

# Gospel Maturity Introduction

**"Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God." - Oswald Chambers**

## What are spiritual disciplines that produce maturity?

Spiritual disciplines are habits of grace that allow us to enjoy Jesus and glorify him. Spiritual disciplines keep us free in Christ and move us towards the goal of maturity in Christ. 1 John 3:2 says we are to become like him (Jesus). Spiritual disciplines do not make sense unless we know what the end goal is. We are **MOVING** towards *someone* and becoming like him.

Colossians 1:28 says, *"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone **mature in Christ.**"*

Spiritual disciplines are the healthy rhythms and habits that help us move towards maturity in Christ. This discipleship material will explore and implement the spiritual disciplines of prayer, bible reading, confession & repentance, sabbath, hospitality, serving, stewardship, and evangelism.

## Why spiritual disciplines?

In the Great Commission, Jesus emphasized that his disciples will obey his teachings. Why obey? To restrict us? To make life a killjoy? No! Because we are created to obey him, enjoy him, and live out how we were created to live. Like a bird underwater or a fish on land is a believer who does not obey. Christian disciplines then are the paths of freedom and obedience that lead to joy and life. In John 14:15, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Spiritual disciplines train us for godliness (1 Tim 4:7) which can be defined as "both closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ..." - Donald Whitney.

God generally transforms us in three ways, but only one is within our control. The first path of transformation is through other people. Scripture tell us "iron sharpens iron," and so God will use others to transform us. Second, are circumstances. God will often use open or closed doors, crisis, or provision to transform us. Lastly, is the transformation that comes from self-control and spiritual disciplines.



## What if we don't practice spiritual disciplines?

Imagine the athlete or the musician who shows up for competition without any practice or discipline. Will the overweight sprinter who neglected diet and exercise win the race? In the same way, how can Christians engage the world and the spiritual battle around us unless we are equipped, disciplined and growing in our relationship with Christ? Like athletes and musicians, every Christian has tremendous potential but whether or not this potential becomes reality is partially up to us! You just have to be faithful, available, and teachable.

Many see discipline as a burden. Micahel Jordan said, "Everybody has talent, but ability takes hard work." Was the cost of working out

and being disciplined worth it for Michael Jordan? Yes! The joy of winning with the team you love shows the reward outweighs the cost. Is discipline often painful? Yes! But Jesus never said things would be easy, but through the hard work of discipline He does promise us peace.

Life will be hard no matter what, but a spiritually disciplined life is actually more enjoyable, more life giving, and allows for greater freedom because that life is maturing in Christ. So what is at stake if you aren't practicing spiritual disciplines to grow in Christ? Your joy, your influence, your impact, your relationships, and your freedom - but above all else, without spiritual disciplines we miss out on the fullness of life with the God who created us and saved us.

Remember a true disciple is someone who is being shaped by the gospel and seeking to grow in maturity!



## Discussion questions

1. When you think about spiritual discipline, what comes to your mind?
2. Many people have been tempted or taught to practice spiritual disciplines to please God, instead of practicing spiritual disciplines because God is pleased in us through Christ. Spiritual disciplines are not to EARN God's pleasure, but to experience it more fully through a joyful, obedient relationship. How does this approach challenge you, encourage you, or change your approach to spiritual disciplines?
3. What spiritual disciplines were modeled to you well? What disciplines have not been modeled to you?
4. Have you ever tried to change something about yourself? What process did you use? How successful were you in changing?
5. In what ways do you hope to grow through these lessons?



# Gospel Maturity #1 - Prayer

## What is prayer?

It is very easy to make Christians feel guilty about their prayer life. This is not the aim of this section. We must realize that to become like Christ we must learn to pray. A very simple prayer is this, "Lord teach me to pray."

When it comes to defining prayer, Tim Keller says, "prayer is the activity in which our triune God would call us to converse with him. It is a joyful conversation and encounter and therefore our way of entering into happiness with God himself." Simply put, prayer is having a conversation with God. Prayer is reaching out to God with our heart, soul, and mind in conversation.



## Why pray?

Missionary Elisabeth Elliot said, "Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between his will and its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit's prayer."

We were made to know God, be known by God, and connect with him. Like all relationships, growth and intimacy occurs through speaking, knowing, and listening. Prayer is powerful! Think about it, the world is governed by the sovereignty of God, the choices of men, and the prayers of the saints. We have the privilege of participating with God in shaping the direction of the world!

Second, God's word expects us to pray: Matthew 6:5-9, Luke 11:9, Luke 18:1, Col 4:2, 1 Thes 5:17

## How to pray

First we must learn to pray. Thankfully, Jesus gave the blueprints for prayer! Before you enter prayer know God hears prayer, answers prayer according to His will, wants to hear from you, and is blessed by your prayers!

# THE LORD'S PRAYER

Read Matthew 6:7-13. We will then look at how to break down this prayer in order to guide us in a multifaceted prayer life.

## Adoration: a deep love and worship of God

"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name."

1. Focus your heart to adore God. Remember who he is and what he has done. Worship him first. When we orient ourselves to God's reality of his power, love, sovereignty over creation, and that in Him we are satisfied, eternally alive, justified, and complete, our prayers become less me focused and more God focused and others focused.

- a. Why is it important to pause, meditate, and acknowledge God as our Father before petition, supplication, confession and intercession?
- b. Why is it important for God to be hallowed?

## Petition: to make or present a request

"Your kingdom come, your will be done."

1. This world is not how it should be. How is earth different from heaven? There is pain, suffering, unbelief, division, hatred, bitterness, and sin on earth and as result there is much darkness.

- a. In your life how are things not like heaven? How can you pray for these areas of your life and the world?
- b. Where does God's will need to be done in the world?
- c. Pray for truth, faith, hope, and love to overcome lies, unbelief, depression, and hatred.
- d. "Thy will be done" is an opportunity to commit everything in your life to Christ and his will and to pick up your cross and follow his will no matter the cost.



## **Supplication: the action of asking for something earnestly**

"Give us this day our daily bread."

1. We tend to pray for ourselves first but we are told only after our hearts are calmed and quieted through adoration and petition that we can properly pray in supplication.
  - a. God knows your needs but desires you to pray for every need for yourself and those in your life. Pray for simple things like lost keys, or the selling of your home, or relationship pain. Pray for big things like God's grace in your life, revelation in God's word,
  - b. Pray for the needs of your loved ones, your friends, your church etc. Pray for your kids to have godly friends, pray for your leaders to be walking with Jesus, pray for sicknesses, healing, financial hardships, and anything else that you need.
  - c. What are your needs? Emotional, physical, spiritual, financial, relational. What are the needs of others in your life? God is our provider in all things.

## **Confession: admitting sin before God and others**

"And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

1. It is nearly impossible to remain in bitterness when you are praying blessings and mercy on your enemies and asking God to forgive you of your own sins.
  - a. Ask God to search your heart and the Holy Spirit to show you where you are unbalanced. Always end, thanking God and praising God that he forgives you!
  - b. A simple prayer to stay free is, "God forgive me for not forgiving others," And, "God I confess this sin, forgive me! And thank you for forgiving me, you are too good!" Be specific in your confession.
  - c. What do you need to confess? Who do you need to forgive?

## **Intercession: saying a prayer on behalf of oneself or others**

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

1. Temptation is the pressure to believe lies over truth and then act on it. In intercession we pray for ourselves and others to have the faith to resist temptation that comes from our own selfish desires, the pressures in the world, circumstances, and the spiritual forces of darkness.
  - a. Pray for those facing tough circumstances, pray that God will both strengthen their faith and deliver them from the trial with their faith intact. Pray the trial does not destroy their faith but builds their faith.
  - b. Pray for justice in the world. When injustice reigns people lose hope and faith.



## Helpful tips

**Who to pray to:** To the Father, through the Son, with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit holds our hands to the gates of Heaven and Jesus who leads to the Throne of the Father. You can talk to all the members of the trinity!

**Posture:** Try getting on your knees, alone, in solitude and quiet and pray through the Lord's prayer for 10 minutes. If you lose where you are at, recite the lord's prayer and pick off where you left off.

**Corporate prayer-** Learn to pray with others. Learn from other believers how to pray to God. What can you learn from them? Pray through the Lord's prayer and prayer requests with friends and family. Break down each part of the Lord's prayer.

**Pray throughout the day-** Paul said to pray without ceasing, meaning to have a constant dialogue and conversation with the Lord throughout the day.

**Intentional prayer time-** Set aside a time each day to pray the Lord's prayer or another prayer in silence and solitude. This does not have to take long.

**Fasting:** Fasting is a great discipline to suppress your flesh and walk in the Spirit for a season. Daniel fasted and prayed and God responded. We can fast for spiritual breakthroughs to seek God and enjoy him. We can fast to intercede for others.

Try fasting one day from social media or your cell phone. Go without food during a meal or for a full day. In the pain and emptiness of the fast cry out to God to fill you and sustain you and seek him. Leverage the hunger you feel for a hunger for God and seek communion with him.



## Discussion questions

- How would you describe your prayer life?
- What do you feel is lacking in your prayer life or where can you grow?
- How have you seen God answer prayer? Do you believe that He still does?
- Spend time praying alone or together in a group.
- Plan a fast. Put it on the calendar. Do it.
- What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note in your phone or in a journal. Plan to talk about it the next time you meet.)

## Key verse to memorize

*"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." -Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)*



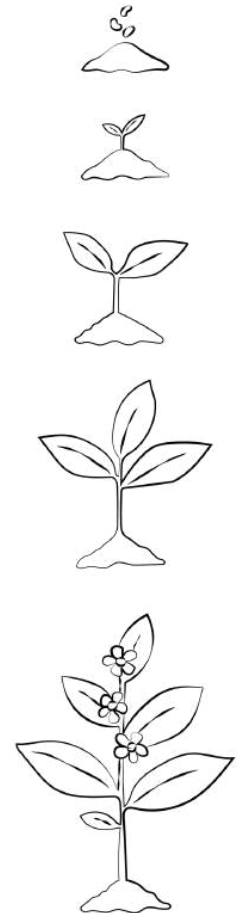
# Gospel Maturity #2 – Reading the Bible

## What is the Bible?

The Bible is 66 books, Old and New Testament, inspired by God and written down by men as the Spirit of God directed. The Bible is God's authoritative Word and the story of His redemptive plan for humanity. God's Word is life giving instruction from our Creator, but more than that, it reveals who God is and what He is like. Before God's Word gives instruction to our lives, it gives revelation of who HE is, what He promises, and what He commands. If you want to become like Christ you must make time to read the Bible and allow the Spirit of God to work through the Scriptures.

Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 *"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."*

Food is important for physical life in the same way that God's Word is important for spiritual life! Notice Jesus says, "every." He literally wants us to *know* all of the Bible. This can't be done in a day but must become a daily discipline over time to know God, His word, and His will.



## Why should I read the Bible?

The Bible is living and active and has the power to transform you and conform your mind and heart to the purposes of God.

Read Psalm 1 and Psalm 19.

This is a great example of the benefits and blessings of those who are committed and dedicated to the Scriptures. You read the Bible to get to know God, His character, and His plan for how to live in this world. What stands out to you from Psalm 1 and Psalm 19 about the benefits of God's Word?

You will never find time to read the Bible in today's world of distractions. You must **MAKE** time and fight against distractions. Turn your phone off, get up early, spend just 15 minutes a day in God's word and go from there! Most people spend hours watching TV or on their smartphone, which shows there is certainly time to read the Bible! You make time for what matters most, and God's Word is essential for an abundant life with God. You might not always **FEEL** like you need the Bible, but without it, you will not grow in knowing God and living for His purposes.



## How to read the Bible?

Use your Bible and a journal to use this method of personal Bible study. Writing things down helps you remember, internalize, and allows the Scripture to speak to your heart.

Remember, we don't go to the Bible simply seeking "what we can get out of it." But saying, "God, show me who you are, your character, your promises, who I am and how I can live in light of that." We get far more from the Bible when we approach it for God and not what we can get.

### SOAP

**S- Scripture:** Pick a book of the Bible and read 1 – 2 chapters a day. Each day, in your journal actually *write* out the Bible verse that stood out to you the most.

**O- Observe:** What is God saying in this verse? What truth did you learn? *Write* down your observations, thoughts, reflections or questions.

Here are some helpful questions to help you observe the text:

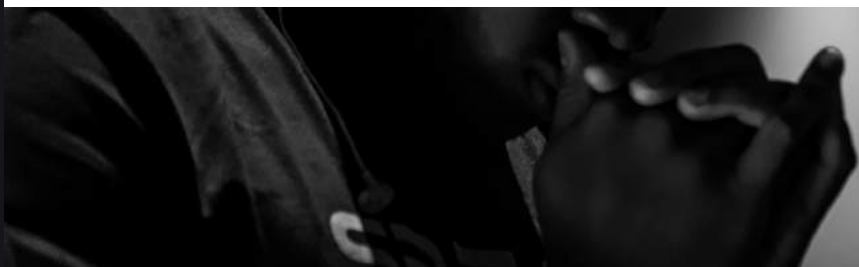
1. What does this passage show you about God?
2. What does this passage show you about humanity?
3. Are there any commands to follow and promises to cling to?

**A- Application:** How can you apply what you learned from the Scripture and observations? What truths do you need to believe, commands to follow, promises to cling to? *Write* down a practical way you can apply this truth.

**P- Prayer:** Respond to God in prayer. *Write* down a short prayer thanking God for this truth and ask Him to help you apply it in your life.

Another simple way to look at Bible reading is 3 questions:

1. **What** does the Scripture say?
2. **So what** is the big deal?
3. **Now what** do I do in light of this?



## Tools and tips

1. Find a Bible reading plan. There are free plans online. Read through books of the Bible, keep track of where you are at.
2. Write down on a calendar when you will read, what you will read, and for how long. Commit this plan to God! Weigh the challenges and benefits to Bible reading.
3. When you miss a day, give yourself grace, tell a friend, find encouragement, and keep moving towards Jesus by reading his word.
4. Additionally, CONTEXT IS KEY! To understand the Bible, you must understand the context it was written in. Before we can know what it means to “us, today,” we need to understand what it meant to “them, then.”
  - a. Tip – Before starting a new book of the Bible, watch the video produced by the Bible Project on that book. This will help give context.

## Tools for Bible meditation according to Donald Whitney

1. Emphasize different words in the text.
2. Rewrite the words in your own words with the same meaning.
3. Formulate a principle from the text – what does it teach?
4. Think of an illustration – what kind of picture or story explains the text?
5. Look for applications for the text.
6. Ask how the text points to Jesus.
7. What question is answered or what problem is solved by the text?
8. Pray through the text.
9. Memorize the text.
10. Create an artistic expression of the text.
11. Ask the Philippians 4:8 questions:
  - a. What is true, what is honorable, what is just or right, what is pure, what is lovely, what is commendable, what is excellent, what is praiseworthy?
12. How does the text speak into your current situation or question?



## Discussion questions

1. What is your current Bible reading rhythm and habit? Do you read daily? Weekly? At all?
2. What are the biggest challenges to enjoying the Bible?
3. Do you have a plan for reading the Bible? If not, what is your plan moving forward?
4. Spend 15 minutes together practicing the SOAP method from one of the following passages (John 15:1-11, Matthew 28:18-20, Ephesians 3:14-20). Share it with each other and pray.
5. What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note in your phone or in a journal. Plan to talk about it next time you meet.)

## Key verse to memorize

*"Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* -Matthew 4:4 (ESV)

## Resources

- Bible Apps: YouVersion Bible App and the ReadScripture App. These are both great resources and have Bible reading plans.
- The Bible Project. [www.bibleproject.com](http://www.bibleproject.com)
- ESV Study Bible
- Understanding the Story of the Bible: *Read According to Plan: Unfolding the Revelation of God in the Bible* by Graeme Goldsworthy.
- What is God Like: Read *Christian Beliefs* by Wayne Grudem.
- Biblical meditation: Biblical meditation helps move the truths from our heads to our hearts. This usually takes place during the Scripture/Observation portion of SOAP. Check out the article below to grow in this practice.
  - <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/when-my-heart-is-cold>

# Gospel Maturity #3

## Confession & Repentance

### What is it?

Confession and repentance is the process of welcoming God's truth and grace into our lives. It is the process of aligning our lives with God's ways and will. It is admitting and acknowledging when we are wrong and then taking steps towards the right path. Nobody graduates from these two practices and everyone will continue to confess and repent as they grow into mature believers in Christ. Confession involves acknowledging your sin before God, thanking God for forgiveness, and asking Him to redirect your desires. Repentance involves a genuine change that takes you away from sin and toward Jesus.

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* -1 John 1:9 (ESV)

### Why do it?

If all my sins are forgiven, why confess again? First, it changes your relationship. Anything hidden negatively affects our relationship with God and others. Confession and repentance restores your fellowship with God.

Anything hidden keeps you in bondage, but the truth will set you free. God desires to cast your sin as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12) and remember it no more (Hebrews 8:12). You have to agree with the doctor's diagnosis before you can change. Therefore, confession brings things into the light, activating renewal and grace to grow believers into maturity.

As believers, we want to walk in freedom and bear fruit for God. All sin is like a weed growing that needs uprooting, so bring to the light your sins in community and allow people to speak into your situation. We need grace from believers when we fail. We need the healing touch to help us keep fighting and overcome.

Unaddressed sin will create discouragement, shame, and guilt and will affect all aspects of your life. David said in Psalm 32:3-5,

*"When I was silent my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long...my strength was drained...then I acknowledged by sin to you and I did not hide my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin."*



## How to do it? Confession

We can confess our sin alone with God in prayer and with others.

*"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." – James 5:16*

1. Confess the problem, the sin, the situation. Name it and say it.
2. Offer these sins up to God and ask him to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.
3. Admit that you need to be forgiven.
4. Trust that God completely forgives you and thank Him for His forgiveness
5. Find people in your life where you can confess FAST, FULL and FREQUENT.
  - a. Fast – be quick to confess
  - b. Full – share everything open and honestly, bringing it to the light
  - c. Frequent – Have relationships where you can frequently confess your sin

## Repentance

Where confession deals with the heart and mouth, repentance takes confession and moves us toward genuine change. There is a change in attitude, action, and desire resulting in healthy spiritual habits and behaviors. This change will move you towards maturity in Christ.

*"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." – 1 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV)*



## How to repent: The 4 R's

- **Reveal**- Confess your sin with a Godly grief/remorse. There is a difference between guilt and grief. Christ frees you from guilt, but your grief over sin should produce change in your heart.
- **Receive**- Receive forgiveness and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to produce change in your life. Don't seek change so God will love you, but because He loves you. Receive feedback from those in your community. Humbly allow them to speak truth into your life.
- **Repent**- Turn from sin and turn to Jesus. It's like doing a 180 degree turn. You are walking away from sin, choosing to avoid it, and walking toward God. There should be a new motivation to chase after the right things.
- **Replace**- Replace the sinful habit with a God-honoring, Jesus-centered habit. Replace sinful desires with Godly desires. Replace evil thoughts with good thoughts. But above all else, replace SIN with the SAVIOR.

## Discussion questions

1. Read psalm 51. What attributes of God's character does David depend on?
2. What is the difference between real repentance and false repentance?
3. Have you cultivated relationships with people where you can confess sin?
4. What is your biggest fear in confessing sin to others?
5. Is there a past relationship or incident that may be affecting your relationship with God?
6. What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note in your phone or in a journal. Plan to talk about it the next time you meet.)
7. Spend time confessing sin and praying for one another.

## Key verse to memorize

*"If we confess sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* -1 John 1:9 (ESV)

## Resources

- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-power-of-confession-in-your-small-group/>

# Gospel Maturity #4 Sabbath

PSALM 113  
1 While humbly himself to behold  
the things that are in heaven, and in  
the earth. Ps. 113  
2 He reareth up the poor out of the  
dun, and lifteth the needy out of the  
dun. Ps. 113  
3 That he may set Arise with  
princes, even with the princes of his  
people. Ps. 113  
4 He maketh the barren women to  
keep house, and to be a joyful mother  
of children. Praise ye the Lord.

772 Tremble at the presence of the Lord  
4 Their abode is silver and gold, the  
work of men's hands. Ps. 113  
5 They have music, but they speak  
not: eyes have they, but they see not:  
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## What is it?

"To practice Sabbath is a disciplined and faithful way to remember that you are not the one who keeps the world running, who provides for your family, not even the one who keeps your work projects moving forward" - Tim Keller

In a world where productivity has become a core value of success it seems counter intuitive and unproductive to rest. However, the Scriptures tell us that rest is what actually brings us peace, joy, strength, and allows God to do what we can't do. Resting is a posture of trust in God and a demonstration of faith.

Exodus 20 reads, "For God rested on the seventh day." What does this mean practically for us today? First, Since God rested after His work, we must also rest after ours. God wove Sabbath rest into His creation for our benefit. It is a gift from God.



## Why do it?

First, when we rest and Sabbath we declare that our vocation is not our primary identity. Our primary identity is being a child of God. Our vocation is good but it is not our god and is not ultimate. When we rest, we trust God will rejuvenate us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Through rest, we actually bless the people around us! If you aren't resting, the people around you are probably suffering. Vocation has become such a part of our identity that we often neglect rest, leisure, relationships, family, and our relationship with God. Sabbath therefore is a way to bring order and refreshment to our lives and relationships.

**Matthew 22:39** says, *"Love others as you love yourself"*

If you can't lead yourself, you can't lead or influence others. In order to be a disciple maker you need to discipline yourself to rest. To truly love yourself you need to learn to be in sync with God's design and rhythm for work and rest.

"This rhythm of work and rest is not only for believers; it is for everyone, as part of our created nature. Overwork or underwork violates that nature and leads to breakdown. To rest is actually a way to enjoy and honor the goodness of God's creation and our own. To violate the rhythm of work and rest (in either direction) leads to chaos in our life and in the world around us. Sabbath is therefore a celebration of our design." – Tim Keller

After much ministry and hard work Jesus said to his disciples, *"Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile."* –Mark 6:31. Jesus was a hard worker but He also knew the importance of rest.

In today's context we don't have to be legalistic but remember the words of Jesus that the Sabbath was made for us (Mark 2:27). God wants us to enjoy the benefits of rest. If you can't rest, take a day off, or turn off your phone, it reveals insecurity and lack of faith. **This isn't a time issue, it's a trust issue.** You must learn to replace overworking with resting and recharging in Jesus.





## How to Sabbath

1. Take one day off each week to unplug from the demands of the world and plug into what refreshes your soul in Christ. This could mean setting aside a day like Sunday or setting aside a 24 hour period (ex. Saturday 6PM – Sunday 6PM).
2. During that one day or 24 hour period practice these four things:
  - a. **Stop** – actually stop working. Disengage from all your work –physically and mentally. The emails/phone calls can wait one day. Rest from paid and unpaid work.
  - b. **Rest** – this doesn't mean you have to do nothing all day. Instead, do things that give you life and draw your attention to God. Spend extra time in prayer and in God's Word. Go for a hike, mow the lawn (if that is restful for you), spend time outside in God's creation.
  - c. **Contemplate** – Dwell on the things of God. Think about His creation, His design, His goodness, and His character. Listen to a sermon, meditate on God's Word, and let your thoughts be on God.
    - i. Reflect over your past week... where was God at work? Give Him praise and thanks. What places were you anxious or burdened? Bring that to God.
    - ii. Look ahead to next week... What are you trusting God for? Where do you need to depend on Him? Invite Him to lead you and empower you in what lies ahead.
  - d. **Delight** – Take joy in resting in the Lord. Worship God and thank Him for the gift of rest. Remember your identity as a child of God. Be joyful, listen to worship music, sing, and have gladness in your heart. Delight in the things of God.

### If you don't know what refreshes your soul start with these steps:

- a. Begin by sleeping seven hours a night. Prioritize rest every day before you prioritize weekly rest. Pastor John Mark Comer says, "those who practice Sabbath live all seven days different." It's not just about a day, but a lifestyle of resting in Christ.
- b. Write down what recharges you and what exhausts you. On your day off, don't do the things that exhaust you.
- c. Who are the people who refresh you? Who are the people who drain you? Of course we are called to love people that are hard to love, invest in them, and sometimes these things surface on the Sabbath. However, prioritizing a day of rest is not selfish, it's God honoring. Fight for it and don't feel bad blocking it out on your calendar.
- d. Avoid email, phone, clients, and anything that reminds you of work
- e. Enjoy a hobby, creation, music, etc. If you don't have a hobby, go find one!
- f. Try to get draining work done the day before (laundry, dishes, cooking, cleaning, etc). Unpaid work is still work! Plan to do those things on your other day off. A Sabbath and a day off are different.
- g. Remember the Sabbath is holy so make it different and close to God.

## Discussion questions

1. What does your weekly rhythm of work and rest look like?
2. What boundaries do you have in place to prevent burnout?
3. How much sleep do you get each night?
4. Do you prioritize family meals? Why or why not?
5. What does overworking reveal about our heart posture towards the Lord?
6. What steps can you take this week to move towards healthy boundaries of work, rest, sleep, family time, and relationships.
7. What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note in your phone or in a journal. Plan to talk about it next time you meet.)

## Resources

- Article - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-power-of-deep-rest/>
- Book - "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" by John Mark Comer



# Gospel Maturity #5: Hospitality

## What is it?

Hospitality is related to the word hospital which comes from the Latin word *hospes* which means guest or stranger. Furthermore, the word patient comes from the word suffering. So literally hospitality is the urgent call to bring refreshment to those suffering apart from a life with Christ. Jesus often reclined with his disciples but also included tax collectors and sinners! Our community is not to be some holy huddle, but a hospital for lonely and broken people to come and find healing.

Jesus was almost always going to a meal, at a meal, or leaving a meal. He truly knew how to fast but he also knew how to feast and enjoy community. Jesus was an expert at hospitality because he knew that one of the deepest longings in the human heart is for belonging and connection. Hospitality is the art of creating an environment and atmosphere where connecting and belonging can exist.

Hospitality can happen in many places and in many ways but it primarily happens in the home and around the table. Because of the fall of man and sin, all mankind has been longing for deeper family, relationships, and community. In one sense we all feel homesick. Hospitality is moving towards others to include them into the joy of your home and table.

"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." -Galatians 6:10





## Why do it?

People need connection and community and most people aren't getting it. According to William Vanderbloemen *"the first thing God cursed was isolation."* Why? God knew without connection and community Adam would be incomplete so he brought him Eve. In community we are known and know others, and this leads to human flourishing.

Rosaria Butterfield, author of *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, explains how as a lesbian Syracuse professor it was Christian hospitality that led her to Christ. Parents of one her students took interest in her and they developed a relationship over meals and dialogue that eventually led to trust. In a postmodern society hospitality is of paramount importance not only to reach the lost but to strengthen the body of Christ as well.

Steve Cuss said, ***"a good metric for ministry and family success is how much joy is found around your table."*** This is a good metric of success because this meets a need that all humans long for. As America drifts into postmodernism, many people won't attend a Sunday church gathering but they will attend a meal in your home! The home and the table is a representation of the church, God, and community.

Next, hosting is a reminder that we are to move towards others and invite them into God's story. Jesus often talked about the Kingdom of God and our role to simply "invite." Hosting is the reminder that we are missionaries wherever we live!

Lastly, hospitality breaks down the walls of division and prejudice in our society. We can emulate Christ and move towards all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds and invite them into our home and the story God is writing.





## How to do it? 8 practical ways

1. Be intentional about knowing every neighbor's name and vocation in a 5-10 house radius.
2. Make the command to "love your neighbor" practical. Bring your neighbors gifts, pray for them, invite them.
3. Dedicate once a week to having people into your home. If this is hard that is okay! If it is awkward, that is okay! You will grow. When we are weak God shows up.
4. In the Sunday gathering, notice the lonely or new people and move towards them and ask them good questions.
5. Make your home fun! Have good food and have fun games!
6. Ask good questions, take interest in people. Find out what they are passionate about, what their needs are, and then come alongside them.
7. Be prepared! Have your house ready, your food ready, so you can take interest in them! Also, remember to give yourself lots of grace when things aren't perfect. Perfect preparation is not the goal, but planning and preparation are important.
8. Bring close friends and family over when you host others. This can help take the pressure off if you have to do everything. Create a team for hosting.

## Discussion questions

1. How often do you have people over to your house or go to other people's houses? Why is this?
2. What are your biggest challenges to hospitality?
3. On a scale from 1 to 10 how much joy is around your table? Why?
4. On a scale from 1 to 10 how important is hospitality to you?
5. How many of your neighbors' names do you know?
6. What can you do to create a fun and hospitable experience at your church or in your home?
7. Who is one person you can invite to your table to practice hospitality?
8. What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note on your phone or in a journal. Plan to talk about it the next time you meet.)

## Resources

- City Group Leaders Guide on the Citylight Church App
- *The Art of Neighboring* by Dave Runyon & Randy Frazee
- *The Gospel Comes with a House Key* by Rosaria Butterfield
- *10 things you should know about Hospitality*: <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-christian-hospitality/>

# Gospel Maturity #6: Serving

## What is it?

Scriptures show us that all believers are connected and play a vital role in fulfilling God's purposes. God uses many agents to fulfill His purposes such as governments, families, and relationships, but his primary means to fulfill His will is through the Church.

Every Christian is gifted to serve within the Church. Paul tells us we are all members of the body of Christ, the Church. (1 Cor 12:12). Like an olympic athlete each part of the body is needed in order to win. The ear tells the brain when the race begins and the brain tells the body to move. Then all the systems and muscles of the body work together to press on towards the goal of victory. This is why we need everyone to serve with their gift. Everyone is gifted uniquely and everyone's gifts are necessary so that the church is complete and lacks nothing.

Serving is how we meet needs and demonstrate the Kingdom of God within the Church in communities. We are called "ambassadors of Christ," meaning we are representatives of Christ's Kingdom on earth to meet the needs of the world. It was the church that started hospitals, orphanages, and universities to meet needs. Today, we can be creative and meet the needs of our church, neighborhoods, and communities.



## Why do we serve?

First, every Christian is **expected** to serve and is to carry it out by gratitude, humility, and compassion. However, this type of obedience is not to be guilt or fear motivated but rather a response to God's love, grace and mercy.

Romans 12:1 says, *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual worship**."* The Christian life is a wholehearted act of worship in response to God's mercy and our serving is a part of that worship.

Not only do we serve as an act of worship, but we serve because Jesus first served us. We were made to serve and so serving actually blesses us, brings us into community, and brings us more joy than if we don't serve. *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* - Mark 10:45 (ESV)

We serve to be like Jesus and be His presence on earth. The less we serve others the more we serve ourselves. The more selfish we become the more miserable we become. Look at serving as a way to emulate Christ and be who you were made to be. Serving is living out of our identity in Christ, and living out of our identity brings joy!

We serve others by being the hands and feet of Jesus. We primarily preach the gospel through words but it is also important to demonstrate the gospel through good deeds as we love and care for the community and church. Serving involves good news and good deeds. We support the church by using our passions and gifts to meet the needs first within the body of Christ and then others.

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."* Galatians 6:9-10.

*"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."*  
- 1 Peter 4:10

In summary we serve...

1. Because we have been given a gift
2. Because we are all needed in order for the church to thrive
3. To meet the needs of the people of God
4. To free us from only serving ourselves and becoming selfish
5. To meet the needs of neighbors and the community
6. To experience joy and God's people
7. To imitate Jesus
8. To worship God with all of our lives

## How do we serve?

Serving will at times be hard, there will be temptation to quit and there may be little glory or praise in what you do. However, the motivation to serve should always be the glory of Christ! A culture of everyone using their gifts to serve makes the church vibrant, healthy, and multiplying.

1. The first thing when it comes to serving is simply showing up!
2. Discover your God given wiring and what you are passionate about as you think about serving the body of Christ and those outside the body.
3. Ask leaders how you can help. When your passion and gifting meets the needs you begin to find your sweet spot in serving.

Remember, not all serving will be your sweet spot. Sometimes you will need to sacrificially serve.

**Spiritual/Emotional needs**- One way to serve is through fellowship, prayer, and quality time together. During this time you can encourage, challenge, take interest, and allow others to be heard and known.

Many people are facing trials or difficult circumstances. If we can be there for people during these times to love, listen, and counsel we will help serve their emotional and spiritual needs. Many people battle shame and isolation and we can serve people by hearing them and reminding them of their shared identity and purpose in Christ. Remind them they are not alone, you are for them, and God is for them. We help people get unstuck and move them towards their purposes with Christ.

**Physical needs**- We see the early church moved towards generosity and helped each other with their physical needs (Act 2:44-45). First, discover the physical needs in the church through observation and asking questions. Does an area of the church need help? Discover the needs in your neighborhood. Does a neighbor need help mowing the lawn, shoveling snow, or taking kids to school? Are they sick and need a meal delivered? Be aware of the needs. Also, be aware of the unique needs of your city. When working with the homeless, addicts, and marginalized use wisdom and caution so you help them and not hurt them. Consult with ministries who specialize in these areas.

Recommended ministries and organizations:

Serve 6.8

Safe Families

Fort Collins Rescue Mission

Elderly Homes

Neighborhood

Tips:

1. Don't burn yourself out.
2. Start small and increase and find your capacity.
3. Do something instead of doing nothing.
4. Discover what you are passionate about.
5. Ask people how you can help.
6. Make time to serve



## Discussion questions

1. When you think of serving in the local church what immediately comes to mind?
2. When it comes to gifting and passion (what you are good at and what you enjoy), how can you identify how you can uniquely serve the church, your neighborhood, and the community?
3. What would you tell someone who doesn't feel like they are good at anything and therefore shouldn't serve in the local church?
4. What steps can you take to either discover your gifting or grow in your gifting?
5. What are some of the needs in the church?
6. What are some of the needs in your neighborhood and community?
7. Take the spiritual gifts tests together and discuss.
8. What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note on your phone or in a journal. Plan to talk about it next time you meet).

## Resources

- Spiritual gifts test: <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/quizzes-and-assessments/what-type-of-spiritual-gifts-do-you-have-quiz.html>



# Gospel Maturity #7: Stewardship of Time

## What is it?

Stewardship is taking good care of something. For the Christian, it means taking care of everything God has entrusted us with. God has given us all time, talents, money/treasures, relationships, physical bodies, and vocational work.

If we aren't intentional to exert influence over these areas in our life they will naturally move towards chaos. We must put in the intentional work to bring balance to these areas of our lives, and steward them according to the Scriptures. We must know and remember that EVERYTHING belongs to God and He simply entrusts us to manage these things. So our time, our money, our possessions, our relationships are all from the Lord. We simply are to steward these things well for the glory of God.

*"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."* -Col 3:23-24

*"Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest."* -Proverbs 3:9



## Time

We are told from Scripture that the days are evil (Eph 5:16) and we must be intentional to dedicate our lives to Christ and his mission. We must make the most of our time and every opportunity! We will naturally drift towards worldliness, comfort, and unbelief. Therefore, we must manage our time well and be growing in the basics of going to bed on time, waking up on time, going to a Sunday gathering, being in community, resting well, working hard, and prioritizing family and relationships.

We must keep in step with the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control and that includes the way we steward our time.

## Why steward our time?

1. Time is passing and limited
2. Time is short
3. Time is uncertain

Eternity is at stake. What we do with our time now has the potential to have ripple effects for all eternity. So, invest your time in what matters most - God, His Word, and the souls of men and women. There is nothing greater that you could give your time to.

We can't control time, we can't control the past, nor control the future. What we CAN do is steward our time each day to influence the future for Christ. This is where priorities, planning, and persistence come into play.

## Discussion questions

1. Get out a sheet of paper. Write 168 in large numbers at the top - that is how many hours there are in a week. Next, make a list of how you spend your time. Include everything... (Sleep, personal care, work, driving, meals, prayer, time with God, church, school, hobbies, time on phone, social media, etc). Add all the hours up. Use this exercise to see where you have spare time & evaluate if you are being a good steward of your time.
2. What does the use of time reveal about what you value most? ? How we spend our time reveals what we are valuing most at a functional level. Does your time spent reveal what you truly value most?
3. What would you like to prioritize and commit more or less time to?
4. Pray for God to give you direction in how you structure your schedule and prioritize your time
5. What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note in your phone or in a journal. Plan to talk about it next time you meet.)





# Gospel Maturity #8: Stewardship of Finances

## Why steward our finances?

Everyone has finances they must steward. Unfortunately, many people are ruled by their financial situation. Jesus spoke more about money than almost anything else. Why? Our posture towards money reveals what our heart really treasures and worships.

*"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* - Matthew 6:21 (ESV)

*"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*  
- Matthew 6:24 (ESV)

First we must know that money is not evil and is not to be our master. Why is money easily idolized? Because it brings power, comfort, and opportunity. Jesus reveals that He is true power, true rest, and true opportunity and that money now becomes an agent to leverage our lives for the Gospel. If we don't see the power, rest, and opportunities in Christ, we will continue to pursue money as our functional savior.



## Three helpful steps towards financial stewardship

1. Avoid debt. If you always have to go into debt, Dave Ramsey says you may be trusting people you don't care about and they don't care about you. Don't waste your life going into debt and being a slave to the lender (Proverbs 22:7). If you have debt, tackle the interest rate that is the highest. Learn to be content with little and seek the Gospel and the joy and freedom it brings to your heart.
2. Invest in assets not liabilities. Don't put all your money into things that depreciate in value. Put your money into things that grow in value.
3. Dedicate a portion of your income to giving. Look at money as both bread (provision for what you need) and seed (provision for what God is doing). Start small and be consistent, but reorient your life to give. Give generously and sacrificially to your local church. Try giving 10% and see how that goes! Remember your motivation in giving should always be worshipful and done out of gratitude because of what God has done for you in the gospel. Giving to your local church is investing in Kingdom work through your generosity. This is the call for every Christian - to steward our finances for Christ!



*"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." – 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (ESV)*

## A simple way to handle your money, prioritized in order

1. **Give.** God's desire is for your firstfruits as an act of worship. Give first before you do anything else with your money.
2. **Save.** Steward additional resources to build up an emergency fund, plan ahead, or be ready to give a spontaneous gift.
3. **Spend.** We all have to spend money. It's a necessity for life – for housing, gas, food, bills, hobbies, vacations, etc.

Remember: God owns everything. You simply manage it. Take care to steward for the right things! Giving is an act of worship.

## Discussion questions

1. If I were to look at your credit card statement/bank statement, what would it communicate about where your treasure is?
2. Do you have a history of giving to a local church or ministry? Why or why not?
  - a. If you have never been taught the importance of biblical generosity, read the recommended article below.
  - b. If you are not giving, start somewhere. Maybe you can't go from 0% to 10%, but ask God what He would have you regularly give and start today.
3. What is your biggest fear in giving?
4. What is your greatest joy in giving?
5. If meeting with close friends, share about the amount of debt you have and be honest about your financial disciplines. If this is an area of your life you struggle with, you're not alone! Invite others into your situation, to challenge you and pray for you.
6. What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note on your phone or in a journal. Plan to talk about it next time you meet.)

## Resources

For a more in depth article on where we see tithing biblically and why we should strive towards it:

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/toward-the-tithe-and-beyond>

How to steward and budget:

- <https://www.crown.org/resources/estimated-budget-worksheet/>

# Gospel Maturity #9: Evangelism

## What is it?

Evangelism is declaring the good news of the gospel. It's a declaration of who Jesus is and what he has done. We desire to share the good news because it is the **ONLY** solution to the problem of humanity. We share the gospel because we love others and want to obey God and His mission to save and rescue a people out of death and spiritual slavery and into life and relationship with Him.

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* - Luke 19:10

As Christians, our entire life is a witness to the gospel. However, we must also be intentional to engage with people in conversation concerning the gospel message. Many have heard the saying, "share the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words." This is **NOT** biblical. Faith comes through hearing and hearing comes through words being **SPOKEN**. Of course we should model the gospel with our deeds, but it must always be paired with our words.

*"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*

-Romans 10:17



## Why we do it?

First, evangelism is expected. Jesus, through the Great Commission told his disciples and us,

*“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...”*

- Matthew 28:19-20

Making disciples is a command for every Christian. The church exists to make disciples of Jesus and the first step in making disciples is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the pattern of Jesus, who came proclaiming the Kingdom God, and entrusted His disciples to go and proclaim a message of repentance and forgiveness. We are tasked with that same mission!

Second, evangelism is empowered. In Romans 1:16, the Apostle Paul says, *“for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”*

The power is not in our abilities, our knowledge, our winsomeness or anything else within ourselves. The power comes from the gospel! We simply share it and the power of the gospel transforms lives as the Spirit of God directs and the Father draws people to Himself.

Don't be discouraged if you don't see immediate results. Most people must hear the gospel seven times before they can make sense of it. Your role is simply to be a faithful witness and reveal Jesus to the world.

Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, rightly defined successful evangelism as this:

*“Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.”* - Bill Bright

Evangelism blesses you and others because there is no greater joy than seeing someone else experience a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.



## Discussion questions

1. What has been your experience with evangelism?
2. What keeps you from sharing the gospel with others?
3. What questions, doubts, or fears do you have when it comes to evangelism?
4. Who are people in your life you can pray for and ask God to give you boldness to share Christ with them?
5. What strategies do you think will work in your context?
6. What is a key takeaway from this lesson? (Make a note in your phone or on a journal. Plan to talk about it next time you meet).

## Next steps

1. Create a list of seven people in your life that are not family members (coworkers, classmates, neighbors, etc) and begin to pray for them by name to know Christ!
2. Choose one of the following resources and practice sharing the Gospel with a friend. Over time, it becomes second nature. We recommend starting with the Knowing God Personally booklet or learning to do the Bridge.
3. Challenge: Ask God to use you to see one person come to have a saving relationship with Christ. Only God can save, and our "success" is faithfulness, not conversion. However, when we pray like this we grow expectant and aware of how God is at work in the lives of those around us.

## Resources

- 3 Circles: <https://www.namb.net/evangelism/3circles>
- How to Share your Testimony: page 13 of City Group leader Guide on the Citylight App
- The Bridge: <https://www.navigators.org/resource/the-bridge-to-life>
- Knowing God Personally Booklet: The God Tools App or [www.cru.org](http://www.cru.org)
- The ABC's - Admit Sin, Believe, Confess Jesus as Lord and Savior

