

GROWING IN THE HABITS OF A DISCIPLE

“... walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God ”
- Colossians 1:10 (CSB)

“Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time ... ”
- Ephesians 5:15–16 (CSB)

These are uncertain and challenging times. It feels as if our very world has turned upside down. Yet, even in the midst of this, we know that our mission as a church has not changed: **Following the Holy Spirit, we exist to create a movement of disciple-making disciples, in RDU and around the world.**

As we love and care for each other, our city, and our world, we know God has called us to grow as disciple-making disciples and deepen our dependence on him. As we say often around here, “The gospel is not just the diving board; it’s the pool.” We believe God is at work in this season in many ways, but we know one of them is for us to go deeper into that pool. We want to use this time well. We don’t want to waste this moment; rather, we want to trust that God will redeem it.

God wants each of us to increase in our knowledge of him, even in this season. In light of this call, we want to take five weeks and focus our church family in growing deeper in essential habits of being a disciple of Jesus. For five weeks, we will focus on five essential habits for disciples of Jesus. We will discuss them in our small groups, challenge each other to grow in them, and provide resources for those that are led to dig even deeper.

Visit summitchurch.com for our weekly Growing in the Habits of a Disciple guide.

Week Two: The Habit of Christian Accountability

The habit of Christian accountability reminds us that we cannot thrive if we are pursuing God by ourselves. The Christian life truly is a life together (Acts 2:44). Christians have always been a people who build one another up in healthy, loving fellowship (Romans 15:2; 1 Corinthians 14:4–26; Ephesians

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4:12–29; 1 Thessalonians 5:11). God’s Word encourages us to consider one another (Philippians 2:4), to stir one another toward love and good works (Hebrews 10:24), to serve one another (1 Peter 4:10), to speak the truth to one another (Ephesians 4:25), and to care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25–26). Yet, it can be easy for Christians to settle for a few polite exchanges and miss out on the beauty of true Christian accountability. The basics of Christian accountability involve intentionality, honesty, transparency, and availability in Christian friendship. That’s why this week’s discussion will encourage us to take practical steps to practice Christian accountability with one person in this season so that we might experience more of God’s transforming grace at work in our lives.

Our Next Step

Each week’s study will lead us to one outcome, one habit, to develop as disciples of Jesus. To cultivate a habit of Christian accountability, our next step is to *commit to honest, intentional, weekly conversations with one person from your small group until at least June 13.*

*Two important notes for this week’s meeting. First, **the men and women in your group will meet in separate, single-gender meetings for the entire time.** So, as you plan for your group time, make sure you’ve identified a host for the women’s meeting and a host for the men’s meeting. Second, if these single-gender meetings are more than six people, we ask that you divide your same-gender group into groups of two to four people for the **Share Our Next Step** section below.*

Before Your Small Group Meeting

- Listen to the weekend message from April 25/26.
- Read 1 John 1:1–10.
- Be ready to meet in single-gender groups this week’s small group meeting.

Questions for Group Reflection and Discussion

Ask your group to open their Bibles and invite them to open up any sermon notes from the weekend message. Pray together and ask God to speak to your group by the power of his Spirit and through his Word as you discuss the following questions.

Discuss the Weekend Message

1. The weekend message explained that doubt is one of Satan’s main tactics against God’s people. In what ways are you tempted to doubt who God is and who he declares you to be in Christ?

Read 1 John 1:1–10

The message of Christianity is so joyful, so life-changing that it creates a deep and vibrant community among those who share the good news (1 John 1:1–5). But sometimes sin and self-deception get in the way of our relationships with God and other believers (1:6–10). Any Christian can be tempted to live a lie and walk in darkness. 1 John 1:1–10 says that we need other believers to help us live in a godly way. We can “walk in the light” by having honest, encouraging, open, and loving relationships with other Christians who will tell us the truth. This is the essence of Christian accountability.

1 John 1 teaches us two points about the foundations for Christian accountability. First, we have to remind each other continually of the truth that God has revealed to us (1:2–3, 5, 8, 10). We worship a God who forgives our sins (1:7, 9; 2:1), calls us his children (1:2–3; 3:1), and shows us the light (1:5, 7). If we are honest, all of our thoughts, actions, and dreams throughout the day do not line up with God’s truth. As the sermon this weekend reminded us, we are prone to forget our identity. So, as we listen to each other’s stories, concerns, prayer requests, and dreams for the future, we need to remind each other of how God’s truth relates to what we are hearing from each other. Second, we need to confess our sins to one another (1:9). What the Bible means by walking in light instead of darkness is to be open and honest about our struggles and temptations. 1 John 1:7–10 reminds us that if we pretend to be without sin, we ruin the fellowship that we have with each other *and* with God. Let others know where you have fallen short, and let them remind you that you are forgiven and loved by God. Our study of 1 John 1:1–10 should make us all ask the question, “Am I living with Christian accountability that lovingly declares truth and encourages the confession of sin?”

Discuss 1 John 1:1–10

2. As Christians, with whom do we “have fellowship” according to 1 John 1? And what must we do to participate in that fellowship?
3. According to 1 John 1:1–10, what practices are true of those who seek to “walk in the light”? These practices form a foundation for Christian accountability.
4. Of the practices for Christian accountability mentioned in question 3, which one is the most challenging for you to practice? Why?
5. What do you personally need most from other Christians that will help you “walk in the light”?

Share Our Next Step

This week, we are asking every group member to commit to practicing our next step together:

Commit to honest, intentional, weekly conversation with one person from your small group until at least June 13.

At this point in our small group study, we are already in single-gender discussion groups. **If your single-gender group is larger than six people, we ask that you divide your single-gender group into even smaller groups of two to four people** for more focused discussion in an environment where everyone can have an opportunity to share.

- Some platforms like Zoom Pro feature ways to break your call into smaller sections.
- You could also choose to wrap up the larger call together and spend the remainder of your group time on separate calls in your smaller groups of two to four, including prayer time!

After you establish your smaller groups of two to four, ask each other the following questions and give everyone an opportunity to share. *[Grab a note-taking device and write down each other's answers so you can know how to pray for each other this week!]*

6. 1 John 1 shows us that Christians declare the truth to one another (1:3, 5). Where are you most discouraged right now? What truths from God's Word do you need others to declare to you as encouragement in this season?
7. 1 John 1 also shows us that Christians confess sin to one another and that the confession of sin brings forgiveness and cleansing (1:9). What sin or sins from this season should you confess out loud tonight?

Remember, we want everyone to *commit to honest, intentional, weekly conversations with one person from your small group until at least June 13*. After discussing the questions above, make sure that each small group member **commits to Christian accountability within your small group**.

By committing to Christian accountability, you are committing to the following expectations:

- Identify an accountability partner (or two) in your small group. *[If your group has an odd number of participants, it's OK for three people to commit to Christian accountability together.]*
- A weekly conversation (voice-to-voice) with your accountability partner.

- Initiate with your accountability partner. *[It can be tempting to only be the one receiving communication. Don't be passive. The best friendships are those where both people take turns initiating with each other.]*
- Initiate conversation by (1) declaring truths from God's Word and (2) asking questions that show how much you care.
- Choose a regular list of three to four questions, such as:
 1. How are you spending time with Jesus and what is he teaching you?
 2. Where have you been tempted to sin? What sins do you need to confess?
 3. Are you loving others well and serving those around you?
 4. How can I pray for you?
- Be honest at all times. *[It's always better to say "I don't want to answer that question" than to lie about something!]*

Before you leave the virtual small group meeting, set up a time to connect with your accountability partner later this week!

Dig Deeper

God is calling each of us to grow in our knowledge of him. If committing to honest, intentional, weekly conversations with one person from your small group is not a challenge for you, check out the Dig Deeper section on Christian accountability in our Growing in the Habits of a Disciple guide at summitchurch.com.

Respond in Prayer

Remain in your smaller groups of two to four for prayer time this week. Invite everyone in your group to return to 1 John 1:1–10. Ask someone in your group to read the passage out loud. Then, move through the following prayer prompts.

Adoration:

- Invite two or three of your group members to praise God for who he is with short prayers of adoration.
- Praise God that he is the God of light and truth (1:5).
- Praise God that he is the God of love (1:3; 2:5; 3:1, 16; 4:7–12, 16).

Confession:

- Give your group an opportunity to confess any sins out loud to God right now.
- Ask one person in your group to voice a prayer to God. Ask him to change our desires, that we may choose the fellowship we have with him over the fleeting pleasures of sin. Ask God to give us the ability to run from temptation and rest in God's love for his people.

Thanksgiving:

- Assign at least two group members to thank God for what he has provided for us in the gospel.
- Thank God that he is "faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins" (1:7–10).
- Thank God that he made himself and his truth known to us (1:1–5).
- Thank God that he has revealed his love for us through the sacrificial death of Jesus (4:9).

Supplication:

- Have everyone pray silently to themselves over the following points:
 - Ask God to help you walk in light and not in darkness (1:5–6). Be specific about the ways that you need God's help to live a life that's pleasing to him.
 - Ask God to help you make the truth of the gospel known to others (1:1–5).
 - Ask God to help you love others that way he has loved us (1:3; 3:1, 16; 4:7–12). Be specific about the opportunities that you have to share God's love with family, friends, neighbors, or others in your community.