.

## *Philippians 2:1-8*

- Based on this verse, what are some things you think it takes to be able to confess our sins to God and to others?

# Generosity

We live in a world where the pursuit of wealth and possession is considered to be among the highest pursuits possible. With all of that focus on wealth and possessions, though, we generally tend to make one very vital mistake. Nothing in the world belongs to us. None of our possessions are really our own. We are nothing more than stewards of what God has made available to us. It is a huge problem to think that resources belong to us when we are nothing more than stewards. Recognizing our role as God's stewards, then, is vital.

## *Luke 19:11-27*

- The context of this passage has to do with Jesus' criticism of Israel for being poor stewards of God's gifts to them. The principle of stewardship, however, applies to the stewardship that is expected of all of God's people now.
- Being a good steward means to manage someone else's resources well as if they were your own and we are called to be stewards of everything that God has given us.
- Do you often see the things around you as a gift from God that he has given you to steward?

## *Matthew 28:18-20*

- Part of Adam and Eve's original call to stewardship was to be fruitful and multiply and to subdue the whole earth, managing it well as God's stewards.
- Jesus calls his disciples to take on that original role that was designated for all humans as God's stewards.
- have you ever thought of your role as a disciple as really a stewards of his creation and expand his kingdom and rule?
- To do this properly we must remember that we need to seek his kingdom first; anything less would be to be poor stewards.

## *1 Peter 4:10*

- We are called to be stewards of the grace that God has given us. That may be gifts, talents, abilities, time, knowledge, resources, etc.
- What are the things that God has given you and called you to be a good steward of?
- What does it mean for you to be a good steward of:
  - Gifts, talents, abilities
  - Time
  - The word of God
  - The Gospel of Jesus Christ
  - Resources and possessions
- Which of these areas are you good at being a steward over? Which areas need improvement?

# Generosity

## *Malachi 3:7-12*

- This passage was written to the Old Covenant people of God but the principles of giving and stewardship came before the Old Covenant Law and continue to apply to God's people in the New Covenant. They had demonstrated that they had drifted from God by being poor stewards and by refusing to give to God what was his in the first place
- God asked them for a mere tenth of all that he had given them as a reminder to them that everything had come from him and that they were simple stewards ("tithes" literally means "tenth")
- Being a good steward means more than just giving ten percent to God, though, it means managing all of our resources well and being good stewards so that we can give generously and lavishly to God and those in need.

## *Luke 17:18-30*

- God doesn't call everyone to give up everything we have, but as stewards we should be willing to if that is what he calls us to.
- Are you a good steward with everything that God has given you? Is there anything you would have a hard time surrendering to follow God?

## *Luke 21:1-4*

- Being a good steward is more about giving all that we have than it is just having a lot or even giving a lot. It is being willing to recognize that everything we have (whether it be a lot or a little) comes from God.
- What convictions about being a steward in all areas of your life have you gained from this study?

## *Acts 4:32-5:11*

- This passage gives us a comparison story: we see Barnabas, whose generosity actually served as such an impact that people gave him the name "Son of Encouragement" and Ananias and Sapphira, who wanted to be known as generous, but were not.
- No one wants to be known as a 'scrooge' but at the same time it can be difficult to be as generous as we find the people in Acts 4:32. Where are you on the spectrum we see between Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira when it comes to your generosity? Do you encourage others with your stewardship or do you often hold back?