

AVPC

GROWTH CHECK

FLOURISHING GUIDE
(4 WEEKS)

HOW TO:

FLOURISH

AS A DISCIPLE!

HOW TO FLOURISH AS A DISCIPLE...

AVPC wants to encourage everyone to **lean** into their faith and **grow** in their spiritual maturity. In short, our prayer is that you would become everything God dreams!

We have created this booklet with 4 weeks of Flourishing Exercises to serve you in this aim. We encourage you to focus on one week at a time and participate in the activities outlined. If possible, share this with someone in your home or community (via the internet/phone, etc.).

May you discover that God has already been preparing you for this special time he wants to *share with you*. You practicing these exercises over the upcoming weeks means you are taking your relationship with Jesus seriously!

May you find your strength and peace in the one who holds *the whole the world in his hands!*

LET US FLOURISH TOGETHER!!!!

**“WITHOUT SOLITUDE IT IS
VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO LIVE A
SPIRITUAL LIFE . . . WE DO NOT
TAKE THE SPIRITUAL LIFE
SERIOUSLY IF WE DO NOT SET
ASIDE SOME TIME TO BE
WITH GOD AND LISTEN TO HIM.”**

~HENRI NOUWEN

PREPARATION

Silence is a way of waiting, watching and listening for the presence of God's Spirit in our midst. Solitude gives us the opportunity to rest in God; to let go and surrender and find REST in God's grace.

Enter into a brief time of silence and solitude in order to still your heart and clear your mind so you can become attentive.

1. ENGAGING WITH GOD

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’**”

(Matthew 22:34-39)

WHAT IS A FLOURISHING DISCIPLE?

A flourishing disciple is someone who grows in their love for the Lord through their:

- **Head:** They know more of God through his Word.
- **Heart:** They grow in intimacy with Jesus and in the likeness of Him.
- **Hands:** They live their faith out in their daily lives.

One way to help you grow more into the image of Christ in areas in which you may be lacking is to develop a personal design for discipleship.

There are **four components** of design for discipleship – this week we will work on:

#1 Engaging with God.

The following are *some* examples of ways to *Engage with God* (Spiritually): Prayer / Fasting
Journaling / Scripture Reading / Meditation
Scripture Memorization / Singing / Praising God
Listening to Christian Music

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Chose one or two activities from above and write down specifically what you plan on doing (i.e. daily prayer, read a specific book of the Bible). Jot down what you do each day and try to share what you are discovering with someone.

We are praying for you as you journey forward as a flourishing disciple.

**GOD IS INFINITELY PATIENT.
HE WILL NOT PUSH HIMSELF INTO
OUR LIVES. HE KNOWS... HE HAS
GIVEN US OUR FREEDOM.
BUT IF WE INVITE HIM WITH
ATTENTION... WITH SILENCE, HE
WILL SPEAK TO OUR SOULS, NOT
IN WORDS OR CONCEPTS, BUT IN
THE MYSTERIOUS WAY THAT LOVE
EXPRESSES ITSELF –
BY PRESENCE.**

~M. BASIL PENNINGTON

PREPARATION

Silence is a way of waiting, watching and listening for the presence of God's Spirit in our midst. Solitude gives us the opportunity to rest in God; to let go and surrender and find REST in God's grace. Try to not evaluate this time for what you hear or feel...it's just about making yourself available to God.

Enter into a brief time of silence and solitude in order to still your heart and clear your mind so you can become attentive. Maybe set a short timer (2-5 minutes) and BE STILL...

2. ENGAGING WITH KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH

The New Testament word “disciple” literally means “a learner.” Christians are called to a careful study of the Bible. This will help us acquire the knowledge that we need in order to do what God has call us to do. Jesus said, *“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”* (John 8:31–32)

Christians are to study God’s word to learn his revealed knowledge. **If we are to proclaim the message, we must know what that message is.** We owe *it* to each other, we owe *it* to other churches, and we owe *it* to the world to give a clear articulation of our faith.

How do you want to **engage** with scripture to **aid** in your growth?

Here are *some examples* of ways to engage with **knowledge** and **truth**:

Bible Study – Listening to Sermons – Studying in groups through the Bible App – Religious Articles – YouTube – Reference Books – CDs/DVDs – Create Lessons – Blogs – Podcasts

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Choose an activity from below to work on this week or design an activity of your own that will help you grow in knowledge and truth.

- Choose a book of the Bible – read through it, take notes, and write questions in a notebook.
- Make a list of and examine all passages in the Bible about truth
- Read an article about the characteristics of leadership as seen in Jesus.
- Using the internet, create a lesson on a topic of your choice.

These are just some ideas to get you started. We are praying for **you** as you continue your journey forward as a *flourishing disciple*.

**“WE ARE IN OUR VERY ESSENCE
A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY
GATHERED AROUND THE
PRESENCE OF CHRIST.**

**WHAT WE DO FLOWS OUT OF
WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST.”**

~RUTH HALEY BARTON

PREPARATION

We are called first and foremost *to be with Jesus* and by virtue of our relationship with Jesus we come into relationship with each other. Our focus is not so much on our direct relationship with each other, but to be in a life-transforming relationship with Jesus. In turn this will impact our relationships with each other. Our priority is to recognize and respond to the transforming power of Jesus in our midst.

As you enter into a brief time of silence and solitude in order to still your heart and clear your mind remember community begins *with Jesus* and His invitation *to be with HIM*.

3. ENGAGING WITH OTHERS

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, **into Christ**, from whom the whole body, *joined* and *held together* by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it **builds itself up in love**.

(Ephesians 4:19-20)

BUILT UP IN LOVE...

During the past couple weeks, we have been **engaging with God** and **engaging with knowledge and truth** as we continue our spiritual growth journey.

Our paths may not be exactly the same, but we *all need to grow* in the knowledge of God and spiritual growth takes the discipline of daily Bible study and prayer. It is also very important to learn from one another.

We grow stronger when we are together. That's why we need one another to bear spiritual **fruit** and to spiritually **mature**.

So how can we engage with others during this challenging time?

The following are *some* examples of ways to *Engage with Others* (Relationally): Mentoring / Intercessory Prayer / Group Prayer / Phone Time or FaceTime with family/friends / Virtual Group Study

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This week chose an activity from below to help you engage with others:

- Twice this week, converse with someone about what you are **reading** in the Bible.
- Ask a friend to **pray daily** for your growth in the *knowledge & application* of the Bible.
- Call a church partner to **encourage** and strengthen their spiritual growth!
- Take part in a Prayer Group or Virtual Study.

We are continuing in our prayers for you as you journey forward in becoming a flourishing disciple.

“SURRENDER IS SOMETHING THAT IS DONE TO US, MORE THAN SOMETHING WE DO OURSELVES ... NONE OF US CAN ENGINEER OUR OWN TRANSFORMATION – OR IT WOULD NOT BE TRANSFORMATION AT ALL BUT MERELY COSMETIC SURGERY TO MAKE US THINK WELL OF OURSELVES.”

~ RICHARD ROHR

PREPARATION

In your preparation today, make yourself available to God by stilling your heart and mind by saying the prayer below slowly-several times until you are ready to move into our focus for this week.

“God for me, I call you Father.

God alongside me, I call you Jesus.

God within me, I call you Holy Spirit...

(then close with the following:)

Come and give the grace needed so You can do the work needed in me so I may *flourish* in **faith**, **hope**, and **love** as your precious child.”

4. ENGAGING IN REAL LIFE EXPERIENCES

THE APPLICATION PRINCIPLE

In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself.

(James 2:17)

APPLYING WHAT YOU ARE LEARNING TO REAL LIFE...

During the past few weeks, we have been growing by engaging with God, engaging with knowledge and truth, and engaging with others. This week, we will focus on the types of experiences we can have in order to foster growth. The work of nourishing your faith can and should be joyful work. It should be filled with enrichment and celebration.

Faith is an **activity**, something that has to be **applied**.

So how can we engage in real life experiences?
Below are some examples of ways to engage
with experiences (experiential):

Learn by Doing / On-line workshop / Simple
Obedience / Praying for Others / Fruitfulness in
Ministry / Serving Others / Exposure to New
Realities

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Choose an activity to work on this week that will
help you engage with real life experiences:

- Spend time each day **praying with** someone.
- **Be still** and **listen** to what God has planned for
you and then **obey**.
- Become part of a new group – **virtually** – to
learn something new.
- Prepare and **present a lesson** on a section
from the Bible for a small group.

Pray you will continue to lean into the journey
God has for you in becoming a flourishing
disciple.

A photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a green shirt, hugging another person from behind. She is smiling broadly with her eyes closed, conveying a sense of love and care. The person being hugged is wearing a dark-colored top. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**LET US
NOT LOVE
WITH WORDS
OR SPEECH
BUT WITH
ACTIONS AND
IN TRUTH.**

1 JOHN 3:18