

# Eight Marks of a Healthy Hometown Disciple

## Reads the Word:

It is crucial to read and study the Bible because it is God's Word to us. The Bible is literally "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). In other words, it is God's very words to us. The Bible embodies the very essence of God's message and plan for humanity, providing us with divine insight and guidance. Throughout history, philosophers and thinkers have wrestled with many profound questions about existence and purpose. Fortunately, the Scriptures provide clear and thoughtful answers to these questions. For example, what is the ultimate purpose of life? The Bible helps us understand our existence in relation to God's plan for creation and encourages us to seek a closer relationship with Him. Where did we come from? The Genesis account emphasizes our creation in God's image, showing our inherent value and purpose. Is there life after death? The Bible assures us of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, giving hope beyond our earthly life. How can I attain eternal life? Scripture teaches that faith, repentance, and a personal relationship with Christ lead to salvation. Additionally, why do we see evil and suffering in the world? The Bible examines the nature of sin and free will, offering insights into human struggles.

Beyond these major questions about existence, the Bible is full of practical wisdom for everyday life challenges. For example, it teaches us how to build meaningful friendships by emphasizing qualities like loyalty, kindness, and support. What defines true success? Scriptures encourage us to see success in terms of spiritual fulfillment, love, and service to others rather than material wealth. When it comes to personal growth, the Bible offers guidance on how to make positive changes within ourselves, reminding us of the transformative power of Jesus. Additionally, the Bible raises important questions about how to live a life without regret. It encourages us to be deliberate with our time and choices, emphasizing what truly matters—our relationships with God, family, and others. How can we overcome unfair circumstances and tough life events? The Bible provides encouragement and guidance on staying hopeful and resilient despite challenges.

In our pursuit of romantic relationships, the Bible outlines essential qualities to look for in a life partner, emphasizing the significance of shared values, faith, and mutual respect. When it comes to marriage, it provides principles for building a strong, loving relationship, rooted in commitment and understanding. Lastly, as parents, we are offered wisdom on raising our children, instilling values such as love, discipline, and faith in their lives. In summary, the Bible is not only a source of spiritual truth but also a practical guide that addresses both our deepest questions and everyday challenges, making it vital for anyone seeking to navigate life with purpose and meaning.

We read the Bible because it is essential for our spiritual nourishment and growth. It acts as a guide that deepens our relationship with God, allowing us to connect with His heart and understand His voice more clearly. Through its teachings and stories, we are able to discern His will for our lives. Additionally, we engage with Scripture to express our love and reverence for God, seeking to live in accordance with His desires and commands. Ultimately, the Bible is not just a book for us; it is a vital source of wisdom that shapes our beliefs and actions in our daily lives.

A healthy disciple intentionally dedicates time to spend with God through His Word. This involves establishing a consistent daily routine that includes reading scripture, listening to teachings, using commentaries and various other sources to deepen their understanding, and thoughtfully applying the lessons to everyday life. By immersing themselves in the Word, they allow its truths to penetrate their hearts and minds, fostering spiritual growth and a closer relationship with God. This practice not only enhances their understanding but also prepares them to live out their faith authentically, enabling them to teach others to do the same.

## *THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN READING THE WORD:*

### **Infant:**

- Unfamiliar with the Bible and may not know how to nourish themselves spiritually.
- May have never read the Bible.
- May not fully understand what they are reading.
- The words might not make sense to them, and they may struggle to connect the concepts.
- Might not know where to find specific books, chapters, or verses within the Old or New Testament.

### *An infant's needs:*

- They need someone to guide them through the Bible and read it with them.
- They require assistance in knowing where to start, as well as a demonstration of what devotion looks like, so they can comprehend and see it in action.
- They also need regular reminders to develop new habits and establish new patterns.

### *How to help an infant grow:*

- One-on-one interactions are essential for effective learning and development.
- Cultivating an environment that fosters growth involves creating a supportive atmosphere where spiritual infants feel safe to explore and ask questions.
- Handheld for demonstration, spoon feeding the word and the appropriate portion of the word are crucial. This approach prevents overwhelming the infants and allows them to absorb the material more effectively.
- You might suggest starting with short passages or stories, and gradually increasing the complexity as their understanding grows.
- Actively engaging in conversations and encouraging questions is vital to the growth process.

### **Child:**

- Recognize that they should read the Bible and incorporate their reading into their daily routine, but they often struggle with consistency in this rhythm.
- They understand that the Bible is transformative but may find it challenging to fully embrace the teachings and allow the Word to make a meaningful impact on their lives.
- They may experience boredom or disinterest when reading the Bible, which may hinder their desire to explore its depth and wisdom further.

### *A child's needs:*

- It is essential to build a strong relational connection with a parent who is familiar with and understands the Bible.
- They need to shift from being spoon-fed to learning to feed themselves. This shift to self-feeding is crucial for their personal growth and a deeper understanding of their beliefs.
- A constant reminder of their identity in Christ is essential. This can include regular affirmations and teachings that emphasize their worth and purpose as children of God, helping them internalize their true identity.
- They need to focus on becoming doers of the Word, rather than relying solely on their emotions or immediate feelings to guide their actions.
- They also need assistance in seeing the importance of living out their faith and allowing the Holy Spirit to empower them to make choices that align with God's truth.

### *How to help a child grow:*

- Establish a one-on-one relational connection with the child. This connection will help them feel comfortable sharing their experiences and questions about faith.
- Consistently model what it means to read the Bible by demonstrating a personal commitment to Bible reading so the child sees the importance of the Word through your actions and attitudes.
- Encourage the child to read the Bible daily by introducing fun and engaging methods that foster a habit of daily Bible reading.
- Create a positive and supportive environment by cultivating a nurturing atmosphere that encourages exploration and discussion of biblical themes. This could involve establishing regular times to read the Bible together, whether at home or during special outings.
- Develop a personalized reading plan that aligns with the child's interests and comprehension level. Check in on their progress by discussing what they've learned, sharing thoughts and reflections through phone calls or face-to-face meetings, reinforcing their learning, and encouraging deeper engagement.

### **Young Adult:**

- Maintaining a consistent pattern of reading the Bible to deepen their understanding of Scriptures.
- Knowing how to navigate through the various books and chapters of the Bible and being able to make connections between different verses and themes.
- Applying what they have read in the Bible to their everyday lives, guiding their decisions, actions, and interactions with others.

### *A young adult's needs:*

- A spiritual mentor who can guide them in interpreting scripture and provide a safe space for asking questions about their experiences and challenges with the Bible. This mentorship should involve thoughtful discussions that encourage exploration of the text and its meaning in their lives.
- Deep, ongoing relationships with people who are firmly rooted in biblical teachings. These connections allow for the sharing of insights and lessons learned, fostering a community of learning and support.
- To be in an environment where they feel encouraged and supported in their spiritual journey. They should feel comfortable expressing doubts and struggles regarding particular verses or passages, and have others hold them accountable on their path of understanding.
- Need resources or how to get resources to help improve their understanding of scripture, such as books, study guides, podcasts, video teachings, commentaries, and group discussions. These tools can provide in-depth context, diverse perspectives, and practical applications, enriching their overall understanding and relationship with the Bible.

### *How to help a young adult grow:*

- Focus on fostering independence by releasing them and encouraging or guiding them to actively seek out individuals who are struggling with reading the Bible, helping that person grow in their faith. By helping these individuals, they can grow both in their own faith and in their ability to support others.
- Transitioning to parenthood can be challenging, so provide ongoing support by creating an inviting, safe space for them to share their thoughts, feelings, and challenges.
- Assist them in building a strong support network. This could include connecting with other spiritual parents and resources that provide guidance and encouragement.

## Parent:

- Establishing a regular routine of reading the Bible at a specific time and place, along with some form of Bible reading plan.
- Prioritizing Bible reading as a core habit and utilizing commentaries and various other sources to enrich their understanding.
- Engaging with Scriptures to foster a close connection with God, supporting personal growth, and acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of biblical teachings.
- This intentional reading practice influences how individuals live their lives, enabling them to teach others to do the same.

## *A parent's needs:*

- Continue identifying individuals who are less mature in their Bible reading to tailor support that meets their specific needs and helps them grow.
- Build strong relationships with other spiritual parents committed to making disciples. A support network can be formed where a group of spiritual parents shares experiences, insights, and strategies that enhance the discipleship efforts.
- Ongoing training that focuses on a variety of tools and resources will be vital in enhancing the skills of both spiritual parents and disciples. This training can cover techniques for effective Bible study, methods for applying Scripture to daily life, and ways to foster personal spiritual growth.
- Recognize the appropriate timing to release a disciple. Each individual progresses at their own pace, and it's important to discern when they are ready to take the next step in their spiritual journey. This means allowing them to take ownership of their faith and encouraging them to disciple others as they mature.
- Create margin in their schedule to develop disciples and to guide these disciples from spiritual infancy to spiritual parenthood. By providing consistent support, encouragement, and accountability, spiritual parents will enable these disciples to grow in their understanding of Scripture and their relationship with God, ultimately fostering a vibrant community of believers who are equipped to support one another in their faith journeys.

## *How to help a parent continue to grow:*

- Offer ongoing support, encouragement, and resources.
- Maintain regular contact with other spiritual parents, as sharing experiences and insights can foster a stronger community and enhance mutual growth.
- Remind them of the importance of prioritizing their personal relationship with God through dedicated time spent in reading the Word, as it is crucial for effective modeling.
- Encourage them to create a routine that includes reflective reading and prayer, allowing the teachings to permeate their lives and influence their actions positively.

## Resources:

- One-Year Bible
- Psalms Quiet Time Plan (5 Psalms/day)
- Proverbs (read the chapter that corresponds to the date)
- Rooted Rhythms - Daily Devotion (Rooted Network)
- Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day (Scazzero)
- Living by the Book (H. Hendricks)

## Prays:

Prayer is considered one of the most profound and effective ways to communicate with God. It serves as a vital channel for maintaining a daily dialogue with our Creator, allowing us to connect with Him on a personal level. The significance of establishing this daily communication through prayer cannot be emphasized enough, as it appears over 250 times in Scripture. This frequent mention underscores its essential role in the spiritual lives of believers and invites us to develop a consistent practice of prayer. So, what makes daily prayer so important? In Jeremiah 33:3 (NLT), we find an invitation from God: "Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know about things to come." This verse reveals a central aspect of prayer: God's desire is for us to reach out to Him, assuring us that He is ready and willing to respond.

First and foremost, daily prayer allows us to share every aspect of our lives with God. It provides a safe space for us to express our innermost thoughts and feelings, enabling us to be vulnerable and honest. This openness fosters a deeper relationship based on trust and intimacy, allowing us to experience God's presence in our everyday lives. Additionally, daily prayer offers us the opportunity to express our gratitude for the countless blessings that God provides. Taking the time to acknowledge our blessings helps cultivate an attitude of thankfulness, reminding us of the abundance in our lives and the goodness of God's provision.

Moreover, daily prayer creates a platform for confession and seeking assistance. We all struggle with sin and challenges, and prayer provides an avenue for us to confess our shortcomings and ask for help in overcoming them. This process of reflection encourages personal growth and spiritual maturity, allowing us to align ourselves more closely with God's will. Furthermore, daily prayer is an important act of worship and obedience. By dedicating time to pray, we acknowledge God's sovereignty and express our devotion to Him. This act of worship not only deepens our faith but also reinforces our understanding of God's divine purpose in our lives, reminding us of our commitment to follow Him.

Finally, engaging in daily prayer helps us recognize who is truly in control of our lives. In a world filled with uncertainty, chaos, and challenges, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by our circumstances. Prayer serves as a reminder that we are not alone; that the Holy Spirit of God is guiding and sustaining us throughout our journey. This acknowledgment brings a sense of peace and assurance, equipping us to face life's difficulties with confidence and hope. In summary, daily prayer is not just a ritual but a lifeline that deepens our connection with God, nurtures our spiritual growth, and empowers us to navigate the complexities of life with faith and courage.

A healthy disciple actively pursues a deep and personal relationship with God. This involves engaging in worship, where they express reverence and gratitude. They take time to listen for God's guidance and direction in their lives, recognizing that communication with God is a two-way process. Through prayer, they maintain an ongoing dialogue with God, sharing their thoughts, concerns, and joys. Additionally, a healthy disciple makes it a regular habit to pray not only for their own needs but also for the needs of others, and also to pray with others. They understand the importance of interceding on behalf of friends, family, and the community, which fosters a sense of unity and support within their relationships. When faced with important life decisions, they prioritize prayer, seeking God's wisdom and clarity before taking action. This thoughtful approach helps them navigate life's challenges with confidence and faith.

## *THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN PRAYER:*

### **Infant:**

- Lacks the cognitive understanding necessary to appreciate the significance of prayer in their life.
- Might not have any prior experience with prayer and, as a result, not know how to engage in it.
- Might find prayer boring, which makes it hard to stay engaged in.
- Might need to be introduced to the concept of prayer by providing guidance and exposure to its practice.

### *An infant's needs:*

- Someone who will take them under their wing to teach the importance of prayer in their daily lives.
- Someone to guide them in understanding the purpose of prayer and also demonstrate how to pray effectively.
- Someone who will pray alongside them and show them the methods and attitudes Jesus taught His disciples, emphasizing the connection and communication with God.
- They need to observe and listen to others praying, as this exposure will help them develop their own prayer lives and deepen their spiritual understanding.

### *How to help an infant grow:*

- Assist them in integrating or developing prayer as a natural and joyful part of their daily routine.
- Introduce them to a straightforward and repetitive prayer that can be recited during mealtimes and at bedtime. This will help them associate specific times of the day with prayer and encourage consistency.
- Encourage them to incorporate prayer into daily activities to foster gratitude and awareness of God's presence in all aspects of life.
- Demonstrate that prayer is a normal and joyful aspect of life.
- Share personal experiences of how prayer has impacted your life positively and encourage open discussions about it.
- Invite them to a prayer meeting where they can observe and listen to others express their prayers. This experience will not only inspire them but also help them understand different forms of prayer and the sense of community that can be found in shared faith.

### **Child:**

- They recognize the vital role that prayer plays and understand that it should be an integral part of their lives.
- While they acknowledge the significance of prayer, they struggle to fully embrace prayer as a regular practice.
- They want to establish a consistent prayer routine, but they often let life's busyness interfere with that goal.
- They are having a hard time prioritizing prayer as an important aspect of their spiritual journey.

### *A child's needs:*

- Someone to encourage them to see prayer as an essential and regular part of their daily lives, helping them understand its importance in nurturing their relationship with God.
- Provide them guidance on creating a consistent prayer routine that feels relatable and meaningful by introducing a helpful framework like ACTS—Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. This practical tool will help structure their prayers and enable them to express their thoughts and feelings in a more organized manner.
- Promote simple conversations with God by incorporating the Psalms into their prayers, as these rich passages can provide inspiration and a deeper connection to their faith.
- Encourage them to pray together with others to build a sense of community and shared experience in their spiritual journeys.
- They need help understanding the nature of God they are praying to and the importance of prayer as a way to build a relationship with God.
- Someone who emphasizes that prayer is more than just a ritual but a meaningful way to connect with God, share heartfelt thoughts, seek guidance, and find comfort in His presence.

### *How to help a child grow:*

- Making prayer a natural, relatable, and joyful part of their lives.
- Model prayer by creating an environment where you and others engage in prayer, demonstrating different ways to pray, such as offering spontaneous prayers or journaling thoughts addressed to God.
- Let them hear you pray during both good and difficult times, so they can understand that prayer is a dialogue with God that is relevant in all circumstances.
- Discuss your prayer habits, including what you pray for and how God answers your prayers, by sharing stories of both the expected and surprising ways you have experienced answers.
- Celebrate answered prayers with them and encourage active participation in the prayer process.

### **Young Adult:**

- Understanding prayer is essential for building a personal relationship with God.
- Aware of God's presence and remain open to communicating with Him.
- Set aside a consistent time and find a quiet space free from distractions for prayers.
- Starting with manageable lengths of time for prayer, and as they develop the habit, gradually extend it.
- Using Bible verses as prompts for prayers, and engaging in worship and praise to shift their focus from personal needs to God's greatness.
- Keeping a prayer journal can help you maintain focus, reflect on answered prayers, and serve as a record of God's faithfulness.
- Joining a prayer group or partnering with an accountability partner to provide encouragement and support as they develop their prayer life.

### *A young adult's needs:*

- Encourage them to embrace the transition into parenthood and actively support those struggling through prayer, helping them enhance their prayer life.
- Since transitioning to parenthood can be challenging, offer ongoing support through one-on-one interactions and other forms of connection to share their thoughts, feelings, and challenges.
- Someone who listens empathically and helps them process their experiences, fostering a sense of connection and understanding.

- Encourage them to build a strong support network by connecting with other spiritual young adults and spiritual parents who share the same passion for developing disciples. These shared experiences can greatly improve their journey, creating a sense of community and offering mutual support during tough times.
- Assist them in creating resources that provide clear guidance and motivation. These resources may include participating in workshops, gathering literature, and holding group discussions on fostering spirituality and personal growth.

#### *How to help a young adult grow:*

- Pull the young adult out of the fold instead of pushing them out. This could include them coming alongside a spiritual parent to help a person grow in their faith. By working closely with a spiritual parent, the spiritual young adult can learn the processes involved, making it easy for them to replicate or share those experiences with others.
- Introduce them to a network of people who can become valuable resources and supportive roles as the spiritual young adult navigates their transition into adulthood.
- Play a more supportive role in their transition into adulthood.
- Empower them throughout the process by actively seeking their feedback and suggestions. This can be achieved by asking reflective questions such as, "How am I doing as a spiritual parent?" This type of inquiry opens the door to constructive dialogue and personal growth. Additionally, spiritual parents should ask for feedforward by inquiring, "What do you need from me to be a more effective spiritual parent for you?" or "What are some suggestions you have that could enhance my ability to support you as you work toward becoming a spiritual parent yourself?"
- Provide them with the necessary tools and support to navigate both the joys and challenges of transitioning to parenthood.

#### **Parent:**

- Understanding prayer is essential for building a personal relationship with God.
- Establishing a routine and structure by choosing a specific time and a quiet place to pray, allowing oneself to be alone with God without any distractions.
- Creating a peaceful environment that fosters a deeper connection with God as praying for self, others, and with others.
- Consistently aware of God's presence and a willingness to communicate with Him throughout the day, not just during designated prayer times.
- Their prayer life involves expressing gratitude for God's blessings, even during difficult times, and approaching prayer with the expectation that God hears and answers according to His will.
- Utilizing various prayer methods.
- Incorporating worship into prayers.
- Incorporating prayers into daily tasks to reinforce connection with God throughout the day.
- Keeping a prayer journal.
- Consistently encourage others to pray, and make sure to pray for them as well.

#### *A parent's needs:*

- Continue identifying individuals who struggle to embrace prayer as a regular practice fully.
- Build strong relationships with other spiritual parents committed to making disciples.
- Create a support network where spiritual parents exchange experiences, insights, and strategies to improve discipleship efforts.
- Ongoing training that focuses on various tools and resources will be vital in enhancing the skills of both spiritual parents and disciples. This training involves learning the mechanics of



prayer (prayer guides, devotional, or scripture), understanding its purpose, and developing a consistent practice.

- Recognize the right timing to release a disciple since each person progresses at their own pace. It is important for a spiritual parent to discern when the person they are discipling is ready to take the next step in their spiritual journey.
- Create margin in their schedule to develop disciples and guide them from spiritual infancy to spiritual parenthood. By providing consistent support, encouragement, and accountability, spiritual parents will enable these disciples to grow in their understanding of prayer and cultivate a mindset of faith.

***How to help a parent continue to grow:***

- Help parents understand the stages of spiritual growth. Offer insights into how to evaluate these stages, including key indicators of spiritual development and what they might expect at each phase.
- Provide resources such as training that focuses on prayer techniques (prayer guides, devotionals, and scripture selections).
- Offer encouragement and support throughout this process.
- Encourage parents to actively connect with other spiritual parents, fostering a supportive community that allows for the sharing of experiences, tips, and resources. This network can serve as a crucial lifeline, offering encouragement and motivation as they navigate their own spiritual journeys and their disciples.
- Highlight the vital need to prioritize and nurture their personal relationship with God. Urge them to set aside dedicated time for prayer and reflection, showing how this dedication is crucial not only for their spiritual well-being but also for effectively demonstrating a lively faith to their disciples.
- Consistently remind them that their spiritual routines can greatly influence their disciples' understanding and experience of faith.

**Resources:**

- Rooted Rhythms – Prayer (Rooted Network)
- Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day (Scazzero)
- Praying the Bible (D. Whitney)
- Practicing the Way (J.M. Comer)

## Gives:

Giving is a profound expression of faith and gratitude that flows from our understanding of God's blessings in our lives. As individuals, we are called to be faithful stewards of not only our material possessions but also our time, talents, and resources. This concept is beautifully articulated in Psalm 24:1, which declares, "The earth and everything in it belong to God." This verse serves as a reminder that all we have is ultimately His. In James 1:17, we find further reassurance that every good and perfect gift we receive is a direct blessing from God our Father, underscoring the idea that our possessions are truly gifts entrusted to us. When we come to a realization of this divine ownership, it transforms our perspective and opens our hearts to give generously, even radically.

As faithful stewards, one of the most meaningful ways to acknowledge God's ownership over our lives is through generous giving. But why is giving so important? Proverbs 3:9 encourages us to honor God with our wealth and with the very best of everything we produce. This act of giving is not merely a duty to fulfill; it is a powerful act of worship that not only enriches our spiritual lives but also strengthens our reliance and trust in God. When we give, we actively recognize the lordship of Christ over our resources, and in doing so, we build our faith in Him. Moreover, giving serves as a counterbalance to the insidious love of money. The Bible consistently warns us about the dangers of this love, and one of the most effective ways to free ourselves from its grip is through acts of generous giving.

Furthermore, our generosity plays a crucial role in advancing the Kingdom of God. It creates pathways for blessings to flow and opens up opportunities to share God's love with others. In Acts 20:35, Paul reminds us to remember the words of Jesus, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This profound truth invites us to embrace a lifestyle of generosity that reflects the heart of God, creating a ripple effect of love and kindness in the world around us. Through giving, we not only enrich the lives of others but also draw closer to the One who generously gave His all for us.

Psychologists have uncovered fascinating insights into the way our brains react on a chemical level when we engage in acts of giving. When we perform generous actions, our brains release a cocktail of positive neurotransmitters. For example, serotonin plays a crucial role in regulating our mood, helping to foster a sense of well-being. Dopamine, often referred to as the "feel-good" chemical, generates feelings of pleasure and satisfaction, reinforcing the enjoyment we feel when we help others. Meanwhile, oxytocin, sometimes called the "bonding hormone," enhances our sense of connection and trust with those around us, further deepening our social bonds and relationships.

These chemical reactions illustrate that giving is not just beneficial for those who receive but also contributes significantly to our own health and happiness. Engaging in acts of kindness and generosity can lead to improved mental health, reduced stress, and an overall enhanced sense of fulfillment. Moreover, the principle of giving is deeply ingrained in our DNA because it is a core belief that God established for His children to experience both blessings and the chance to bless others in their lives. As followers of Christ, we are called to emulate the nature of Jesus, which inherently embodies a spirit of giving, compassion, and selflessness. This connection not only enriches our personal lives but also fosters a sense of community and support among believers and the wider world.

A healthy Hometown disciple expresses their worship of God by committing to give 10% of their income as a form of tithing. This foundational act of giving reflects their faith and gratitude. Moreover, they strive to cultivate a spirit of radical generosity that goes beyond this initial commitment. This might involve contributing additional financial support to various causes, volunteering their time, or finding creative ways to share resources with those in need. By actively seeking opportunities to live a generous lifestyle, they not only deepen their relationship with God but also positively impact their community and inspire others to do the same.

## *THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN GIVING:*

### **Infant:**

- This individual is new to the faith and tends to keep all their resources to themselves, believing that what they possess is solely their own. They might question, "Why do I need to give to the church?"
- They are unaware of their biblical responsibility to attend services, serve, and give regularly.
- They may feel uncomfortable discussing money in a church setting and may have reasons for viewing giving as irrelevant, unnecessary, or even corrupt.
- This individual's perspective on giving is significantly limited, and they may struggle to see how sharing their resources could foster community and spiritual fulfillment.
- They might not know how to budget and may be facing financial difficulties.

### *An infant's needs:*

- Provide personal guidance from a spiritual parent who can lead them to recognize that their possessions ultimately belong to God and foster a mindset that encourages generosity and the development of a consistent habit of giving.
- Someone to guide and keep them accountable during that stage of their journey. This support will help a spiritual infant stay committed to their giving practices and make meaningful changes in their lives.
- Someone who will consistently exemplify the principle of sacrificial giving. By modeling this behavior, they can inspire their disciples to embrace a similar lifestyle of generosity and stewardship.
- May need to learn how to budget and get out of debt so they can be free to give.

### *How to help an infant grow:*

- One-on-one interactions are essential for effective learning and development.
- Cultivating an environment that fosters growth involves creating a supportive atmosphere where spiritual infants feel safe to explore and ask questions.
- Handheld for demonstration, spoon feeding the concept of generosity and the appropriate portion of giving are crucial. This method prevents overwhelming the spiritual infants and allows them to absorb the principle more effectively.
- You might suggest starting with a small percentage of their income and gradually increasing it as their understanding grows.
- Actively engaging in conversations and encouraging questions regarding the concept of giving.

### **Child:**

- This individual understands that all possessions ultimately belong to God and desires to cultivate a consistent habit of giving.
- They may struggle to give consistently due to debt and poor budgeting.
- They are also hesitant to commit to giving a specific percentage or amount of their income to the church, which adds to their uncertainty about how to approach their generosity.

### *A child's needs:*

- A strong relational connection with a mature believer so they can transition to a more kingdom-minded perspective. This will help the child move from simply knowing their possessions are not truly theirs to actively choosing to give back to God consistently.
- Someone to teach them how to be generous with their time, money, and possessions.
- Learn to trust God by obeying His word regarding generosity.

### *How to help a child grow:*

- Personalized One-on-one interaction
- Provide an environment where the individual feels that they will not be judged for failure.
- Consistent reminder on the importance of giving and emphasizing that their possession ultimately belong to God. This perspective can help shift the focus from ownership to stewardship.
- Help them to develop effective budgeting skills and money management strategies tailored to their unique circumstances.
- Provide resources or a financial course if necessary.

## Young Adult

- This individual sees their role as a steward of the resources entrusted to them and is committed to giving sacrificially.
- They prioritize this practice as a means to liberate themselves from the enticing pull of materialism and the love of money.
- They understand that the first places to direct their generosity should be within their own family and local church community.
- They recognize that these foundational relationships create a framework for their giving, helping to strengthen not only their faith but also those around them.
- They recognize that, as Randy Alcorn puts it, giving to the church is like the training wheels of Christian giving. While they believe that starting with 10 percent of their income is a good approach, they aspire to give even more.

### *A young adult's needs:*

- Encouragement to continue commitment to sacrificial giving.
- Connect them with others who demonstrate generosity.
- Help them create resources that offer clear guidance and motivation for generous giving.

### *How to help a young adult grow:*

- Continue working with the young adult to help them learn the necessary processes involved, making it easy for them to replicate and share their experiences with others.
- Connect them with other spiritual parents who can serve as valuable resources and supportive figures.
- Provide support as they transition into parenthood.

## Parent:

- This person holds a profound belief that everything in existence ultimately belongs to God and that all they possess—whether it be material wealth, personal talents, or their time—is a gift from God entrusted to them. Recognizing this truth, they dedicate their resources to fulfilling what they perceive as God's purpose in the world.
- They truly appreciate the significance of sharing their resources, time, talents, and acts of kindness with those around them. They do so selflessly, without any expectation of receiving something in return. Their generosity is not just an obligation; it is a heartfelt commitment to improving the lives of others.
- Not only do they engage in giving, but they do so with an infectious enthusiasm that inspires those around them. Generosity is not merely an action for them; it is ingrained in their character and shapes their worldview.
- This individual actively seeks out various opportunities to help, demonstrating a sincere and unwavering commitment to making a positive impact in the lives of others. Their passion for giving is evident in every aspect of their life, as they strive to embody the principles of compassion and generosity in all they do.

- This individual prioritizes not just giving in general but giving to the specific church they belong to.

#### ***A parent's needs:***

- Peer encouragement to strengthen the belief that everything they possess ultimately belongs to God.
- To encourage the continued development of less mature disciples.
- Maintain ongoing accountability and foster the skills necessary to nurture others in becoming spiritual mentors in the area of generosity.

#### ***How to help a parent grow:***

- Provide insights on how to evaluate a person's generosity at different spiritual stages, including what they may experience at each stage.
- Share resources that focus on the concept of generosity.
- Offer encouragement and support throughout this process.
- Encourage parents to actively connect with other spiritual parents, fostering a supportive community for sharing experiences, tips, and resources. This network can serve as a vital lifeline, offering encouragement and motivation as they navigate their own spiritual journeys and those of their disciples.
- Consistently remind them that their generosity can significantly influence their disciples' understanding of sacrificial giving.

#### **Resources:**

- Rooted Rhythms – Sacrificial Generosity (Rooted Network)
- Total Money Makeover (D. Ramsey)
- Managing God's Money (R. Alcorn)
- Financial Peace University Class (D. Ramsey)

## Serves:

We have the incredible gift of free will, which lets us choose between acting selflessly or selfishly in our daily lives. In today's fast-paced and often distracted world, it's easy to fall into patterns of selfishness. We often rush from one obligation to the next, preoccupied with the latest social media trends or engrossed in binge-watching a series on our favorite streaming platforms. This constant distraction can cause us to prioritize immediate gratification over the needs of others. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, particularly in Galatians 5:13, the Apostle Paul reminds us of an important truth: we are called to live in freedom. However, he also warns us against using that freedom to satisfy our sinful desires. Instead, Paul encourages us to channel our freedom toward serving one another with love and compassion. This theme of serving others is one of the main ideas throughout the Bible and is central to Jesus' teachings.

Jesus Himself, through His actions and teachings, emphasized the importance of serving others. He taught that true greatness comes not from being served but from serving others selflessly. By incorporating acts of kindness and service into our lives, we not only honor our freedom but also contribute to a more loving and supportive community. In doing so, we fulfill our purpose of caring for one another, reflecting the very essence of love that is woven throughout Scripture.

In Mark chapter 10, James and John asked Jesus to make them His lieutenants when He established His kingdom. Jesus responded, "But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:43-45, NLT). Jesus taught them that serving is not optional but essential. Jesus didn't just talk about serving; He actively practiced it. A poignant example is when Jesus washed His disciples' feet in John 13, right before His betrayal and sentencing to death. This act is significant because it demonstrates how even Jesus Christ, who is greater than anyone on earth, humbled Himself and prioritized the needs of others. If Jesus can practice selflessness in difficult times, then we should, too, strive to do the same.

There is something truly wonderful and tangible about serving others. It humbles us and encourages us to slow down, reminding us of the bigger picture in life: showing the love of Jesus through meaningful actions. In 1 Peter 4:10-11 (NLT), Peter emphasizes the importance of serving others. He writes, "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen." Peter makes it clear that when we serve others, we bring glory to God. But how does God receive glory through our acts of service? The transforming power of Jesus Christ is evident in the lives of those who choose selflessness over selfishness. Peter suggests that believers should recognize that when they serve others, they are speaking and acting directly on behalf of God.

A healthy Hometown disciple embodies a true servant's heart, demonstrating selflessness and a willingness to help others. Actively involved in church ministry, this individual goes beyond just participation; they take on roles that uplift and support the church community. Whether it's volunteering for events, mentoring others, or lending a hand wherever needed, their contributions reflect a deep commitment to service. Recognized as a "servant leader," they inspire others with their actions and attitude, both within the church and in their daily lives, fostering an environment of compassion and support in all their interactions.

## *THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN SERVING:*

### **Infant:**

- They may be blind to the area of service or choose not to serve in the church because they prioritize other activities or hobbies.
- Their focus is on themselves, not others.
- They may be unaware of where to serve or not know about the specific volunteer opportunities available.
- They might cite their busy schedules, filled with work, family, or other commitments, as reasons for not serving.
- They may lack confidence or feel intimidated by the idea of serving.
- They might feel disconnected from the church community or lack a sense of belonging, which could hinder their willingness to serve.
- They may simply be waiting for someone to ask them to get involved.

### *An infant's needs:*

- Help in seeing or identifying the areas of need within the church.
- Guidance as they seek to identify roles that align with their unique skills, gifts, and talents.
- Encouragement to keep their focus outward, emphasizing the importance of serving others rather than getting caught up in their own needs.
- To be connected with existing ministry leaders to understand the ministry and the skills needed.

### *How to help an infant grow:*

- Engage in one-on-one interactions to help individuals shift their focus away from themselves.
- Create a safe environment where individuals feel comfortable exploring and asking questions.
- Invite the person to serve alongside you.
- Encourage them to take on service opportunities in areas that feel less intimidating.

### **Child:**

- Starting to identify areas of need, but might still be looking for someone to reach out to them to serve.
- Starting to develop a habit of serving, making a conscious effort to engage in activities that support and help others.
- Becoming a resource to the church.
- Committing to attending church more regularly, not only to deepen their personal faith but also to serve.

### *A child's needs:*

- Establish a strong relationship with a spiritual parent to help them focus on serving others rather than themselves.
- A personal invitation to consider serving. This invitation can help them recognize the potential impact their involvement can have on others.
- Someone to teach them how to embrace a servant mindset, emphasizing that they are here to serve and not be served.
- Someone reminding them that their identity is rooted in Christ, not in themselves.
- Encourage them to trust God in the areas where they are serving.

### *How to help a child grow:*

- One-on-one interaction
- Provide a list of opportunities where individuals can serve.
- Create an environment where each person feels they belong and will not be judged for any failures in serving.
- Consistently remind the individual of the importance of serving, emphasizing that the growth of the community depends on everyone's contribution.

### **Young Adult**

- Understanding that serving is a profound expression of worship to God. This understanding helps spiritual young adults see service not just as a duty but as an integral part of their faith.
- Recognizing that the community thrives through the service provided to one another. Each act of kindness and support builds stronger bonds and fosters a sense of belonging, ultimately leading to a healthier and more vibrant community.
- Prioritizing serving the community by intentionally making time in their daily schedules to engage in community service.
- Acknowledging that they are valuable resources to the community through their unique skills, talents, and perspectives.

### *A young adult's needs:*

- A place where they can serve and feel like they belong.
- A spiritual parent who can guide and support them through their ministry experience.
- A deep, ongoing relationship with someone who offers encouragement, support, and accountability.
- To keep developing skills in understanding and caring for others.
- Help identify their skills and talents and find the best opportunities to use them.

### *How to help a young adult grow:*

Kindness and empathy

Flexibility and adaptability

- Focus on fostering independence by allowing them to take the lead and encouraging or guiding them to recognize emotions, practice gratitude, and find small ways to show kindness.
- Transitioning to parenthood can be challenging, so offer ongoing support by creating an inviting, safe space for them to share their thoughts, feelings, and challenges.
- Help them build a strong support network, including connecting with other spiritual parents and resources that provide guidance and encouragement.
- Encourage them to be flexible and adaptable and continue developing their skills in empathy.

### **Parent:**

- Take the initiative to serve when they see a need, and they jump right in.
- Serving is a way of making disciples.
- Demonstrating a proactive and caring attitude in every situation
- Always leading by example.



- Individuals should actively seek out opportunities to assist others whenever they observe a need for help. They don't hesitate or wait for someone else to take action; instead, they promptly step in and offer their support, demonstrating a proactive and caring attitude in every situation.

***A parent's needs:***

- Reminding that there are less mature disciples around them who need to become parents.
- Encouragement to continue surrounding themselves with other spiritual parents who are involved in making disciples.
- Accountability is essential.

***How to help a parent grow:***

- Ongoing training to help improve skills.
- A continuous reminder of releasing the spiritual young adult.

**Resources:**

- S.H.A.P.E. Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life (E. Rees)
- Spiritual Gift Test – Hometown Website under Resources

## Shares their Faith:

Sharing your faith involves sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others or evangelizing them, and it should be a lifestyle for every believer. We received a great command when our Lord Jesus left us this clear instruction: "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20, NLT). Before we can make disciples, we must share our faith or evangelize. There are many reasons beyond Jesus' command that should motivate us to share the greatest news of all with people, especially those who have not heard it.

Sharing our faith is an act of love. God loves people so much that He gave His only Son, Jesus, to die so that whoever believes in Him would have eternal life. Likewise, we must love others as God does to share Jesus with them. As followers of Christ, love should be our defining characteristic, as we have the Holy Spirit of God living within us. We express the fruit of the Holy Spirit through our love for others. Since we possess the greatest news in the world, love motivates us to share it with those around us. Love wants everyone to have the opportunity to accept God's free gift of salvation. Withholding this life-saving message would be the ultimate act of cruelty.

Sharing our faith not only benefits others but also strengthens our own beliefs. When we regularly engage in sharing our faith, it reinforces our convictions. This practice encourages us to confront difficult questions, seek answers for ourselves, and be prepared to respond to inquiries from others. As Peter advises in 1 Peter 3:15, "And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it." We can prepare ourselves by studying God's Word, listening to sound Bible teachers, and maintaining a close relationship with Jesus. These activities help us live genuinely, ensuring that we do not become hypocrites who preach one thing while acting differently.

Sharing our faith is a meaningful and heartfelt expression of the profound hope we hold within us. The author of Hebrews beautifully captures this concept in Hebrews 6:19, where he writes, "This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary." This hope is centered in Jesus Christ, who serves as our eternal High Priest, bridging the gap between humanity and God. This hope is not just a fleeting emotion; it is a steadfast reassurance that guides us through life's challenges and uncertainties. It provides us with a sense of purpose and belonging, reminding us that we are never alone on our journey. Because of this deep-seated hope, we feel an irresistible urge to share the message of Jesus with those around us. Whether through conversations, acts of kindness, or our daily lives, we are motivated to tell others about His love and grace whenever we have the opportunity. In doing so, we not only affirm our faith but also invite others to experience the same hope that sustains us.

Sharing our faith is not just a duty or a command; it is an expression of our love for God and a way to bring Him joy. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:9, "So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him." This verse emphasizes that regardless of our circumstances—whether we are living in this physical world or have moved on to the next—we should always aim to align our actions with what pleases God. As children of God, our desire should be rooted in the intention to follow His commands and reflect His love in our daily lives. Obeying God's commands of sharing our faith with others not only strengthens our relationship with Him but also fulfills our purpose as His followers. By doing so, we contribute to God's greater plan for the world He so loved, and find deeper fulfillment in our faith journey.

A healthy hometown disciple is someone who not only understands the Gospel but also actively shares it with others in their community. They make it a priority to **BLESS** those around them, offering support and kindness in both words and actions. They intentionally invest their time and

energy in building relationships with unbelievers, engaging in meaningful conversations that reflect their faith. Additionally, they regularly invite friends, family, and acquaintances to join them at church, creating opportunities for spiritual growth and connection. Ultimately, their goal is to lead individuals to a relationship with Jesus, guiding them on their journey of faith with love and compassion.

### ***THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN SHARING THEIR FAITH:***

#### **Infant:**

- Hopefully have an understanding that they have been saved from hell.
- May not have 100% assurance in their own salvation or may just have difficulty communicating why.
- Will feel overwhelmed at the thought of communicating the Gospel.
- Will think they need a lot more bible knowledge and experience before they start reaching out to others.
- Have the Holy Spirit, so they have the power and the presence of God, but may not even know that.
- Some are very zealous and, because they are so excited about their salvation, tell everyone they know about it...often communicating to others that they are "going to hell."
- Since they were just recently "dead," and likely living sinful and immoral lives, may not be taken seriously by the people they have known for a while. People haven't had time to see that their life really has changed.
- If willing, can be a mouthpiece for God.
- Infants can be very effective in starting to reach out to people.

#### ***An infant's needs:***

- Someone to help them understand and have full assurance of their salvation – they should be 100% sure they will go to heaven when they die
- Inspiration/encouragement to share the message that changed their life
- As soon as possible, help them understand that Jesus wants them to become "fishers of men."

#### ***How to help an infant grow:***

- Read one of the Gospels together and look at what the disciples did
- Take them out, sharing the Gospel/witnessing. Have them observe and see how it's done
- Have them think about the people in their sphere of influence (oikos) that might not be heaven-bound. List them out. Help them to understand the reality of the fate of those people without Christ.
- Have them start praying for the lost people in their lives.
- Give them a Revive Bible and band if they don't have one yet; show them how to use it.

#### **Resources:**

- Read the Parable of the Soils (Luke 8:4-15). Discuss why 3 of the soil types will not produce fruit. Cast vision for them to be the "good soil."
- Revive Bible and band
- B.L.E.S.S. resources

#### **Child:**

- May not have understood that they were called to be an ambassador of the Gospel and to witness and minister to others.
- May not understand the severity of sin fully, the punishment we all deserve for it, and how terrible hell will be.

- May be worried about what other people will think of them if they start sharing.
- May be concerned or scared of persecution if they speak up.
- May not know how to communicate the Gospel or know any verses to share.

#### *A child's needs:*

- Inspiration from the Scriptures; understanding of their calling.
- Understanding of how their oikos (sphere of influence) is one of their mission fields
- Someone to help them write down a concise version of their story (testimony) – 1. Life before Christ, 2. How they found Jesus, 3. Life since finding Jesus
- Practical training

#### *How to help a child grow:*

- Have them "practice" sharing their testimony – to other friends in the church or Christians they know
- Take them out sharing the Gospel. Give them opportunities to join in the conversation without the pressure of leading the conversation.
- Have them start memorizing verses related to sharing the Gospel
- Revive training
- B.L.E.S.S. resources
- Take them on a mission trip; take part in MTOC

### **Young Adult**

- May be growing in desire to share but still feeling afraid of what people think, and under-equipped.
- May still feel like they are lacking knowledge.
- May be starting to have conversations with people about the Gospel, but unsure of how well they are going.
- May be trusting in their own abilities and words, instead of God's power and His ability to provide the words to say.

#### *A young adult's needs:*

- Ongoing inspiration.
- More experience sharing their testimony and the Gospel.
- Others to hold them accountable for sharing their faith.

#### *How to help a young adult grow:*

- Revive training
- More actual experience sharing.
- Learn the "bridge diagram" and how that can be useful for sharing the Gospel.
- Go on a mission trip.
- Revive training; B.L.E.S.S. training.
- Lead teams during MTOC.

### **Parent:**

- Trains others how to share their faith.
- Takes others with them to share – sets the example and gives others opportunities.

***A parent's needs:***

- Continual trust in God's power, not their own abilities.
- Accountability to be sharing the Gospel themselves and accountability to be training others.
- To hear fresh stories of life change to keep reminding them of why we do this.
- Encouragement – if their disciples aren't sharing or they aren't seeing fruit.

***How to help a parent grow:***

- They will grow as they learn how best to help other grows in sharing their faith.
- Lead a mission trip.

**Resources:**

- B.L.E.S.S: 5 Everyday Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World (D. Ferguson)
- Tabbed Bible and Bracelet – Time to Revive Videos

## Disciples of Others in Community:

In His infinite wisdom, Jesus chose to use dedicated followers—His disciples—to spread the message of salvation to all people around the world. Our Lord included the call to disciple others in His great command when He instructed us: “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20, NLT). These verses provide clear guidance on how we can make disciples: by going, baptizing, and teaching.

Making disciples is important because it is the method chosen by Jesus to spread the message of salvation. During His public ministry, which lasted about three years, Jesus focused on making disciples. He taught and trained them, providing convincing evidence that He is the Son of God and the promised Messiah. Frequently, He took His disciples aside privately to explain the meanings of His lessons and miracles after speaking to a crowd. He also sent them out on various ministry assignments. In John 14:16–17, Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit, who would always be with them, lead them into all truth, and dwell within them.

As promised, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came with power upon the believers, who were then empowered to share the Good News with everyone. The rest of the Book of Acts provides an exciting account of all that they accomplished. In one city, the opposition remarked, “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus” (Acts 17:6, NIV). Many placed their faith in Jesus, becoming disciples, and churches were established throughout the Roman Empire and eventually in other nations.

Because of influential disciples like Martin Luther and others, Europe was opened to the Gospel of Jesus Christ during the Reformation. This movement eventually led Christians to emigrate to the New World to spread the message of Christ. Although the world is still not fully evangelized, the challenge remains as significant as ever. The command of our Lord continues to stand: “Go and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

**The characteristics of a disciple can be simply defined as someone who knows and follows Christ, is being changed or transformed by Christ, and is committed to the mission of Christ, as stated in Matthew 4:19.**

We use these verses and Jesus’ examples to explain what it means to make disciples. We stress that making disciples isn’t just about teaching; it’s about building real relationships with people. Our method centers on walking alongside others, offering support, and helping them grow in their trust in Jesus. This includes sharing our own faith stories, answering their questions, and guiding them as they learn to follow Jesus more closely.

A healthy Hometown disciple is someone who knows and follows Christ, is being transformed by Christ, and is committed to His mission. This person actively and consistently participates in a Hometown small group, fostering community and accountability among members. In addition to this small group involvement, they also seek out one-on-one mentorship or form small group connections with individuals of the same sex. These interactions serve a vital purpose: to provide mutual support and encouragement as each person strives to grow and deepen their spiritual maturity in Christ. Through open dialogue, shared experiences, and prayer, they help each other navigate their faith journey and develop stronger connections with God and one another.

## *THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN DISCIPLING OTHERS:*

### **Infant:**

- They have limited biblical knowledge.
- They don't know how to connect with God.
- They are largely motivated by their emotions and circumstances.
- Life is generally all about them and their needs.
- They are highly dependent on others.
- They are easily influenced.

### *An infant's needs:*

- They need a relationship with someone who will be their friend and model the Christian life.
- They need patient love and reassurance.
- They need simple gospel-centered teaching.
- They need protection and guidance from false teaching and ideas.
- They need help forming spiritual habits, starting with reading the Bible and prayer.

### *How to help an infant grow:*

- The key to helping an infant grow is the word SHARE.
- Share your life with them so they can see what it looks like to authentically connect with God and live daily as a Christ-follower.
- Share new truth with them from the Bible so they can learn to think and believe in alignment with what God says, not what feels right to them.
- Share new habits with them – help them begin to learn how to read the Bible and pray for themselves and others. For more specific next steps, refer to Mark #1 and #2 above.

### **Child:**

- They are growing in their relationship with God by learning to communicate with Him.
- They are growing in biblical knowledge and learning to replace lies with truth.
- They are growing in their relationship with other Christians.
- They are motivated by their needs and comfort.
- They are beginning to learn obedience to God's Word and the blessing that come from that.
- They are sensitive to approval and correction.

### *Child's needs:*

- They need a strong relational connection to a mature believer.
- They need teaching and affirmation of their identity in Christ.
- They need a family to belong to where they can be genuinely loved and learn to love others.
- They need clear boundaries and loving correction.
- They need teaching on obedience and holiness.
- They need help handling emotions and conflict biblically.
- They need encouragement through failure and challenges.

### *How to help a child grow:*

- The key to helping a child grow is the word CONNECT.
- Connect them to God by showing them how to feed themselves on God's Word and through authentic prayer. For more specific next steps, refer to Mark #1 and #2 above.
- Connect them to family by helping them join a small group and learning how to actively participate in other believers' lives.

- Connect them to their purpose of being a disciple who blesses and serves others. For more specific next steps, refer to Mark #3 above.

### **Young Adult:**

- They are growing in spiritual disciplines – learning to connect with God and feed themselves spiritually.
- They are making the shift from self-centered to others-centered.
- They are learning to serve and minister to others with the resources God has given them.
- They are learning to fight personal sin intentionally.
- They are becoming consistent in obedience to God's Word, even when it is difficult.
- They are beginning to feed others spiritually.

### ***A young adult's needs:***

- They need to be challenged toward deeper connection and dependency on Christ.
- They need help identifying their spiritual gifts and receiving skills training.
- They need opportunities to serve and learn how to use their gifts and resources for the benefit of the church.
- They need deep, ongoing relationships with mature believers who will offer grace-filled accountability, encouragement, and correction where needed.
- They need help establishing healthy boundaries.
- They need opportunities to disciple others.

### ***How to help a young adult grow:***

- The key to helping a young adult grow is the word MINISTER.
- Equip them for ministry by helping them identify their gifts and how to use them to serve others. For more specific next steps, refer to Mark #3 above.
- Provide ministry opportunities for them and coach and encourage them along the way.
- Release them to minister to others and to look for leadership opportunities around them.
- Explain the stages of spiritual growth and how to assess the maturity of those with whom they are in a relationship.
- Help them understand how to use this tool to begin assisting those around them to take their next step of spiritual growth.

### **Parent:**

- They have a solid understanding of God's Word.
- They have a deep, abiding relationship with God.
- They are living out God's Word and are demonstrating Christ-like character.
- They are others-centered and God-dependent.
- They are actively investing in and discipling others.
- Their spiritual authority is rooted in humility.
- They are inviting others to follow them as they are following Christ.

### ***A parent's needs:***

- They need close peer relationships with other spiritual parents who are involved in making disciples for encouragement and accountability.
- They need opportunities to lead and multiply their lives into others – permission to develop others to maturity.
- They need ongoing training in spiritual leadership and skills development.
- They need assistance in learning how to delegate responsibility so they can prioritize rest, in order to avoid burnout.



- They need to be challenged to continue to grow in their connection to and intimacy with God in their daily lives.

***How to help a parent grow:***

- The key to helping a spiritual parent grow is the word DISCIPLE.
- Explain the discipleship process so they know how to help others take their next step.
- Get them familiar with how to use this tool to be intentional about helping their disciple take steps to grow in each of the 8 Marks of a Healthy Hometown Disciple.
- Release them to disciple another person with your help – coach and encourage them along the way.
- Release them to disciple others alone and continue to cast the vision that they are to make disciples who make disciples.

**Resources:**

- Real-life Discipleship Training Manual
- The Disciple's Journey (Putman)
- Emotionally Healthy Discipleship (Scazzero)
- The 8 Marks of a Healthy Hometown Disciple
- Practicing the Way (J.M. Comer)

## Healthy Home and Family Life:

The concept of family holds great significance in God's plan, as emphasized throughout the Bible in both physical and theological contexts. This idea was introduced right from the beginning, as seen in Genesis 1:28 (NLT): "God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.'" God's intention for creation was for men and women to marry and have children. According to Genesis 2:24, a man and a woman join together in a "one-flesh" union through marriage, and together with their children, they form a family—the fundamental building block of human society.

The Bible emphasizes a sense of community and family that contrasts with the more individualized perspective prevalent in many Western cultures today. For example, when God saved Noah from the flood in Genesis 6, it wasn't just Noah who was saved; it was his wife, his sons, and his sons' wives as well—essentially, his entire family was saved. Similarly, when God called Abraham out of Haran in Genesis 12, it was a call for him and his family. The sign of the Abrahamic covenant, circumcision, as mentioned in Genesis 17, was meant to be applied to all males in the household, whether they were born into the family or were servants. This indicates that God's covenant with Abraham was based on family and community rather than individualism.

The importance of family is evident in the provisions of the Mosaic covenant. For instance, two of the Ten Commandments focus on maintaining family cohesion. The fifth commandment, which emphasizes honoring one's parents, aims to preserve parental authority in family matters. Similarly, the seventh commandment, which prohibits adultery, safeguards the sanctity of marriage. From these two commandments, various other stipulations in the Mosaic Law emerge, all designed to protect marriage and family. The health of the family was so crucial to God that it was incorporated into the national covenant of Israel.

The theological concept of family is significant. In Matthew 12, Jesus redefines what it means to be part of a family. While He was speaking to a crowd, His mother and brothers sought to speak with Him. When someone informed Jesus of their request, He responded, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" He then pointed to His disciples and stated, "Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, sister, and mother!" So, what is Jesus communicating here? Is Jesus suggesting that biological family is unimportant? Jesus is not dismissing His biological family; instead, He is highlighting a theological truth: in the Kingdom of God, the most vital family connection is spiritual, not physical. This concept is echoed in the Gospel of John, specifically in John 1:12-13, which states, "But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God." The parallels are clear. When we are born physically, we are born into a physical family. However, when we are "born again," we enter into a spiritual family.

The Bible emphasizes that having a healthy home and family life is essential, serving as a fundamental building block of human society. Such an environment deserves our protection and nurturing, as it plays a critical role in our development and well-being. Central to this concept is the significance of love, respect, and spiritual growth within the family unit. Ephesians 5:21 describes the mutual submission of husband to wife and wife to husband as each complements the other. God has designed each differently with different but coequal roles. Verse 33 concludes that "each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." In fact, a husband must give up his life just as Christ gave up his life for the church. This is a selfless and sacrificial leadership role.

In addition to physical families, the Bible introduces the idea of a spiritual family, which represents the new creation that God is forming through Christ. This overarching family includes all individuals who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, regardless of background. As highlighted in Revelation 7:9, this spiritual family draws from every nation, tribe, people, and language, showcasing the diversity and inclusivity that characterizes God's kingdom. Ultimately, the health of both physical and spiritual families is seen as a vital foundation for individual well-being. A strong family unit not only fosters personal growth and stability but also acts as a powerful reflection of God's love, order, and intention for humanity.

A healthy Hometown disciple is an individual who actively nurtures and develops their relationships with their spouse and other family members. This person approaches family life with a sense of grace and truth, leading by example and fostering an environment of open communication and mutual respect. They demonstrate authenticity in their actions and beliefs, ensuring that they are not hypocritical in their behavior at home. Additionally, a healthy disciple seeks to cultivate a positive atmosphere where their children feel valued and understood, contributing to an overall family dynamic where rebellion is minimal. This type of individual prioritizes family connections and works diligently to build strong, loving relationships within their household.

### ***THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN HEALTHY HOME AND FAMILY LIFE:***

#### **Infant:**

- They may not know that God has a clear plan for marriage and family life.
- Spouses may believe that all aspects of marriage are 50/50 responsibilities. That is, they believe that all responsibilities should be shared equally.
- The concept of "roles" in marriage is not understood.
- Spouses put their own needs first – not considering the other.
- Spouses have adopted patterns for marriage and parenting from their childhood, not the Bible.
- Children are viewed as "blank slates," not understanding their sin nature.
- Children are not trained with certain limits, but are given too much freedom.

#### ***An infant's needs:***

- They need a foundational understanding of marriage – that it is a God-designed relationship between a man and a woman, and both express God's triune image together.
- They must understand that it is not good to be alone – that marriage is God's plan A to overcome loneliness and experience deep companionship.
- They must develop a growing understanding of the wisdom principles for parenting in Proverbs and other Biblical truths.

#### ***How to help an infant grow:***

- Discovering Biblical truth about marriage and parenting is vital. This includes reading all that the Bible teaches about both, attending parenting boot camps, mom's and dad's workshops, and honestly examining their own upbringing.
- There are many examples of good and bad parenting in the Bible. Good: Job, Abraham, Hannah, Joseph & Mary, Eunice... Bad: Lot's wife, Eli, David, Ahaz, Herodias... Learn from these examples.
- They need to observe and listen to other marriages and invite others to observe them and receive honest feedback.
- Children need good, godly friends (1 Cor 15:33) – steer clear of bad company.
- Children need their parents' attention – this takes time and personal sacrifice.

#### **Child:**

- They begin to take the Bible seriously in their marriage and family.
- They are excited to take steps of obedience but feel overwhelmed or unable to obey God's standards/commands.
- They have simplistic and immature perspectives on marriage and parenting based on personal experiences or over-emphasis of a few Bible passages.
- They understand God's ideal for marital love (1 Cor 13) but see how their spouse comes up short. And they can be critical of each other.
- They desire to have a godly marriage and godly children, but their response to insights or criticism is defensive.
- Comparing their marriage and parenting with other godly families can be paralyzing.

#### *A child's needs:*

- They need to internalize the truth of God's word regarding marriage and parenting.
- They need to reject worldly standards for marriage and parenting – and even endure criticism from friends and family members who do not follow Jesus Christ.
- They need godly couples to encourage, support, and mentor them as they adopt new ways of treating each other as spouses and new parenting patterns.
- Spouses must pray together and ask God to unify them and lead them as two individuals becoming one team, together.
- They must agree together on their parenting decisions – and not fight against each other.
- The goal is to raise godly children who love God and love others. The goal is not to "befriend" them, but to train their children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4).

#### *How to help a child grow:*

- Join a marriage or parenting small group and grow your Biblical understanding of both. You will see and imitate examples of families pursuing God's plan.
- Applying Biblical truth to their marriage and parenting is vital. This includes continuing to read all that the Bible teaches about both, attending parenting boot camps, mom's and dad's workshops, and honestly dialoguing with other godly couples about their family.
- Understand that God's BIG plan for all families is the same – to love Him and love others. But this plan is unique for each family. And no two families are the same. So, receive and give grace to each other.
- Proverbs 22:6 says to "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This training encompasses teaching them to love God, be responsible, and practice spiritual disciplines.
- Just as God disciplines those he loves, parents discipline their children to train in godly living, yielding the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Heb 12:7-11). This is an act of faith.

### **Young Adult**

- Spouses live out selfless/agape love, sacrificial service, and forgiveness – reflecting Christ's love for the church.
- Spouses honor and respect each other, as described in Ephesians 5.
- Spouses focus on communication, understanding, and vulnerability to build intimacy.
- Others can see a united marriage of "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24, Mark 10:8) – working as a team, recognizing and appreciating the other's differences, and helping each other up (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).
- Parents train/restrain/correct/affirm their children as a team and support each other.
- Parents look for godly counsel/wisdom from others they respect.

#### *A young adult's needs:*

- Parents need godly examples who listen empathetically, help them process their experiences, allow for failure, and encourage a grace-filled home life.
- Parents need periodic opportunities for self-examination. Safe places or events or relationships to ask, "Where are we now and where are we going?"
- A parent's goal is godly character in their children, not simply behavioral obedience.
- Children need parents who listen with understanding, beyond just hearing words, to grasp their intention.

#### *How to help a young adult grow:*

- Couples take advantage of resources available to them – providing godly marriage and parenting truth. They hunger to grow via workshops, Bible studies, small groups, and weekend teachings.
- Couples pray together and read the Bible with Christ at the center – a "threefold cord" (Ecclesiastes 4:12), which is not easily broken.
- Couples do not let the sun go down while they are still angry (Ephesians 4:26) – preventing small grievances from becoming major rifts.
- Couples share their inner heart, needs, and feelings with each other – avoiding passive-aggressiveness or blame.
- Parents train and discipline their children and do not exasperate them (Col 3:21); they parent with comfort, prayer, love, and forgiveness to win the child's heart.

#### **Parent:**

- They participate in church as a family, fostering authentic relationships.
- They lead and serve in the church and community in line with their spiritual gifts.
- They incorporate prayer, Bible reading, and gratitude into family life.
- They emphasize a personal, loving relationship with God and each other, not just rules.
- They include other couples/families in their lives – vulnerably exposing their highs and lows with others.
- They act as spiritual parents (not just physical) by modeling their faith and showing their children how to live their faith in the home every day.
- They explain basic truths and habits, sharing God's commands, extending grace, and raising children to be Jesus' disciples.

#### *A parent's needs:*

- Couples need to be careful to not "lose our first love" (Rev 2:4). That is to love God with all of their hearts and remain humble and teachable.
- Husbands are called to love their wives sacrificially, as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25), putting their spouse's well-being above their own.
- Couples need to honor one another (Ephesians 5:33) and validate each other's emotions to create a safe space for vulnerability.
- Couples need to "be kind and compassionate, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). This prevents the buildup of resentment that can erode emotional intimacy.

#### *How to help a parent grow:*

- They remember that their primary identity is in Christ and their hope is in heaven rather than the fleeting comforts of this life.
- They "take up their cross daily" (Luke 9:23) rather than escape the world's brokenness via entertainment or possessions or comfort.
- They speak the "truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) and are "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry" (James 1:19).

- They continue chasing after godly marriage and parenting truth. They continue to hunger for growth via workshops, Bible studies, small groups, and weekend teachings.
- They include other couples/families in their lives – vulnerably sharing the highs and lows of following Christ in their marriage and family.
- They model and teach godly marriage and parenting truths in all their relationships: friendships, small groups, at church, at work, and in their community.

**Resources:**

- Love & Respect (Emerson Eggerichs)
- Marriage Mentoring (Matt Loehr/Dave and Jenn Hoffman)
- Parenting Boot Camp (Eric Cram)
- Marriage: 6 Gospel Commitments Every Couple Needs to Make (P.D. Tripp)
- Premeditated Parenting (Steve Nelson)
- Parenting: 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family (P.D. Tripp)
- Hometown Annual Marriage Conference
- Mom's Time & Dad's Workshops (Once/month at Lakeville or Bloomington)

## Pursues Godly Character and Emotional Health:

A person's character is shaped by their disposition, thoughts, intentions, desires, and actions. It's important to remember that character is assessed based on overall tendencies rather than isolated actions. To truly understand a person's character, we must consider their entire life. For example, King David is often regarded as a man of good character or "a man after God's own heart," as stated in 1 Samuel 13:14. However, David also sinned. In 2 Samuel 11, he took something that did not belong to him, committed adultery, and even orchestrated murder.

On the other hand, there's King Ahab, who is noted in 1 Kings 22:35 for possibly performing one good deed, but he is still remembered for his overall bad character. According to 1 Kings 16:33, Ahab did more evil to provoke the anger of God than any of the other kings of Israel before him. Throughout the Bible, several individuals are described as having godly character, highlighting the importance of looking at the totality of a person's actions and life when assessing their character.

Character is shaped and defined by our choices. Adversity presents a crossroads that forces a person to choose between integrity and compromise. Character is more than just words; anyone can claim they have integrity, but actions reveal true character. A person cannot separate their character from their actions. A person's character is their true self in action. In Daniel 1:8, Daniel made the decision not to defile himself with the royal food in Babylon. This godly choice was a crucial step in establishing unshakeable integrity in his life. Conversely, our character also influences our choices. Proverbs 11:3a (NIV) states, "The integrity of the upright guides them." It is God's purpose to develop character within us. Proverbs 17:3 tells us, "Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but the LORD tests the heart." Godly character results from the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification. In a believer, character is a consistent manifestation of Jesus in their life. God is pleased when we grow in character.

Mental and emotional health are critically important to a person's well-being as they submit themselves to following Christ and His commands. Mental and emotional health refers to the ability to effectively manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, which fosters a sense of peace and resilience. Key characteristics of mental and emotional health include emotional regulation, healthy relationships, self-awareness, and adaptability. These traits help individuals navigate challenges, build fulfilling connections, experience a sense of purpose, and actively pursue that purpose. Although the Bible does not explicitly address mental or emotional health, it discusses the heart and mind, spiritual brokenness, and the condition of the soul. The Bible directs us on how to behave in a mentally and emotionally healthy way and reveals how to develop a healthy mind and heart beneath those behaviors by highlighting God's role in healing and restoration. It acknowledges the reality of mental and emotional health challenges while pointing to God as the ultimate source of strength, peace, and hope. The Bible encourages us to seek God in prayer, meditate on His word, and find comfort in His promises.

According to Genesis 3, we live in a fallen world, which has been greatly affected by Adam's disobedience to God. This disobedience initiated several significant changes that impact not only individuals but all of creation. Among these changes is a profound influence on mental and emotional health, introducing concepts such as shame, guilt, fear, and broken relationships. These factors can lead to ongoing struggles with emotional well-being. The narrative illustrates how the entrance of sin into the world distorted human nature, causing alienation from God, from others, and even from oneself. The prophet Isaiah reminds us in Isaiah 59:2 that our sins separate us from God, while Paul notes in Romans 8:21-22 that creation itself is groaning for freedom from its state of decay. The fall of mankind has resulted in physical ramifications for the body as well as spiritual effects on the soul. This foundational narrative suggests that challenges related to mental and

emotional health are not simply personal failings, but a consequence of the brokenness introduced by sin.

The Bible is filled with people who knew God and loved God and still wrestled with their mental and emotional health. The language we use and the diagnoses for emotional or mental health might be modern, but the struggle itself is timeless. Each of these people in the Bible reminds us of the importance of our emotional health, which is linked to the health of both the body and the spirit. Let's quickly look at a few examples.

We read the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:1-20. Hannah was a woman who deeply knew grief. She longed for a baby, but her womb remained painfully empty. She faced constant mockery and taunting from her husband's second wife, who has children, and her sorrow caused her to weep to the point of losing her appetite. Yet, despite her pain and desperation, Hannah did not give up; she continued to seek and worship God. When we encounter pain, grief, or any emotional health challenges, may we be like Hannah and consistently turn to God.

In 1 Kings 19, there is a story about the prophet Elijah experiencing burnout. Despite achieving one of the greatest victories of his life, he finds himself feeling hopeless and terrified, even praying to die. In that moment of hopelessness, God provided Elijah with what he needed: food and rest. This story prompts us to consider how we should respond when we reach our breaking point or when things seem hopeless. It teaches us that God is our comforter and provider, even in the darkest of times.

The story of Jonah in Jonah 4 serves as a powerful example of despair. God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn its people that destruction was approaching due to their sin. Instead of obeying, Jonah tried to flee from God and was swallowed by a large fish, where he spent three days in its belly. After the fish released him, Jonah finally went to Nineveh to deliver God's message. The people of Nineveh listened, and as a result, God decided to spare them from destruction. Despite this outcome, Jonah was angry with God for showing compassion and wished to give up on life. Instead of embracing God's mercy and praising Him for His grace, Jonah's anger spiraled into a desire to die. This story prompts us to reflect on how we respond when we experience disappointment or struggle with feelings of unfairness. Realigning ourselves with God is the only way to overcome our emotional state of mind.

A powerful example is the story of Job in Job 1-42, who lost everything. Job was a faithful servant of God, yet in a single day, he lost all his material possessions and his family. Can you imagine the depth of his sorrow and confusion? To make matters worse, he was afflicted with painful sores that covered his entire body. In his suffering, Job began to feel hopeless, as expressed in Job 7:16, and he felt lonely and overlooked by God, as he conveyed in Job 30:20. God responded to Job in Job 38, reminding and encouraging Job that, although evil exists in the world now, it will not last forever. Ultimately, God will have the victory.

The Bible does not promise that following Christ will shield us from troubles, pain, or emotional health challenges. However, it does assure us that God will be with us during these difficult times, and we have victory over death through Jesus. There is hope in knowing that one day we will live free from pain and suffering, as stated in Revelation 21:4. In the meantime, let us remember that amidst the messiness of life, God is still good and in control, and He is with us. Let us hold onto Him.

The Bible offers valuable guidance on emotional health by addressing the management of emotions, the pursuit of peace, and the importance of seeking support from others. It outlines principles that can help individuals attain and maintain good mental health. Key themes in the scriptures include the importance of trusting in God, which can bring a sense of security and calm in turbulent times. Finding rest in Him is emphasized throughout the Bible, encouraging believers to take time for spiritual reflection and rejuvenation. For instance, Philippians 4:8 provides a clear



description of a healthy thought life, urging us to focus on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

Moreover, Jesus serves as a powerful example of the necessity of taking breaks from the hectic pace of life to concentrate on spiritual matters. In Luke 5:16, we see Him frequently withdrawing to lonely places to pray, demonstrating the importance of solitude and reflection. Additionally, in Mark 6:31, He invites His disciples to "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile," highlighting the significance of rest and disconnection from daily stresses. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul recognizes the value of physical well-being, stating in 1 Timothy 4:8 that physical exercise is beneficial for the body. This acknowledgment serves as a reminder that caring for our physical health contributes positively to our overall emotional and spiritual well-being.

In conclusion, the Bible underscores that self-care, both physical and spiritual, is not just beneficial but essential for maintaining a healthy and balanced life. Taking the time to nurture our bodies and spirits prepares us to face life's challenges with resilience and hope.

A healthy disciple in Hometown recognizes that while talent is a valuable gift that can open many doors, character is a conscious choice that defines who they are and how they interact with the world. This individual demonstrates strong self-awareness by recognizing their strengths and weaknesses. They acknowledge that numerous factors in life are beyond their control, including family background, upbringing, and aspects of their intelligence quotient (IQ). However, they firmly believe that developing their character is within their power and responsibility. They understand that if they ignore flaws or weaknesses in their character, these unaddressed issues will likely grow deeper and could harm their relationships and overall well-being. To cultivate their character and support their growth journey, they intentionally seek out relationships with godly people who provide encouragement, constructive feedback, and accountability.

They also effectively manage their emotional health, allowing them to express their feelings appropriately in various situations. This individual approaches criticism with an open mind, viewing it as an opportunity for growth rather than a personal attack. They embody grace in their interactions, showing kindness and compassion even in difficult circumstances. When faced with challenges, they remain resilient, enduring hardships with an optimistic attitude and faith. They practice active listening, giving their full attention to others and valuing their perspectives.

Furthermore, they possess a deep sense of meaning and purpose in their life, which guides their actions and decisions. They are proactive in seeking wise counsel from trusted mentors or leaders, recognizing the importance of guidance in their spiritual journey. Respect for authority is a key trait, as they honor those in positions of leadership and acknowledge their role in the community. Lastly, they consistently support and uplift their fellow believers, fostering a sense of unity and encouragement within their faith community.

### ***THE STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN GODLY CHARACTER AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH:***

#### **Infant:**

- They may not know the nature of God and how to pursue godly character.
- They may be compartmentalized godly characters.
- They may not know that God has a clear plan for our emotional expression and character.
- They may be easily offended or receive feedback as a personal attack.
- They may be prone to grudge-holding.
- They may easily fall into arguing or heatedly debating with people who have differing points of view.
- They might have a series of broken relationships and regularly point to the faults of others that contributed to relational breaks while dismissing or minimizing their own.

- They may exhibit poor listening habits (distracted, interrupting, jumping to conclusions, listening to respond vs listening to understand, etc.)
- They may be captivated by despair or hopelessness when faced with trouble in their life.
- They may suffer from constant anxiety about what is happening or could happen.
- They may be impulsive in their emotional expression (i.e., consistent outbursts of anger) or resistant to expressing any emotion.
- They may not know that prayer helps to restore mental and emotional well-being.

#### *An infant's needs:*

- Encouragement that godly character is an important trait.
- To be aware that integrity brings trust.
- To be aware that their emotions are valuable insights for their internal world.
- To learn that emotions are something to rule over, rather than be ruled by.
- Gentle and patient communication to help draw out their internal world and assist them with processing their emotions in a peaceful environment.
- Encouragement in God's character when faced with trouble to know that they can trust and obey Him in any storm.
- To learn God's will for their emotional processing and definition of godly character.

#### *How to help an infant grow:*

- Need to see what a godly character looks like through examples of those leading them.
- Need to be in an environment where they will see men and women living out godly character.
- Encourage them to pause when faced with trouble instead of reacting without processing.
- Teach them helpful ways to identify emotions
  - Ask yourself, "What am I feeling?" Goal: name the emotions. Could use the [Feelings Wheel](#) when needed to dig a little deeper (i.e., move from "I feel bad" to something more specific, "I feel overwhelmed") or Atlas of the Heart by Brené Brown.
  - No need to label the emotion as good or bad. Just identify it.
  - Talking it out loud on a walk or with someone else can help process.
- Introduce them to Bible verses on God's will for our emotional processing and godly character.
- Need to be in an environment where they will see men and women living out emotional health.

#### **Child:**

- Understands and believes in the importance of Biblical instructions on godly character.
- When faced with trouble, accepts that God has the answer on how to process and respond.
- Sees feedback as a positive input feed that improves humility (self-awareness).

#### *A child's needs:*

- Support from a listening ear when processing their feelings and an example of how to bring their emotions to God.
- Practice in pursuing godly character, even when it is hard.
- To learn who they are in Christ and that they will be comforted by God in their troubles.

### *How to help a child grow:*

- A child can grow in character by:
  - Studying God's character demonstrated through the Old and the New Testament and Jesus' example in the New Testament.
  - Practicing godly virtues and guarding their hearts.
  - Keeping good company.
- A child can develop emotional health by
  - Demonstrating emotional prayer through biblical examples.
  - Constant reminders to pause when facing trouble instead of reacting.
  - Studying one-another commands in the Bible.

### **Young Adult**

- Understand the nature of God and their need to be a person of Character.
- Appropriately grieves loss and disappointment
- Pauses in the midst of emotional situations, reflects on their emotions, and chooses wisely
- Communicates their emotions to the Lord first and to trusted counselors for input
- Has hope in the Lord and receives peace from Him when troubled
- Obeys the Biblical instructions on godly character, even when it is not convenient
- Takes less time to process and move on from disappointments or setbacks
- Developing deep and healthy relationships.

### *A young adult's needs:*

- Encouragement to give the emotional support they receive from God to others.
- Feedback on their character; what fruit is already growing, and what could they grow next?

### *How to help a young adult grow:*

- Provide them with the resources that they need to continue to grow in character.
- Have them seek out and support those in the group who are facing trouble.
- Have them share how God is meeting them in their pain and leading them in godly next steps.
- Celebrate with them the hope and peace they receive by trusting their emotions and circumstances to God.
- Provide feedback to others.

### **Parent:**

- Teaches the importance of Biblical instructions on godly character
- Models how to process emotions in a healthy way
- Listens with empathy and leads with optimism
- Strengthens relationships by regularly receiving and providing feedback
- Lives out one-another commands.

### *A parent's needs:*

- Reminders of how hard it is to grow in emotional health and to maintain empathy for those who are infants, children, and young adults.
- Deep relationships where they transparently share their life, receive feedback on their blind spots, and live in accountability.
  - **Remember:** not even parents outgrow the need for feedback & discipleship.
- Empathy and encouragement to continue the practice of emotional communication to God and the pursuit of godly character.

*How to help a parent grow:*

- Peer discipleship groups with other spiritual parents.
- Disciple others in pursuing godly character and emotional health through the stages: infant, child, young adult, and then release into parenthood.

Resources:

- Bible
- Hometown's 8 Marks of a Healthy Disciple
- Optional: Emotional intelligence resources to gain insight into how to engage with the emotional world of others
  - Berne Brown – [empathy for connection](#)
  - "The EQ Edge" by Steven Stein and Howard Book