

Next Steps

Here are some next steps for your Spiritual Growth...

1. Committing to follow Jesus
2. Baptism
3. Knowing God
4. Living in community
5. Sharing your faith

Committing to Follow Jesus

God's Initiative

God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross, paying the penalty for your sins, and promised that "whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Our Response

* Understand that you are a sinner (Romans 3:23) and that without God's intervention, your wrongdoing will ultimately lead to death and eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23).

* Realize that God loves you (1 John 4:10) and wants to forgive your sin (Psalms 86:5) and give you a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17).

* Turn away from your sin and turn to God (Acts 3:19), accepting by faith His gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8, Romans 10:13). If you want to make this choice now, you can express that desire to God in a prayer similar to this one:

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus died to take the punishment for my sin. I accept Your offer of forgiveness and eternal life. I thank You for what You have done for me, and give You my life from this day forward."

Baptism

Baptism is a powerful step of obedience and identification with Jesus Christ after salvation has occurred. We believe in water baptism by immersion as Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. Baptism is an outward sign of an inward heart change and an act of obedience to Jesus' command to be baptized, publicly identifying ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is offered the second full weekend of every month (except June and July) at all services. During the summer, we have baptisms at our church picnic in late June. A baptism class is required and classes are offered the third full weekend of every month at the start of every service (currently in room 133.) Baptism class registration is not required; just attend the class of your choice.

If you have questions about baptism please contact Pastor Tim Dykes at tdykes@vineyardkcnorth.com or 816.734.8100.

Knowing God

Classes

Vineyard 201 - Growing in the Vineyard

Alpha

Celebration of Discipline (spiritual disciplines)

Disciple I Bible Study (in-depth survey of the Old and New Testaments)

Disciple II Bible Study (in-depth study of Genesis, Exodus, Luke, and Acts)

Disciple III Bible Study (major and minor Old Testament prophets and 13 Pauline letters)

Financial Peace University

Oaks of Righteousness (freedom from past wounds or sins)

Empowering Workshop (healing and prayer ministry)

Learning to Minister Like Jesus

Encounter God

Boundaries

Books

Knowing God by J.I. Packer

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

What's So Amazing About Grace? by Phillip Yancey

The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer

Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby

The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg

The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren

The Unquenchable Worshipper by Matt Redman

The Air I Breathe: Worship as a Way of Life by Louie Giglio

Some suggestions:

Practice the Presence of God: This involves looking for God in every detail of your life. To do this you may want to think of God as ever-present in every situation, and remember you are never alone. Look at everything you do, not as something you do by yourself, but something you do together with God. Spend time speaking with Jesus as if he were right there with you. Take some time to think about him every hour of the day.

Fasting: The purpose of a traditional fast is to abstain from food in order to focus clearly on your relationship with God. You can also fast from television, entertainment, reading, or anything that distracts you from God. Those who are diabetic, pregnant, or who suffer from severe physical disorders when fasting from food should fast from other things that are not physically damaging. Remember, the goal is to develop a focus on God. In order to fast, you may consider the following:

- What is the purpose of the fast?
- Begin with something small, like one meal or one time slot.
- During the fast, commit the time you would have spent eating to prayer, Bible study, worship, etc. Use it as a time to focus on God.

Journaling: Sometimes it is helpful to journal in order to see God's work in our lives. You may want to start a journal that allows you to record some of the victories and struggles you are having. Record your thoughts and feelings as you go through a process of self-examination. Make it a point to review your journal annually to see how God has worked in your life over the past year.

Worship: Find a place where you can worship God privately. It may be a spot outdoors, in the privacy of your bedroom, or even in your car while commuting to work with a good worship CD. Where it is, make a habit of visiting this place regularly and worshiping God there.

Meditate on God: Take some time to meditate on who God is and to get a sense of His greatness. You may want to use the Psalms as a guide. Read through a Psalm and note what the psalmist says about God's character and about his experiences with God. Take some time to praise God for who he is and for what he has done in your life.

Book Study: Choose a book of the Bible and commit to studying it in depth. Read through the entire book a few times. While doing this, get a basic understanding of how the book is structured, what the author's message is, who he is speaking to, what the book's purpose is, etc. Then start with a section of one chapter and read this through a few times asking the same questions as above. Check out "How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth" by Gordon Fee or his more in-depth book, "How to Read the Bible Book by Book". Another good resource is Rick Warren's "Bible Study Methods". Also read good Biblical commentaries. You can access many for free at biblestudytools.com.

Memorize Scripture: Dallas Willard, author and professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California, wrote, "Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. That's where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization". Chuck Swindoll wrote, "I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture. . . . No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified". Get started today by going to www.pursuinglife.com and thescripturecannotbebroken.com.

Flash Prayers: Frank Laubach talked about "flashing" prayers at anyone you meet. He explained how he would pray silently for those he came into contact with and ask for God's joy and presence in their lives. He would "flash" these prayers at anyone he saw, people on the bus, the street, in a plane, etc. Take some time to experiment with this approach to prayer. At church you may want to flash prayers at those you pass by or see in the auditorium. In every instance ask for God's joy and presence in the person's life. Then look for the response. Do you notice a difference in them?

Money Management: Take some time to look over how you manage your money. If you don't have a budget you may want to establish one. Spend some time praying over what God wants you to do with the money he has given you. This will help you budget with God's priorities in mind. Also consider taking the class, "Financial Peace University" at the church.

Living in Community

Books

Community Life 101 by Randall Neighbour

Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Spirit-Filled Small Group by Joel Comiskey

Connecting by Larry Crabb

So you've already taken the first step to "living in community" by joining a small group. Congratulations! Here are some other suggestions...

Accountability Partners: Search out an accountability partner who will commit to meeting with you regularly and help you grow in your relationship with Jesus. It could be an older person or a peer. Set up a consistent time to meet together. This needs to be a person of the same gender with whom you can openly share your struggles and ask for prayer. You'll discuss behaviors you need to change and want to be held accountable for, share devotional insights you have learned in your personal study of the Scriptures, and talk about general life issues. Contact Roger Sodsod at rsodsod@vineyardkcnorth.com for more information on how to start an accountability group.

On-The-Spot Prayer: Prayer is usually a great way to build community with others. The next time a person shares a need or concern with you, stop right there and ask if it is okay to pray for them. Make this a regular habit, and watch what it does for the level of intimacy you have with the people around you.

Seek Reconciliation: For many of us, there are strains in our relationships that come from false perceptions or hurts we have chosen to harbor instead of heal. Take a look at your own life. Are there any strained relationships? Are you angry with someone else? Are you holding a grudge? Are you mad at God for not coming through for you? Are you always critical of yourself and others? As you reflect on your answers to these questions (there may be other questions you think of), make it a point to seek to be reconciled to people you are separated from because of these issues.

How Do You Relate?: What relational problems are unmanageable for you? Are there patterns in your relationships that you repeat over and over again? What bad habits do you bring to your relationships? Many of us experience relational problems due to the ways we relate to others. Make it a point to explore these issues with your accountability partner, your spouse, your counselor, or pastor.

Sharing Your Faith

Books and Resources

Evangelism Outside the Box by Rick Richardson

The Complete Evangelism Guidebook edited by Scott Dawson

Conspiracy of Kindness by Steve Sjogren

Power Evangelism by John Wimber

Engage (6 DVD set by Carl Medearis and Jay Pathak)

Empowered Evangelism (6 DVD set by Robby Dawkins)

Some suggestions:

Be Ready to Care: Be ready to care for the hungry or needy wherever you go. Carry gift certificates from your local grocery and department stores like Target or Wal-Mart to give on the spot to those who have need, without worrying about cash. Carry the numbers for local shelters and food services with you so you can help people. Buy an extra hamburger or bagel and share it with someone who needs it.

Community Compassion: Look for opportunities to care for the needs of your community. There are many community programs that help share the love of Jesus through meeting the needs of others. Look for ways to take your faith outside the walls of the church. Perhaps you and/or your small group can serve at the monthly Harvesters food giveaway or at the food pantry or the medical/legal clinic.

What's Your Style: You may feel pressure when it comes to sharing Christ because you think you have to "sell" someone on Jesus. Sharing Christ can happen in many different ways. Take

some time to explore your style. Read "Becoming a Contagious Christian" by Lee Strobel and Mark Mittelberg. You may be more comfortable speaking directly to people about Jesus; or maybe it is easier for you to let it come up naturally in a conversation. Perhaps you'll share Christ through your gift of compassion, mercy, service, hospitality, etc. Find your style and begin to share your faith with others.

Short-Term Mission: Choose to go on a short-term mission trip. Through these missions trips you get a better understanding of other people's need for Jesus, and a better understanding of the heart of God. Contact our missions pastor, Tim Dykes at tdykes@vineyardkcnorth.com for more information on upcoming missions trips.

Count Conversations and Service Opportunities: Often we can put too much pressure on ourselves to "convert" someone or have all the right answers. It is the Holy Spirit who converts, not us. All you have to do is follow God's leading to talk to people and love on them. Instead of counting the number of people you have led to Christ, start counting the number of conversations you have with others about Jesus. Count the number of times you can serve them.

Pray for your F.R.A.N.K.s: Make it a point to pray specifically for people you know who don't know Jesus: friends, relatives, associates, neighbors, and kids. Write their names where you daily see them so you can pray for their salvation.

God bless,

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