

NEXT

MOVING FORWARD IN FAITH

STEPS

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Introduction

Next Steps is a seven-session course designed to lead new believers through fundamental elements of what it means to be a Christian.

The goal is to equip you with doctrinal teaching on how to pray, read God's word, share one's faith and much more. God has given you very specific instructions as to how to live our lives for Him and thereby live the very best life possible.

Practically speaking, each study in this series takes about an hour and is placed in progressive order. The conclusion of each study has practical applications called *Faith in Action*.

Purpose

- To encourage you to remember how God has worked in your life and teach you how to take communion.
- The longer we are disciples; spiritual Alzheimer's can set in where we can begin to forget how God rescued us and how sinful and lost we are without Him. Remembering these things are a powerful weapon against Satan's attacks. If Satan can get us to forget, it is only a matter of time before we will be tempted to return to the world.

Remember God**Exodus 16:1-3**

- Israel, even after being rescued from Egypt and witnessing the miracle at the Red Sea, was quick to forget what God had done for them. As a result, when times became difficult, the Israelites began to lack faith and trust in God.
- We need to be careful not to forget all that God has done in our lives.
- Remembering the faithfulness of God in our past is essential to trusting Him in the future.

Deuteronomy 8:10-18

- Another danger as we grow older as disciples is forgetting God and His role in our lives. We can begin to believe that our lives and our blessings are the result of our own talents and abilities.
- God says that we will be tempted to forget Him not only in difficult times, but also in times of prosperity.

Remember The Cross

1 Corinthians 11:23-30

- Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and his instructions were clear, "Do this in remembrance of me."
- We are taught that taking communion calls for self-reflection and unity among believers. Before taking communion, reflect on the following:

Q: Is there lingering sin I need to confess?

Q: Is there a relationship in the church that needs to be mended?

Luke 22:14-20

- The Passover was a celebration of how God rescued his people and communion serves the same purpose for us today. Communion allows us to reflect on God's love and mercy and how he has rescued us.
- The bread is representative of Christ's body, broken for his people.
- The juice is representative of Christ's blood, poured out for his people.
- Communion allows us to remember Christ's sacrifice for us and reconfirm the covenant relationship that he established with us.

Remember Heaven

Philippians 3:12-21

Q: How much did Paul think about the struggles of his past?

Q: How often do you think about heaven?

Q: Do you see being in heaven with God as your ultimate goal?

Faith in Action

1. Write out your conversion story. Keep it in a safe place and read it every year on your spiritual birthday. Take communion together.

Purpose

- To teach you how to have an accurate and biblical view of God and inspire you to build a daily relationship with God.

Q: How do you think your experiences growing up have shaped your view of God? How was your relationship with your father?

Q: How do you view authority? Do you have any negative experiences with authority figures in your past?

- Our relationship with our earthly fathers and our past experiences with other authority figures can have a profound effect on how we view God.
- God is *not* distant or disinterested; He is *not* angry or short-tempered; God is not unjust or unloving. God is the perfect father and he desires to have a real, daily relationship with us.

You Are Important To God

Luke 15:3-6

- If you were the only person who needed to be rescued...God would come running after you! He loves you so much. This is who God is.

You Are Valuable To God

Luke 15:8-10

Q: Have you ever searched desperately for something you lost? What?

Q: Would you go through the garbage or mud for a single penny? How about a one hundred dollar bill or winning lottery ticket?

- How valuable an item is determines our eagerness in finding it, and what we would be willing to do to recover it.
- The Bible teaches us that we are very valuable to God!

Psalm 40:1-4

Q: From what mud and mire did God save you?

God Longs To Be With You**Luke 15:11-32**

Q: When you sin and hurt God, does it make you hesitant to spend time with God?

Q: Do you think the son was initially eager to return to his father after what he had done?

Q: How did the father respond when his son returned home? Describe it.

Q: How does God feel if we choose to stay in the muck and mire of sin rather than repent and return home to him?

Q: How will God respond when we choose to repent, come home and spend time with him?

- God loves us and desires to have a daily relationship with us. The only thing we can do to mess that up is to forget and allow Satan to convince us that we are better off in sin or that God will not accept us if we return.

Faith in Action

1. Take some time and write a letter about your upbringing, and specifically, how it may have affected your view of God.
2. Work on having a biblical and accurate view of God.

Purpose

- To give you a basic understanding of prayer using the Lords Prayer.

Q: How important is communication in a relationship?

- Good communication is at the heart of every relationship and a relationship with God thrives on communication as well. In prayer we both speak to and listen for God on a personal level.

Mark 1:35

- Jesus was a busy man, yet he always found time to pray and places that were free from distraction.

Q: What are the potential challenges in your life for finding the time and place to pray?

Why We Need To Pray

Luke 11:1-4

- When a first century Jew heard the words *daily bread*, they would have immediately remembered the exodus.
- In Exodus 16 the Israelites had to rely on God for nourishment.
- As the people collected the manna, they could only collect enough for one day because anything extra would turn to maggots. This made God's people go to God everyday to get what they needed to survive.
- In the same way, we must understand that we cannot have a weekly Christianity. We cannot survive spiritually if we just rely on weekly times of fellowship and worship for our spiritual nourishment.
- Like the Israelites, we must learn to go to God everyday to sustain us.

Q: What would have happened to the Israelites if they had stopped going daily into the desert for manna? What will happen to us if we do not go spend time with God daily?

A Model For Prayer

- *Our Father*: Acknowledge God.
- *Hallowed be your name*: Praise God.
- *Your Kingdom come*: Pray for others including the church, family, enemies, leaders and anyone you want to see in heaven.
- *Give us each day our daily bread*: Pray for your daily needs including your spiritual, emotional, and physical needs.
- *Forgive us our sins*: Confess and ask God for forgiveness.
- *Lead us not into temptation*: Pray for God's protection.

Luke 11:5-13

Q: What does Jesus' story teach us about our prayer lives?

- Be bold and know that God loves you and wants what is best for you!

1 Thessalonians 5:17

- Prayer is something that should become a continuous habit. Even when we are engaged in other activities, we can always include God in our thoughts and heart.

Q: How would *continual prayer* change the way you engage your day-to-day activities and schedule?

Faith in Action

1. Start a prayer journal using the outline that Jesus gave his disciples.
2. Have a consistent distraction-free time to pray everyday.

Purpose

- To give you a basic understanding of fasting including why, when, and how to fast.
- Fasting is something that people do when they are drawing close to God, seeking out His will and depending on Him.

Matthew 9:14-15

- Jesus expected that after he departed, his disciples would dedicate themselves to the spiritual act of fasting.

Why We Should Fast

2 Samuel 12:15-22

- David fasted personally for repentance after sinning with Bathsheba.

Jonah 3:5-10

- Nineveh fasted corporately as a whole nation for God's mercy.

Acts 13:1-3

- Fasting was used to draw near to God in conjunction with worship.

Daniel 9:3

- Daniel fasted and prayed for God to deliver Israel from slavery.

Isaiah 58:6-8

- God called his people through the prophet of Isaiah to not be self-centered in their worship, prayers, and fasting.
- In the days of Isaiah, when the nation of Israel fasted, they were fasting for their own personal deliverance, but they were not concerned for other people around them that were starving, naked, and homeless.

Isaiah 58:6-8 Continued

- God wanted them to have a heart to fast about other people's spiritual needs as well as their own, and to bring forth good works of helping the needy. This is the most important principle of fasting, to draw closer to God and to seek His righteousness and His will in our lives.

How We Should Fast**Acts 13:1-3**

- Fasting should be accompanied by prayer and Bible study.

Ezra 10:6

- Fasting can also be absolute, which is no food or water at all.

Daniel 10:2-3

- Fasting can be partial, which is abstaining from only specific things.

1 Samuel 7:5-7**Daniel 9:3**

- Fasting can be done corporately or individually.

Conclusion

- Fasting should be a regular part of a Christian's life and helps us draw near to God, depend on Him and be strengthened by Him.

Faith in Action

- Decide the purpose of your fast.
- Pick a day and the type of fast that you will dedicate yourself to.
- Keep the fast between yourself and God.

Purpose

- To teach disciples how to have effective and daily Bible studies as well as teach them to use basic Bible tools.

Luke 4:1-13

- It was the *habit* of Christ to overcome temptation with scriptures. He knew them so well that he even knew where Satan was misusing them!
- Satan's temptations will be something we battle everyday and we need to develop the *habit* of answering them with the Word of God.

Q: What kinds of temptations does Satan bait you with?

Q: How can Scripture help you overcome?

Psalm 1:1-3

- The Bible does not actually say that we should have a *Quiet Time* everyday—it actually goes much further!
- The blessed man is the one who meditates on God's word day and night, not just for thirty minutes in the morning.

Q: What is the difference between *meditation* and just *reading*?

Psalm 119:9-10

- Keeping a pure life comes from hiding God's word in your heart.
- Jesus teaches us that our hearts are a source of sinfulness (Mark 7) and can only be changed through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 119:59-60

- We should not delay to obey God's commands.
- Bible study is rendered worthless if we do not put what we learn and know into practice (James 1:22-25).

Q: Why would someone delay to obey the commands of God?

Acts 8:26-29

- The Ethiopian Eunuch was a busy, important man who found the time to study God's word. (Elaborate more on the desire to learn and the heart of the Ethiopian Eunuch)

Practical Bible Study Tips

- Decide in advance what you want to study—a book of the Bible, a section of a book (Sermon on the Mount), a topic (faith, impurity, grace), the life of one character (Moses, David, Ruth) or a question you don't know the answer and dig for an answer.
- Read the passage out loud.
- Read different translations.
- Write down thoughts and questions about your Bible study.
- Share what you are learning with others.

Faith in Action

- Have a Bible study together.
- Learn to use a concordance and any other study tools that will complement your Bible study.

Purpose

- To teach you about your role and relationships within the church and help you see how your gifts can be used to build the body of Christ.
- The Bible teaches us that church is not a place we attend, but an opportunity to serve the needs of others.

Our Relationships**John 13:34-35**

- Jesus commanded us to love each other as he has loved us and this is what makes our relationships with one another distinct as Christians.
- The ultimate expression of love was Jesus being willing to serve and sacrifice for his disciples—and we should follow His example.

Mark 3:35

- We are Jesus' brothers and sisters if we do God's will and because of this common purpose, Christian relationships transcend even blood relations.

Our Role**Ephesians 4:14-16**

- Everyone has a role in the church—finding that role and doing that work is essential for the church to be built up and grow into maturity.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

- Everyone is essential to the body functioning as God intended it, even the weakest part is incredibly important!
- We must value the gifts and roles of everyone in the church and understand that we need one another.

Our Gifts**Romans 12:4-8**

- A spiritual gift is a particular talent or ability that God has put in your life. Therefore, it is your responsibility to grow and use the gift that God has blessed you with in order to build up the church.

1 Peter 4:10

- Whatever gift you have received should be used to serve God's people. As individuals, God has placed gifts, talents and abilities in our lives to be used to build up his kingdom in unique ways.

Q: What are some of your gifts? How can you use those gifts to serve God's people? (i.e Leadership, Guest Services, Youth Ministry)

Faith in Action

- Find an area in the church where you can serve.
- Next week, when you get together, go out and serve or offer hospitality to someone together.

Purpose

- To teach you how to confess your sins and restore others who have sinned.
- The church, our spiritual family, was created to love us, support us, and help us find strength in God as we face the adversities of life.

Q: What kinds of adversity or challenges do you think you will have or have had already as a disciple of Jesus?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

- Q: What is the advantage of having a close spiritual friend?
- We need people in our spiritual lives to help us up when we struggle and fall or it is only a matter of time before we give up in our faith.

Confession

1 John 1:5-10

- Walking in the light means our lives are an open book and on display.
- The Bible tells us, "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."

Q: Can we be close to God if we live in darkness or hidden sin?

- Confessing our sin allows us to walk in the light so that we can have fellowship with one another as well as the blood of Jesus purifies us and allows us to have a relationship with God.

Q: What are some obstacles that would prevent you from being open about your life and confessing sin?

Proverbs 28:13

Q: Concealing sin will cause downfall, but we will find mercy if we confess and renounce our sins.

Restoring One Another**Galatians 6:1-2**

Q: What should we do when someone confesses their sin to us?

Important Principles In Restoring One Another

- Never be harsh and do not overreact; God calls us to restore gently.
- Never say things like, "Amen, brother, thanks for being open."
God calls us to restore them and help them come to repentance.
- Encourage them to bring everything into the light, so that you can really pray specifically and also help them to come to repentance.
- Always ask them, "What do you think repentance looks like?" in order to guide them to repentance instead of just telling them what to do.
- Make sure to pray together after confession.

James 5:15-17

- It is vitally important to pray for one another after confession so that God can truly bring about healing.

Faith in Action

- Have a time of confession together.

Purpose

- To help you understand the importance of discipling as well as inspire you to develop healthy one-another relationships.
- Discipling is the training and learning process of becoming like Jesus. In the Great Commission, the apostles are commanded by Jesus to teach obedience. In the same way, church members disciple and teach obedience to one another through individual and group settings.

Christ-Centered

1 Corinthians 11:1

- In our discipling relationships, we must understand that Christ is the standard and our lives are examples.

Q: What is the difference between setting an example with our lives and making our lives a standard? Why is it important to know the difference?

- We need to have the humility and desire to imitate the Christ-like qualities in one another. However, the foundation and focus of our discipling relationships should always be our desire to be like Jesus.

Teach and Admonish

Colossians 3:16

Q: What is the difference between teaching and admonishing?

- Teaching is to impart skills or knowledge—this is proactive discipling.
- Admonishing is to reprove gently or kindly, but seriously; to counsel against wrong practices; to caution or advise; to warn against danger or an offense. This is reactive discipling.
- We need both proactive and reactive discipling in our walk with God.

Proverbs 27:4-5

- The Bible teaches that it is better to be corrected harshly in love, than to have someone who does not love you enough to correct you at all.

Q: Do you have spiritual friends that you trust enough to allow them to correct and challenge you on a regular basis?

Q: Are people who tell you what you want to hear instead of what you need to hear really a good friend?

One-Another

- There are many passages that give direction for how Christians should and should not act toward one-another. Here are a few of them:
- Hebrews 3:13—Encourage one another
- Hebrews 10:24 – Spur one another
- Galatians 5:13—Serve one another
- Galatians 6:2 – Carry each others burdens

Q: Do you have these kinds of one-another relationships in your life?

Q: Do you actively seek them out for your life?

Faith in Action

- Make sure you have a discipling partner and a community group in your life that you meet with regularly.
- Spend time consistently with your partner and community group: Confess sins, share burdens, talk about what you are learning from God, pray together, share your faith together, challenge one, etc.

Purpose

- To inspire you to see the world through the eyes of Jesus and encourage you to have the heart and compassion of Jesus.
- Compassion is the ability to recognize the suffering of other people, which ultimately leads you to take action and help them.

Matthew 9:35-38

Q: Why did Jesus have compassion on the crowds when he saw them?

Q: What does he mean by sheep without a shepherd?

- A sheep without a shepherd has no one looking out for them, no one protecting them from the predators of the world.
- Satan is a devouring lion in our daily spiritual lives. Most people have no one to help them spiritually, but are alone and wandering without direction. This is how we should see people as we go through our day.

Mark 6:30-44

- Life can be exhausting. The truth is Jesus and his disciples were tired and hungry and were in need of some rest. However, when they got to where they were going they found more people in need.

Q: How did Jesus respond? What motivated Him to meet their needs?

Q: How do you respond to the needs of other people after you have had a long, tiring day?

- We all have times where we feel like we do not have the physical or emotional resources to meet the needs of others. However, we must never forget that if we are willing to act faithfully, God will give us the resources to meet the needs of others and be strengthened ourselves.

Mark 1:40-42

- Jesus was willing to risk his personal well-being and his reputation to help this man. However, He had the heart to love the people who were looked down upon because of their physical, moral or social condition.

Q: Would you be willing to risk your well-being and your reputation to help someone?

Q: Do you love those around you who may be looked down upon by others because of their physical, moral or social condition?

Mark 2:13-17

- Jesus saw not only the physical and emotional needs of people, he saw their spiritual needs. These people may have looked okay on the outside but they were spiritually sick and hurting.

Q: Do you see the spiritual needs of those around you?

Psalms 116:5-6

- We must always remember as disciples of Jesus why we serve, why we share our faith and why we deny ourselves for the needs of others.
- We do these things to be like God who is full of compassion and *who saved us when we were in great need.*

Faith in Action

- Imitate the heart of Jesus and how he cares for people by having compassion that leads you to action.
- Decide to see the spiritual and physical needs of those around you and have a heart to help.

Purpose

- To equip and inspire you to bold, respectful and effective evangelism.
- Evangelism is part of living out the Great Commission that Jesus gave his disciples and it is a responsibility that all Christians have.
- The term evangelize literally means to proclaim the gospel.
- When it comes to evangelism, not many Christians possess both boldness and tact. People can either be so tactful that they say little, if anything, or they can be so bold that tact and respect is ignored.
- We need to find a balance between both so that we can effectively proclaim the gospel.

Motivation**2 Corinthians 5:10-21**

- We proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, trying to persuade others, because we know and fear God.
- Furthermore, the love of Christ compels us to live our lives for Him as ambassadors, realizing God has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Boldness**Romans 1:16-17**

- The Gospel is nothing to be ashamed of because it has the power to save.

Luke 9:23-26

- If we are ashamed of Jesus and his words, he will be ashamed of us.

Effectiveness**Matthew 10:11-14**

- We need to guard our hearts and not be too discouraged by those who do not want to seek out a relationship with God.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

- Invest in a friendship instead of just getting together for Bible studies.
- Share your life with them and develop a real relationship with them.

Matthew 5:14-16

- God desires for us to be examples so that our lives shine in the world for all to see and for our good deeds to bring him glory.

Q: Does the example of your personal life (academics, finances, work ethic) bring glory to God and make the gospel attractive? Or would you be embarrassed to show people certain areas of your life?

Ephesians 6:19-20

- Pray for boldness and God will answer your prayers.

1 Peter 3:15-16

- Show gentleness and respect.

Faith in Action

- Make a prayer list of people you would like to reach out to (family, friends, co-workers, classmates) and pray that God will open a door for you to share your faith with the people on your list.

Purpose

- To teach you the importance of helping the poor and inspire you to serve and sacrifice for the poor and needy.
- We can help those less fortunate than us in so many ways, such as contributing money to charities, volunteering or taking opportunities to help those less fortunate on a personal level. In any case, it is very important that a disciple adopts the heart to serve those in need.

Matthew 25:31-46

- Jesus judges between the sheep and goats.
- Sheep are those who give to others indiscriminately. Goats, on the other hand, are those who do not and simply take for themselves. The Bible says that we will be judged on how generous and helpful we are to the poor and needy!

Q: Who can you identify in your life that is among the least of these?

Q: How can you serve them?

Proverbs 21:13

- The way we respond to the poor and less fortunate has implications for the way that God will treat us.

Proverbs 14:31

- We are honoring God when we are kind to the poor.

James 1:27

- God has a heart for those who are in distress, who are vulnerable and are unable to take care of themselves.

Galatians 2:9-10

- The preaching of the gospel around the world is to be accompanied with service to the poor. They go hand-in-hand.

Q: Why do you think it was so important for the apostles to establish that the spread of the gospel be done along with service to the poor?

Q: Why is it important for us today to combine our preaching with service? How eager are you to remember the poor?

- As we proclaim the gospel, we must continue to remember the poor. When we do this we honor God and are a light to the world.
- As Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16

Faith in Action

- Give a regular poor contribution or benevolence.
- Make every effort to serve the needy in your community
- Be on the lookout for local HOPE Worldwide projects in the church or even consider praying about the possibility of adoption.

Purpose

- God provides us with everything we need through His power and His Word for a purposeful and fulfilling life in every area (John 10:10).
- Marriage is a gift from God and our world so desperately needs great examples in this area because a great marriage draws others to Jesus!

Gods Plan**Genesis 2:24**

- Marriage meets our deepest needs and should be the closest human relationship in our lives.

Matthew 19:9**Communication****Ephesians 4:29**

- Do not tear each other down, but build each other up with your words.

James 1:9

- Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

Colossians 3:13

- Do not bury resentment or bitterness, but deal with them.

Proverbs 15:22

- Plans fail for lack of counsel so make sure you consistently spend time together, talking through scheduling, finances, household needs, etc.

Selfishness**Colossians 3:19 and 1 Peter 3:7**

- Husbands should never be harsh, but must be considerate and serve their wives with a loving attitude.

1 Peter 3:5-6

- Wives must learn to submit themselves to their husbands.

Ephesians 5:22-33

- The husband has been called by God to lead his family spiritually.

Discipling and Counseling**Proverbs 15:22**

Q: Is either one of you closed to input?

- Every marriage needs counseling and discipling—no one is above it.
- Husbands and wives should have permission from one other to seek help and advice if there are unresolved problems.

Spirituality**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**

- Pray with your spouse daily and talk about spiritual things when you are together. Consider studying a spiritual book together.

Romance**1 Corinthians 7:5**

- Do not deprive one another.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

- Do not forget to love your spouse like the Bible describes since this is the best recipe for romance.

Faith in Action

- Do something this month to build up your marriage spiritually.
- For example, pray together, seek out marriage counseling, share your faith together, start reading a marriage book together, etc.

Purpose

- We all have dreams of God using our lives in a great way, yet when things were challenging and the process became painful, we resisted and maybe even took a few steps backward.
- Discipline is something that needs to be learned since few of us are naturally disciplined. How are we going to take the Gospel into all the world with it? Discipline, therefore, must be built into our Christian lives from the earliest possible moment.

1 Timothy 4:7

- Train yourself to be godly. Physical training is of limited value, but spiritual training is immeasurably valuable.
- The Christian life is a process of training in righteousness.

Laziness**Hebrews 6:12**

- We need to realize that laziness is a sin and is a constant threat to the life of every Christian whether you are young or old.
- Therefore, imitate those who are patient, faithful and disciplined. Look for good example and learn from them.

Idleness**2 Thessalonians 3:6-15**

- Follow the example of disciplined people. Don't be a busy body, which is somebody who looks busy, but does not really achieve anything.

Discipline**Hebrews 12:11-12**

- No discipline seems pleasant when you are going through it, but it produces a much more satisfying life. Make your life count!

Practicals

- Make a schedule of how you use your time.
- Get suggestions and set goals.
- Spend time with a disciplined person and learn from him or her.
- If you are not a punctual person, make an effort to be early.

Recommended Reading

- *The Disciplined Life*² by Richard Taylor
- *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective* by Stephen Covey

Faith in Action

- Do one of the practical suggestions mentioned above or read one of the recommended books.

Purpose

- God certainly expects excellence of Christian students—if not excellent results, at least excellent effort.
- Too often undisciplined students become Christians and then use evangelism or the church as an excuse for mediocre performance.
- Students must see that academics are a God-given responsibility. There is nothing unspiritual about studies—the unspiritual path to take is to neglect academics. Without perseverance the student suffers great loss in character, discipline and credibility, not to mention future opportunities.

Clear Calling

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

- God called us to be Christians as students for a reason.
- We have a responsibility to glorify God in academics and evangelism.

Colossians 3:22-23

- Attitude is more important than aptitude.
- Academics are an important part of a student's spiritual life, so in order to stay motivated, we need to work for God, not for ourselves.

Evangelistic Example

1 Thessalonians 4:11

- A consistent example has an impact. Consequently, classmates will be drawn to those who can help others.

Mark 7:37

- People were amazed by the all-around excellence of Jesus. In the same way, you will amaze family and friends if you excel in all areas.
- Conduct your ministry through academics, not in spite of academics.

Powerful Preparation**James 1:2-4**

- Persevering with academics leads to spiritual maturity, discipline, focus and faith.

Practicals**Proverbs 11:14**

- Many advisors make victory sure. So seek discipling in your academics and get input from professors, lecturers and classmates.

Proverbs 13:4**Proverbs 21:5**

- There is no substitute for diligence, so make sure you attend every class. This is also very important for your example.
- Take good notes and catch up on any lectures that you have missed.
- Go through homework the day you receive it and plan how you will get it done instead of procrastinating and waiting until the last minute.

Faith in Action

- Do *at least* one of the practical suggestions mentioned above during your next academic week.

Purpose

- The family is the most basic unit of society and so in order to understand the trouble our society is in, you need only to look at the trouble the average family is in.
- However, the family following God and His word is a communicative, warm, loving, committed and fruitful family.
- Therefore, God has chosen the family to develop character in his most precious gift to parents, their children.

Spiritual Focus

- The chain of command should be Christ, husband, wife then children.
- If you want a great family life, you will need discipling and guidance.
- The goal is to have a family that leads other families to Jesus.

Bringing Up Children**Security and Happiness**

- Time: You will need to reorder your priorities.
- Affection: Without affection, your children will become insecure, introverted, cold and awkward around strangers.
- Example: Ephesians 6:4 and Deuteronomy 6:7

Discipline

- It is unloving not to give discipline—Proverbs 23:13-14.
- Encouragement is necessary—Colossians 3:21
- God commands discipline—Proverbs 22:15 and Proverbs 29:15-21
- The husband is the spiritual leader of the family.
- Wife and husband should agree on the rules, just in case the children pick and choose whom to obey.
- Train your children in areas such as showing respect toward authority, speech and openness, affection, manners, tidiness, moodiness.
- Have regular discipling times with each child.

Practicals

- Have a weekly family time as well as consistent family devotionals.
- Be on time to church and allow extra time for fellowship.
- Pray with the children before they go to bed.
- If you have Christian children, work with the preteen or teen ministry. Embrace feedback and do not be defensive.
- Create a simple system of allowances and incentives for your children.
- Take the whole family out to share your faith together.
- Ask Christians you respect to recommend helpful books.

Faith in Action

- Have a fun-filled, spiritually focused, family devotional.

Purpose

- To teach you the principles of pursuing a godly dating relationship.

Background

- Dating relationships are heavily influenced by culture and yet the concept of dating is still a relatively new practice. In many places in the world today, marriage has typically been arranged by families or a formal *courting* process. Since this was the case in Biblical times as well, you will not find dating anywhere in the Bible.
- Unfortunately, many of people who become disciples come out of the world with bad experiences or low expectations of dating. The good news is that the Bible offers some very important principles on relationships between men and women that can set us on a path for building successful friendships and dating relationships in the future.

Who We Should Date

1 Corinthians 7:39

- This is neither encouragement nor suggestion, but a clear command of God. Disciples marry disciples.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

- The context to this scripture is about who we give our affection to.
- Paul told the disciples in Corinth that he and his companions had given their affection to them, but the Corinthians were withholding their affection from Paul and the other disciples (2 Corinthians 6:11-12).
- Paul was telling them they should be eager to give their hearts to other disciples but never be yoked, or give their affection, to unbelievers!

How We Should Date

The Two General Views of Dating

- Friendly Dating is when men and women go out to encourage one another and get to know each other with no romantic strings attached and no expectations except friendship. This should happen a lot!
- Steady Dating is having an exclusive boyfriend or girlfriend. This should happen after building a regular friendship and consulting many advisors!

Dating Principles

1 Corinthians 10:32-33

- Be considerate of one another and do not be a stumbling block.
- Go on double dates, be home before midnight, dress appropriately, etc.

Ephesians 5:3 and 1 Timothy 5:2

- In all relationships between men and women, including both dating and non-dating, the standard of purity is very high.

Q: What kinds of things, other than sexual immorality, would be a hint of sexual immorality or impurity? (Touching, making out, etc.)

Proverbs 19:20

- Worldly ideas of dating should not be imported into God's kingdom
- Be humble enough to admit that you do not know how to successfully build a spiritual dating relationship with a Christian. You need advice.

Faith in Action

- Write down a list of things God says are essential to building a spiritual friendship with the opposite sex. Make a list of people you can get advice from regarding building these relationships.

Purpose

- Money is the second most mentioned topic in the Bible after love. The way we handle our money says a lot about our spiritual lives.
- Sometimes the attitude toward giving our weekly offering is that we are taking part of our paycheck and offering it to the church leaders. While it is true that weekly giving meets practical needs of the church, such a view does not capture the spiritual reality of our giving.
- The reality is that God has given us everything we have, and by giving weekly we are returning a portion of that to God as a willing sacrifice.
- In this study, we will examine three ideas that should guide our attitude toward giving to God through our weekly giving to the church.

A Spiritual Act

Proverbs 3:9-10

- In the same way the Old Testament Israelites honored God with their tithes or first fruits to the temple—we are honoring God with our giving.

Q: What is your perspective on giving a tithe? Do you see it as a spiritual act or as putting money in a church administrators hands?

A Sacrificial Act

Mark 12:41-44

- Jesus considered the widow's offering the greatest because it involved the greatest personal sacrifice. It was not about the dollar amount, but about the sacrifice behind the amount.

Q: What is the difference between viewing giving in terms of sacrifice instead of strictly a dollar amount? How would that change your giving?

A Willing Heart

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

- Give much, receive much but give little, receive little.

Q: What is the difference between giving cheerfully and giving reluctantly?

Q: Why do you think it matters to God what we are feeling in our hearts when we give?

A Weekly Offering

- Pray and decide between you and God what is a willing and sacrificial amount to contribute.
- Be consistent, weekly or monthly, and have integrity about your giving.
- If you miss an offering, plan to double up the next time you give.
- Budget a saving plan and be organized about your contribution.

Recommended Reading

Acts 2:44-47

- We should imitate the sacrificial attitude of the early Christians.

Acts 4:32-37 and Acts 5:1-11

Q: What differences are there between Barnabas and how he gave as opposed to the way Ananias and Sapphira gave?

Faith in Action

- Look over your personal budget and if you don't have one, get some help and create one.
- Pray and decide what would be a sacrifice and commit that amount every week as an offering to God.