

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 Five: The Habit of Personal Testimony

Followers of Jesus are often recognized by what they verbalize with the mouth, not just what they believe in the heart. Jesus himself taught that the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart (Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45). The Apostle Paul explained that true disciples of Jesus must “confess with

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[their mouths] that Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9). Our words matter. In the Bible, those who experience an encounter with God often respond by telling others (Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 28:10–11; John 4:28; 9:11; Acts 9:20). And in his last words to his disciples before his ascension to heaven, Jesus includes an instruction to be witnesses, even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Yet when it comes to speaking to others about their faith, many Christians may find it awkward or challenging to put their walk with God into words. A testimony is simply someone’s declaration of a first-hand experience. A personal testimony can include a presentation of the gospel, but it can also be more than that. This week’s discussion will encourage us to consider what God has done in our lives and how we might share our story with others in our communities.

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 personal testimony, our next step is to *share what God is doing in your life to at least one person each day this week. [Your personal testimony can be shared with a Christian or a non-Christian.]*

Before Your Small Group Meeting

- Listen to the weekend message from May 16/17.
- Read John 9:1–34.

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 shared six commands of an exile from 1 Peter 1:13–21. These commands are: (1) get dressed, (2) lift your eyes, (3) don’t look back, (4) be weird, (5) stand amazed, and (6) love extravagantly. Which one of these points was the most convicting, impactful, or helpful to you? Why?

Read John 9:1–34

The book of John is unique among the Gospels in that it gives long accounts of up-close and personal encounters with Jesus. In John 9, we are introduced to a blind man who gets healed by Jesus. The

blind man's personal testimony about his encounter with Christ provides a great example for us today. First, notice that the only thing that this unnamed man brought into the story was his need for Jesus (9:1–11). The man makes changes to his life in response to this encounter (9:27, 38), but Jesus' power initiates the transformation. Second, the man is straightforward and open about his testimony. The man is asked repeatedly for answers to deep theological questions about Jesus' identity and God's work in the world. In those moments, he is honest and not afraid to simply say "I don't know" (9:12, 17, 25, 34). Third, we see in this story how fearless the healed man becomes. The Pharisees have the power to rebuke, imprison, or punish him, but he stands firm in his story throughout a contentious hearing (9:24–34). The man's story is here in John 9 as an example to us in courage, honesty, and openness about our need for a savior.

Just like the blind man in John 9, we also should anticipate opportunities to share what God is doing in our lives. It's OK to admit when we don't have all the answers to people's questions. Our responsibility is to share about our need for a Savior and how Jesus changed us. Testimonies can be about our conversion story, or they can be about how God is working in our lives right now. A personal testimony can be as simple as sharing how God answered one of our prayers or spoke to us through his Word. Jesus' statements in verses 3–5 show that God is working in powerful and profound ways in the circumstances of our lives. The story of the blind man in John 9 shows us that the most compelling part about a personal testimony is the power of God, not the eloquence of our words.

Discuss John 9:1–34

2. What do we learn about Jesus and God the Father from John 9:1–34?
3. What stands out to you about how the man shares personal testimonies throughout John 9:1–34?
4. What parts of John 9:1–34 provide encouragement to you as you think about sharing personal testimonies with others?

5. As a group, brainstorm for the different types of statements that can be used to practice personal testimony. *[Examples might include: share something God has been teaching you from the Bible, tell about an experience of answered prayer, talk about what God is doing in our church (or in our small group), or describe your life before you met Jesus and how Jesus has transformed you.]*

6. Ask each group member to practice briefly sharing one example of what God is doing in their lives.

Share Our Next Step

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

Share what God is doing in your life to at least one person each day this week.

Dig Deeper

God is calling each of us to grow in our knowledge of him. If publicly sharing what God is doing in your life this week is not a challenge for you, check out the “Dig Deeper” section on serving others in our “Growing in the Habits of a Disciple” guide at summitchurch.com.

Respond in Prayer

Invite everyone in your group to keep their Bibles open to John 9:1–34. Then, move through the following prayer prompts.

Adoration: Invite two small group members to voice prayers of praise and adoration to God. Here are some prompts that can help:

- Praise Jesus that he has power over creation (9:6–7).
- Praise God that he is working in the midst of our pain and struggles (9:3).
- Praise Jesus that he is the light of the world (9:5).

Confession. Ask your small group to pray silently and confess to God. Consider the following prompts:

- Confess to God that, like the labels for the blind man and Jesus (9:24, 31, 34), each of us is a sinner born in utter sin.
- Confess to God the ways you have failed to be ready to do his will (9:4).
- Confess to God the ways you have been unwilling or afraid to tell others about his goodness in your life (9:24–34).

Thanksgiving. Encourage three group members to voice prayers of thanksgiving for how God has been working in our lives, our church, and our world. Here are some prompts from the passage:

- Thank God for intervening in our world and healing its brokenness (9:1–5).
- Thank Jesus for taking the accusation of “sinner” on our behalf and for living a pure life so that he could save us (9:24, 31, 34).
- Thank God for opening our eyes to see his glory.

Supplication: Ask your small group if there are any urgent prayer requests or needs. Ask one small group member to voice a concluding prayer over any specific requests for your group. Consider praying the following points from John 9:

- Ask that God would give us all opportunities to talk about his goodness in our lives.
- Pray for the confidence and courage to speak about the truth about Jesus.
- Ask God to work in your life, especially where you are experiencing brokenness and need healing.