

Introduction:

- The fast:
 - Souls: Luke 10:2 fields white to harvest (laborers); HS prepare the heart for the entrance of your word; HS conviction (prodigals); Saints to be aware of the eternal fate of the lost.
- The New Year
- Matthew 5:13-16 - Salt, light, equals visible influence.
- *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. ² Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:* Mt 5:1 NKJV. – Followers
- Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* John 8:31-32 NKJV –Growers
- Acts 11:26 *And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.* Were different.
- The common word/thought in each of these verses is the word disciples.

I. People Grow Best When They Understand What They Are

- A. What does it mean to be a disciple? Because most Americans would consider themselves Christian out of heritage, or having gone to church, etc. Here are some questions for personal evaluation:
1. Am I really a disciple of Christ? a Christian? What is a disciple?
 2. How serious of a disciple am I? What is required of a disciple?
 3. As a disciple, am I influencing others to follow Christ?
- B. A Disciple is two things:
1. They are a follower of Jesus. akoloutheo--simply means to follow. When used of a specific person it has profound change in definition: "a call to decisive and intimate discipleship with Jesus." It points to the beginning place of discipleship (Follow Me). (Mt 8:22, 9:9, 19:21, Jn 1:43, 21:9-ff, Mk 1:16-ff.) Invitations by Jesus to follow.
 2. They learn and live his ways. Mathetes--this speaks of person who answers the call to follow and indicates an attachment to the person being followed. They are followers, students, learners of a certain teacher.
- C. A Disciple is a person who has:
1. Put their faith in Jesus Christ. They recognize Jesus as their Savior - the one who died for them so that they could live. John 8:31 They believed
 2. Who governs, directs the course of their lives by Jesus teaching. John 8:31 they abided in the Word.
 3. Who passionately follows Jesus mandate of making disciples. We want to grow here 2024.

4. ***By defining what a disciple is, I am I determining expectations.*** If I don't do this then I am running the risk of communicating to the uncommitted that they have the option to remain that way they were if they choose. You cant stay the way you were; you must plan to grow. So let me help you with this.

II. People Grow Best When They Plan to Grow. This is not a New Year's resolution!

- A. People plan in many areas of their lives.
 1. Plan to educate their children, educate themselves.
 2. Plan to purchase a house.
 3. Plan to get married.
 4. Plan to start a business.
 5. Kids make plans: how can we get mom to buy this, dad to do that, how can I get into this...without getting caught. And it starts when they are really small. Planning is part of life.
 6. People are planning all the time. You have to plan in order to succeed. My father in law used to say, "Blessed is he who aims at nothing for he shall surely hit it." Meaning you need a vision and you need a plan.
 7. Plans are a pathway to a desired result/end. It means you will have to follow a designated route.
- B. A plan is method of acting, doing, proceeding, or making that is developed in advance. It implies purpose, direction and steps to reach desired results. It can also be called a strategy.
 1. It was General Dwight D. Eisenhower who said, "*In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning indispensable.*"¹ Always plan but don't quit if things do not always go according to plan.
 2. Many people do not have a plan to grow spiritually.
- C. Growing is part of the Christian Faith
 1. Jesus Grew. Luke 2:40, 52 tells us that Jesus grew in wisdom and favor (grace) before God and men.
 2. Paul the Apostle grew
 - a) Acts 9:22 he increased in strength. Confounded the Jews proving Jesus is the Christ.
 - b) Gal 1:17-18. We find Paul in Syria and Arabia before going to Antioch to start ministry.
 3. The disciples grew in faith, their understanding of God, and in ministry. Jesus grew them enough in three years to entrust the kingdom of God to them. He will do the same with us.

¹ Peggy Anderson, Great Quotes From Great Leaders, (Lombard, IL: Celebrating Excellence Publishing, 1990), p. 128

4. We are expected to grow
 - a) 3 Jn 2 May you prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers.
 - b) *The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.* 2 Peter 1:8,9
 - c) So, people grow best when they plan to grow.

III. People Grow Best When in Accountable Relationships

- A. Relationship speaks of shared journey, shared heart, shared lives.
 1. The twelve were a part of Jesus' life from the beginning of his ministry to his ascension to the Father.
 - a) Because they were together all the time. Life was a teachable moment—whether in storms on a lake, hungry (feeding of 5k), paying taxes, healing the sick, eating with sinners, or casting out demons.
 - b) Paul had his Timothy and Silas.
 2. Galatians 2:11 Paul opposed Peter to his face because he ate with Gentiles until the Jews came.
 3. Luke 9:51-56 James and John were going to call down fire on those who rejected Jesus. Jesus helped them get their heart in the right place.
- B. Accountability addresses mutual expectations.
 1. People grow best when in accountable relationship because someone is watching, someone is pushing, encouraging.
 2. Much of our growth has to do with retraining, relearning, and personal discovery (which often happen because someone is assisting). Therefore we need others watching, pushing, encouraging.
 3. There are around 28 “one another” commands in the Word. “Love one another, be hospitable to one another, care for one another, be kind to one another, submit to one another...”
 4. Proverbs 27:17 *As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*
 5. Ecclesiastes 4:9 *Woe to him who is alone when he falls...* NKJV

IV. People Grow Best With the Help of the Holy Spirit

- A. John 14:18 *I will not leave you as orphans.* NKJV
 1. This verse testifies of Jesus desire to help us.
 2. It testifies of Jesus desire to comfort us with His presence.
 3. It speaks of Jesus desire to help us grow with His continued presence. Mentoring.

- B. John 14:26 The Helper will teach you all things and bring to remembrance the things I taught you.
 - 1. Parakletos--a helper in court who would speak for another/advocate.
 - 2. The Spirit is the disciples counselor in the context of this world.
 - 3. The Holy Spirit therefore becomes our Helper and Supporter
- C. John 15:26 The Helper will testify of Me
- D. John 16:13 The Spirit of Truth, He will guide you. Guide=path, road, way, street. Mt 7:13-14 *wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.* NKJV
- E. John 16:8 He will convict in regard to sin, and righteousness. God in us leads us in the path of righteousness by affirming or grieving over our choices.
- F. We must always remember that we have supernatural help to live the Christian life.

Conclusion:

- People grow best as disciples when: they plan to grow, when they do it together, with the help of the Holy Spirit.
- Invite people to become disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Hand out sample growth plan (below is sample growth plan on next page.)

My Personal Growth Plan for 2024:

Write measurable goals for each area that are able to be evaluated at checkpoints during the year.

1. Spiritual:

- a. How will I walk in His love, truth and revelation in 2024?
- b. What areas do I want to grow in this year? Character improvement?
- c. What is my commitment to the Word of God? To prayer and fasting?
- d. In what way will I serve the body of Christ at FCC and my community?

2. Family:

- a. When will I take a vacation? What do I plan to do? How will I save for it?
- b. If married: When will I spend time with my wife? How often? What do I need to improve in my marriage and how?
- c. How will I spend time with each of my children? Improve communication? What life skills do my children need to learn this year?
- d. How will I spend time with my parent(s)? Siblings? How often will I call?
- e. What books can I read to become a better spouse, parent, person?

3. Financial:

- a. How will I grow in my financial knowledge this year?
- b. What will I study from God's word regarding kingdom and finances?
- c. What debt can be eliminated in my life? How will I accomplish this?
- d. Do you have a budget in your home? Are you keeping it? Where to improve?
- e. What are my/our savings goals?

4. Work or Business:

- a. What is needed to produce excellence at work?
- b. How can I improve/add to my work skills or education?
- c. How can I make myself more marketable?
- d. What kind of schooling/workshops can I take?
- e. How can I improve my communication?

5. Physically/Personal:

- a. What is my exercise plan for this year?
- b. What eating habits will I change? Other habits needing changed?
- c. How much weight would I like to lose/gain in the next 3 months? 12 months?
- d. Books to read?
- e. Hobby to learn?

After developing your Personal Growth Plan:

- **Pray daily to ask God to help you accomplish your plan.**
- **Listen to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead you each day.**
- **Walk obediently to accomplish your goals.**
- **Share your plan with 2 other people to bring accountability and set a date to begin.**
- **Review your plan often throughout the year to evaluate your progress.**