

PRIORITIZE A GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Introduction:

Have you ever been on a plane and had the oxygen masks drop from the ceiling? Hopefully not! Before every flight takes off, the flight attendant reviews a checklist of safety procedures and what to do in the event of an emergency. On every plane across America, the flight attendant will say:

*“In the event of a decompression, an oxygen mask will automatically appear in front of you. To start the flow of oxygen, pull the mask towards you. Place it firmly over your nose and mouth, secure the elastic band behind your head, and breathe normally. Although the bag does not inflate, oxygen is flowing to the mask. **If you are travelling with a child or someone who requires assistance, secure your mask first, and then assist the other person.**”*

Can you imagine having your 5-year old right next to you and putting on *your* mask before helping them put on *theirs*? At first this sounds selfish and even preposterous, but the airlines have it figured out. If you don't have oxygen yourself, you won't be alive to help anyone else.

The same is true of our spiritual lives. Without life-giving input found in a growing relationship with God, we will slowly die from suffocation, unable to fully live or help others do the same.

The goal of this training module is to help you prioritize your own spiritual growth so you can be growing spiritually while leading others toward spiritual growth.

Focus Competency:

Prioritize a growing relationship with God

Assignments

- Read the Bible passage and answer the Bible Study Questions
- Read *Spiritual Growth Requires A Plan* by Rick Warren and discuss with your coaching group the questions that follow
- Assess your own spiritual growth. Develop a plan to prioritize and plan for your spiritual growth. Look through some of the Next Steps + Resources for ideas. Be prepared to share some of your next steps when your coaching group meets.

Read Hebrews 5:12

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Bible Study Questions

- The writer of Hebrews states his unmet expectation of the Jewish believers reading his letter. What is his unmet expectation?
- When you consider your role as a leader, how are you challenged by this passage?
- How would non-growth/stagnation/regression/decay in your spiritual life affect your ability to lead others?

Unplanned Growth

Although many of us don't like to experience change, there seems to be a relationship between seasons of difficulty and spiritual growth. When we choose to trust God in the midst of our circumstances, we often notice positive, yet unexpected, growth.

- Pruning can produce greater fruit (John 15:2).
- Trials can produce greater endurance (James 1:2-4).
- Financial insecurities can produce greater contentment (Philippians 4:13).
- Pain can produce greater humility (2 Corinthians 12:7).
- Affliction can produce greater compassion (2 Corinthians 1:4).
- Grief can produce greater hope (Revelation 21:4).
- Discipline can produce greater righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

Which of these unexpected changes has caused unplanned growth in you?

A Plan for Growth

While unplanned changes can cause growth, we should also make plans for growth to occur.

Spiritual Growth Requires A Plan

By Rick Warren (Article from pastorrick.com from January 17, 2017)

"You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food" (Hebrews 5:12 NLT, second edition).

Millions of Christians have grown older without ever growing up; they act as though spiritual growth is automatic. They may have a plan to save for retirement. They may have a plan for sending their kids to college. But they don't have a strategy for enriching their souls. They leave the single most important facet of human existence to chance!

But a soul doesn't automatically grow to maturity any more than a baby automatically grows to physical maturity. You need to have a plan for feeding, exercise, education – and especially potty training! – if a child is going to grow up healthy, strong, and mature. A baby left on its own withers and dies. The same thing is true of your soul. Our world is full of people who have grown older but are still babies when it comes to spiritual maturity.

Spiritual growth is not automatic, even for people who have opened their hearts to Christ. The writer of Hebrews sadly noted, *"You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right. Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong"* (Hebrews 5:12-14 NLT, second edition).

Spiritual growth doesn't just happen. You have to have a plan and you have to be patient with the plan! When God wants to make a mushroom, he does it overnight, but when He wants to make a giant oak, He takes a hundred years. Great souls are grown through struggles and storms and seasons of suffering. Be patient with the process.

What 2-3 steps can you take to begin prioritizing your relationship with God? What is your plan to pursue growth in your spiritual life?

Other Next Steps + Resources

1. Read through these five Bible passages. Pick one to write out, memorize and meditate on for the next 7 days: Hebrews 6:1; 1 Peter 2:2; Luke 2:52; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Ephesians 4:15

2. Practice a new spiritual discipline. The spiritual disciplines are practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth among believers. They are habits of devotion that have been practiced by God's people since Biblical times. For a description and list of disciplines, visit soulshepherding.org/2012/07/spiritual-disciplines-list. Or pick up one of these books:

- "The Spirit of the Disciplines" by Dallas Willard
- "Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines" by David Mathis

3. Check out some of these online resources and use them as tools to put a plan into action.

- [Renovare](http://renovare.org): podcasts, books, articles, retreats, spiritual formation groups (*renovare.org*)
- [Bible Reading Plan](http://bible.com): Bible Plans help you engage with God's Word every day, a little at a time. Also available in an app form for your smart phone. (*bible.com*)