

ANNOUNCEMENT: Remind your group about the change in service times beginning *this Sunday*. The new times will be 8:30, 10:00, and 11:30 am and 7:00 pm.

Message by Pastor Nathan Brown
Discussion Guide by Small Groups Leadership Team

Planning Your Spiritual Growth in 2008

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people. Luke 2:52 NLT

ICEBREAKER: Think back to a time when you experienced success in an area that for which you took the time to plan and prepare. Maybe it was a project at your work, an exercise program, or maybe it was something like planning a party for someone. What was it about the planning that made the event successful?

Reflect on your past year:

Prayer	1	---	5	---	10
Scripture	1	---	5	---	10
Worship	1	---	5	---	10
Service	1	---	5	---	10
Giving	1	---	5	---	10
Community	1	---	5	---	10

DISCUSSION: How did you rate yourself on the above areas? Why?

Brainstorm what changes you want to make in 2008.

Read the 4 gospels	Eat better	Coach a friend
Join a small group	Journal	Read positive materials
Go to counseling	Serve in a ministry	Sing/Worship
Start tithing	Sleep more	
Share Christ	Pray (3 min. a day)	

DISCUSSION: In which of the above areas do you feel a desire to focus more of your attention?

1. Identify Your Barriers

a. Habits

- b. Core sins
- c. Community

DISCUSSION: What are the barriers in your life that keep you from growing spiritually? How have you tried to overcome them in the past? How do you feel as though you have been successful? How do you feel as though you have been unsuccessful?

2. Create Your Plan

*But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: to love the LORD **your** God, to walk in **all** his **ways**, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with **all your** heart and **all your** soul. Joshua 22:5 NLT*

But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well. Matthew 6:33 CEV

- a. Your plan needs to be realistic
- b. Your plan needs to be daily
- c. Your plan needs to inspire you!
 - i. Define why you want to change – write it out
 - ii. Set rewards that are healthy and motivating

DISCUSSION: How will you make yourself available to hear from Him so that you will know the spiritual growth He desires for your life?

DISCUSSION: What is the work that God wants for you to do? Where does God want to grow you?

3. Enlist Help!

A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken. Ecclesiastes 4:12 NLT

- a. If you could do it on your own, you would have already done it!
- b. Get Real

- c. Look around
- d. Celebrate Together!

DISCUSSION: How can this small group help you? Who else in your life is willing to help you? How will you place yourself in a position to receive their help?

4. Growing spiritually will always increase your ability to Love!

*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples. John 13:35
NLT*

DISCUSSION: In what ways do you feel as though you are showing the love of Christ to others? In what ways do you feel as though you need to have your capacity to love increased?

DISCUSSION: In general, is your ability to love increasing or declining with time? What are some things you can do this year to become more loving instead of more bitter?

DISCUSSION: How will you make yourself available to the Holy Spirit so that He can give you a greater capacity to love others? How will you make yourself available to the Holy Spirit so that you have a greater capacity to love God?

5. Get in the GAME

PRAYER PROJECT: Ultimately your growth is dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. Your task is to make yourself available to the work He desires to do in your life.

Spend the next 5-7 minutes to sit with the Lord and quietly ask Him, “What is the spiritual growth that He desires for you?”

Next, take another 5-7 minutes and ask Him what would be the methods (or disciplines) that He would like for you to invest more time in so that you can make yourself available for the spiritual growth He desires to do in your life.