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RP Christians Sidebar Compendium  
**300s - Spiritual Maturity**

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## 301 The 7 Basics

*Every believer needs to start somewhere. Whether you're new or have been a believer for decades, the best way to excel is to master the basics. This post outlines what they are and how to utilize them.*

In starting the 300-Level series, take note that this is all about your spiritual maturity and relationship with God. I'll start with two key axioms:

**AXIOM 1:** You cannot lead someone further than you are, only as far as you are.

**AXIOM 2:** The greatest way to excel is by mastering the basics.

Luke 6:40 says, "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher." If you want to lead your wife spiritually, you have to be further ahead spiritually - and the more mature and Christ-like you are, the further you can lead her. She stops growing where you stop growing. If you keep growing, she keeps following. You can't have a wife who follows if she's already at where you are and you're not moving. If she is attracted to spiritual maturity (as I believe all godly women with the Spirit in them are), then you will increase attraction by being a godly man.

The second axiom comes from experience over and over in my own life and in the lives of the 30+ people I've discipled over the years. Michael Jordan's basketball coach once instructed him that the best way to master the game wasn't to learn trick shots or how to dribble between his legs or pass behind his back - it was to master the basics: freethrows, layups, normal dribbling, passing, etc. The same is true in faith. It's not about mastering then next tricky theological concept or figuring out how to heal someone by laying hands on them and praying. These things may come in time, but always start with the basics and make them your go-to.

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### The 7 Basics

For the past 15 years my view on what these spiritual-growth basics are have not changed, and this list has existed since the 1930s. Here they are:

1. Know the Gospel/Assurance of Salvation
2. Quiet Time/Devotional
3. Bible Study
4. Scripture Memory
5. Prayer
6. Fellowship
7. Evangelism

There are things that could be added to this list, but without new empirical data to prove an improvement beyond what I have seen works with my own eyes, I'm going to stick with this.

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### What To Do With The Basics?

I'll probably spend time in separate posts going through these in a more detailed break-down, but for right now rank yourself on how competent you believe you are with each of these (i.e. if you put in the effort, how great would your mastery be?) and also rank how intentionally you have been practicing each of these for the last 3 months.

If your competency is low, work on it. Period. I don't mean intellectual understanding of a subject - I

mean your actual ability to practice it. If you have read 2 dozen books on evangelism but you've never actually gone out and shared your faith with someone, you have no competency. It's easy to know how to have a quiet time and to read your Bible periodically, but until you actually develop a relational connection with God through that time, all you're doing is reading a book and acquiring head knowledge, which is low competency. If you know a lot of passages by memory inside and out, but you've never learned to cite them to yourself and/or others when they become applicable, your Scripture memory is low competency. Until you have developed each of these arts in practice, your competence is low.

Once your competence is acceptable or high for all 7, then start balancing a few of these at a time, implementing them in practice as part of your daily routine.

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## What Does This Have To Do With RP?

As noted above, if your wife has the Holy Spirit in her, she's going to be attracted to a display of the Holy Spirit in you. Your primary reason should simply be because you love God and want to follow him. But the peripheral benefit of attracting your wife should not go unnoticed. If she's not a godly woman, maybe your pursuit of God whole-heartedly will be the example she needs to get her moving in the right direction where you otherwise may have been reinforcing an attitude of materialism and idolatry of the marriage itself in your relationship, among other things.

More to the point, as you grow in these areas, your capacity to lead her will grow as well. I can't count the number of Christian men I've disciplined whose wives were far more spiritually mature than they were. They came to me usually because their wives were fed up with their spiritual immaturity and it was causing major friction in their relationship.

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As I disciplined these men, they grew to love and pursue God even more than their wives. Want to know what happened? Their wives suddenly wanted to screw them every chance they got. After two years of discipling one guy in particular, he was simply beaming because his wife had started screwing him 2-3 times a day. Why? Because being a godly man is attractive to a godly woman. Rather than the nag who thought she was superior to them, these wives saw that their husbands were now men who had a clear mission of eternal significance and who could lead them in the most important aspect of life and the only one that makes life worth living: faith in Jesus.

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## Caveat

To be clear, this is a powerful attractive force, but is not the only one. Many of these men who saw these results were already physically fit and I was helping them learn how to own every aspect of their lives. Don't be an idiot. Lift, OYS, frame, etc. These things still matter. But OI is key here - you've got to be doing all this because you love God, not because you want to attract your wife. Why? Because even if your wife can't see through it (and she will), God will see through it. Don't be a Matthew 7 guy who does all the great things God has for us, then Jesus says, "I never knew you."

## 302 Bible Study

*It's easy to pass the responsibility for learning Scripture onto a pastor or small group leader. After all, they're used to spoon feeding their followers. But if you want to lead others, you'll need to know how to do it for yourself first.*

When looking at the 7 basics, some of them should come naturally. Many people miss the relational development aspect of having a quiet time, but still know how to have a quiet time all the same. From there it's just a matter of OYS - are you being responsible or lazy?

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## Types of Study

There are typically three approaches to Bible study:

1. **Mama Bird Studies** - This is where a leader chews up all the food for all of the participants and basically spoon feeds it to them. The participants have almost no prep-work. They just come and learn, asking questions and making comments along the way.
  - Great for spiritual infants or those who simply aren't disciplined enough for a true study.
2. **Off the Cuff Studies** - This is where everyone shows up without any meaningful preparation and shares their thoughts on a passage or topic with one another. There may be a facilitator, but even the facilitator hasn't done any significant preparation.
  - Great for topical studies or life-on-life groups, where you never know what issue someone will bring up that needs discussed.
3. **True Bible Studies** - This is where all participants in the group have agreed upon what passage will be studied and have actually followed through with preparation.
  - True studies are incredibly valuable for anyone who has even a basic degree of competency in how to understand the Scriptures. That said, they are incredibly rare, as it is overwhelmingly difficult to find anyone who is willing to put in the time and effort to give the passage the level of preparation and dedication necessary.

By way of example only, when I study a single chapter (20-ish verses), I typically expect that I will spend a minimum of 3 to 5 hours with the material itself, 30 minutes in prayer throughout the process, and 15 minutes reviewing commentaries to discern whether or not my interpretations are reasonable. On average, this is about 4hr per week process. This process applies when I'm leading a mama bird study or in a true study. When "off the cuff" issues come up, I get a week off. I'll typically maintain this for about 25 weeks out of a year (i.e. 100hrs of Bible study per year).

A general church group is typically lucky if everyone is willing to spend 15 minutes skimming the passage and googling a few key phrases. This is unfortunate, but it is a sad reality for modern church-goers who do not prioritize in-depth understanding of the Scriptures. Take this as a challenge to man up. Work those spiritual muscles like you do your physical ones.

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## The Inductive Method

Rather than musing over what you think something means, the better interpretive method is to figure out what the author meant when he/she wrote it. The author is the one we agree was inspired by God in writing the Scriptures, not you in reading them. How do we figure out authorial intent?

**Background:** Learn as much as you can about the culture and the context of the passage.

**Observation:** Once you have an idea of the context, make as many observations as possible.

**Interpretation:** Once you have a lot of observations, start asking questions - then use the text to answer the question.

**Application:** Make it personal. How are you going to live differently now?

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## Background

I typically advise people to avoid commentaries as much as possible until after their study is complete. When people rely too heavily on commentaries up-front they lose the ability to think for themselves. Instead of studying the Scriptures, it's as if they're sitting in on someone else's Bible study and reporting the results

to their own group. Or a more apt example: it's like going to the gym with your buff friend, having him lift the weights for you, and then bragging to everyone around how impressive you are.

Instead, I recommend that people start by going through the entire 4-part process first and then refer to commentaries at the end to discern whether or not their conclusions are reasonably aligned with a scholarly consensus. The one exception I make is in the case of a passage where it is clear that historical context is going to play a major role, in which case there is some necessity to know this historical context in advance.

In place of commentaries, the up-front part of researching the background should be reading the passages before and after and addressing correlating passages that reference the subject matter. A cursory book overview is also immensely helpful.

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## Observation

Here's a challenge I give to every man I disciple: make at least 20 observations per verse on average over a passage. So, if you're studying a 5-verse passage, try to make 100+ observations on it. Early on, this will seem almost impossible, as I once thought it was too. As you practice, it'll become second nature and you'll find that even 50+ observations per verse is quite doable.

What types of observations should you be making? I break them up into the following categories with the acronym GRAPES:

*Grammar* - Look for things like past, present, or future tense; if it says "and" or "or"; who is the object of the sentence? etc.

*Repetition* - If something is mentioned more than once, it's probably important

*Absence* - This one is the hardest to process, but look for things that you would normally expect to appear but seem to be missing

*Patterns* - Look for different things that fit together; for example, if you see the "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" all in a few verses, that's a pretty clear pattern that means something

*Extratextual* - These are observations based on things outside the text itself; it might involve observing what a Greek word dictionary says or what you noticed in a historical reference book; it most often takes the form of correlating passages outside the one being studied

*Statements* - This is the most common type of observation and it's the easiest; simply put, you're just noticing what the passage actually says and taking its word for it

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## Interpretation

s with observation, I give a challenge: 10 questions per verse, then answer them. Let's assume you're studying a 20-verse chapter. You should now have somewhere around 400 observations made. Now, go back through all of those observations and ask 200 questions.

I've found that there are no less than 5 different types of questions. I will use Philippians 1:1 for each of my example questions: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons"

*BASIC* - Questions that are readily answerable by the text.

- Ex. Who wrote Philippians?

*INTERMEDIATE* - Can be answered by the text or surrounding passages, but not immediately apparent from the verse prompting the question.

- Ex. What is an overseer or deacon?

*DIFFICULT* - Answerable, but require significant research beyond the text itself. These types of questions usually require an understanding of the Bible as a whole and intimate knowledge of God's character to answer.

- Ex. Why is Paul writing this book to the Philippians?

*CRITICAL THINKING* - Usually don't have a definitive answer, but are worth pondering because they alert us to aspects of God's character of which we would otherwise be ignorant.

- Ex. Why did God have Paul write this letter to the Philippians rather than just telling them directly or having someone in their own city write this book?

*CATEGORICAL* - This is the most important, yet most difficult type of question to address. They focus on observations that span multiple verses and connect them to a single point that can be succinctly summarized. All of your other observations and questions should be leading to this, as these questions (and their associated answers) are the core of what you're trying to get at with Bible study in the first place.

- Ex. What do verses 1-2 mean? What do 3-11 mean? What do 12-26 mean? 27-30? Based on each of those, what does 1-11 mean? 12-30? What does Chapter 1 mean? How does chapter 1 flow into chapter 2? How does it fit into the greater context of the rest of the book?

## Application

An application references some way your life will change because of what you studied. Applications are worthless unless they are practical. My basic rule is that *an application must be observable*. It doesn't have to actually be observed; rather it has to be capable of being observed.

For example, "I'm going to love my wife more this week" is not practical. "I'm going to love my wife more this week by doing (blank), (blank) and (blank)" is practical. That can be observed. The fact that she may never see you doing those things is immaterial. Your goal in loving your wife more shouldn't be to try to get her to notice; rather, it's to be the loving man God told you to be - covert contracts being destroyed in the process.

## 303 Fellowship

*This is arguably the most important of the 7 Basics, and it's also the one that gets overlooked the most. People assume they are great at "fellowship" because they have a few Christian friends they hang out with a lot, but they fail to understand the real depth of relationship Christ intended or the ways that fellowship can be over-applied to the degree of sinfully neglecting other things God has called us to.*

Sorry for the general inactivity. Until 10/15 I'm in single-dad mode and have people staying in my basement pretty much every day, so I don't have computer access except when I'm at work (like right now - slow day).

## Spend Time With Godly Men

A crucial aspect of both faith and RP prescription is fellowship. In the RP world we talk about the need for men being among other strong, like-minded men. Paul says the same thing: "Join together in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you" (Philippians 3:17)

As believers in Christ, it's not enough simply to be around other RP men (or for women, other RP women), otherwise we'll be led astray. 1 Cor. 15:33 says, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.'" With all respect to places like MRP, if that's your only or primary source of fellowship, you're in trouble. Any effort to deny this falls in the "do not be deceived" category.

I'm not saying that to promote this sub either. You should have a fellowship of believers *in person* and not just online. As Hebrews 10:25 notes, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing." Don't let an online community be a substitute for real life interpersonal relationships. At best, on reddit we are "leaving messages" for each other - certainly not "meeting together."

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## Don't Overdo It

With that said, I used to think fellowship was somewhat of a blow-off lesson. Most Christians know how to spend time with other Christians, right? In reality, a few years ago a buddy of mine showed me that fellowship is actually one of the hardest of the 7 basics to master.

Hanging out with other believers is massively important. For a new believer, this is how they're going to stay alive - even to the point that I would call this a priority more than any of the other basics. When a coal is removed from the flame, it burns out almost immediately. Put it back in and it lights on fire again - immediately! New believers should learn how to maintain a healthy balance of fellowship in their lives so they don't lose the life that comes from the gathering of believers.

Here's the problem, though: they go too far. They never learn a healthy balance of fellowship - they learn how to become obsessed with fellowship. New Christians become so excited about their new-found relationship with Jesus that they want to completely abandon their old life and dive head-on into the "church world." Church people are so excited that one among them actually shared the Gospel and "it worked" that they're all too eager to pull that person into everything they're doing. And then that person becomes a "church person" and does the same thing with the next guy who comes around.

The problem is that all these "church people" get so used to hanging out in their own bubble that they forget to build intentional relationships with other non-Christians around them. Sure, they have casual non-Christian acquaintances that they may say hi to every now and then, but conversation rarely goes deep enough for a true heart-to-heart.

The point here is that Christians like fellowship so much that they over-emphasize it and neglect other areas. As I often tell people, it's possible to be "sinfully negligent" of any of the basics (more on that later too), but it's also possible to be "sinfully overdosing" any of these as well.

To the new or "not yet mature" believers: build solid, trusting relationships with those you meet in the church, but don't abandon your old friends who still need to hear about Jesus.

To the rest of you: learn how to re-engage with those in your world for the sake of the Gospel. Doing "the church thing" day in and day out isn't why you're here. Learn how to have an appropriate balance of fellowship with evangelism and not become obsessed with the church life. As I said, this is possibly the most difficult of the 7 basics to master - not because people aren't good at it, but because they're too good at it.

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## Critical Thinking Question

### What defines "good Christian fellowship"?

Consider the following scenario: Bob is hanging out with his church buddies at the bowling alley. They have some drinks, munch on some pizza, tell some jokes. Everyone is laughing and having a good time, swapping stories about stuff they've done recently. After a few frames Bob says before leaving, "Thanks for a good time, guys. It's great to have good Christian fellowship."

Is this "good Christian fellowship"? [Note: rather than giving the answers and a long essay up here, I'd prefer to engage in the comments on this one.]

## 304 Evangelism

*For as much as men love physical reproduction, it's frustrating how little we seem to care for spiritual reproduction with our spiritual spouse. Paul said in Philippians 1 that he'd rather be dead and with Christ, but that God was keeping him here for a reason: helping others journey toward Christ. If we're not doing that, there's no real point in our being alive. So, how do we do witness to others? This post gives a very systematic approach for those who haven't developed a clear plan for sharing their faith yet.*

This is such a huge concept that there may be more posts on the topic, but here are the core, basic concepts.

### Why Evangelism/Discipleship?

To start, it's worth noting that there are only two good things we can do on earth that we cannot do in heaven. Evangelism/discipleship (two ends of the same spectrum) is one of them. That should tell us that evangelism is pretty darn important. If you're not sharing your faith, why are you even here? You'd be better off just dying and going to heaven. As Paul says:

*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far. But it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I am certain that I will remain and will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith. (Philippians 1:21-25)*

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### RP Context for Evangelism

I've said many times that physical marriages are meant to parallel our spiritual marriage to Jesus. I also believe firmly that the pre-marriage process (i.e. dating) is meant to parallel the pre-marriage-to-Christ process (i.e. evangelism). So, what works in pre-marriage?

- *Shotgun, not sniper.* As Rollo talks about, you want to spread out your efforts, not just hone in on that one "special snowflake" who you really care about, but who keeps rejecting your evangelistic efforts over and over again.
- *Plating.* This requires more attention than I can give it here, but suffice it to say you should be working with several people to draw them to Christ. As "serial monogamy" is not often an effective strategy, neither is "serial mono-evangelism." Don't focus on just one. Kick that spiritual ONEitis. Don't take the attitude, "If only my best friend/spouse/kid/person I really look up to would come to Jesus!" That's great. Pursue that person too. But keep your evangelistic options open.
- *Fitness Tests.* Prospects are going to test the crap out of you. They'll ignore you, mock you, laugh at you, argue against you, etc. At the end of the day, as you pass those tests, a respect might develop - just remember to accept the hard no if/when it comes so they don't feel like you're spiritually raping them. Don't be a "bible-thumper," but do be persistent.
- *Abundance Mentality.* Don't get depressed when you're rejected. God has other options out there for you. You literally have eternity at your fingertips. You don't need to be seeing new converts constantly. Your lack of confidence in your own spirituality and insecurity in Christ will not foster confidence and security in a prospective believer. Abundance mentality shows the prospect that what Christ has to offer is something they want - even need in their life.
- *Cocky/Funny.* For that matter, aspects of game like being cocky/funny really helps. Christians get such a negative social view because people think we have sticks up our butts all the time, or we're viewed as so humble that we're weak and can't even understand our own beliefs. A show of rational confidence with humor and charm can go a long way in causing a person to think: "I want what he has!"

The list goes on, but you should get the idea by now.

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## Relational and Proclamational

Purely relational evangelism comes from the theory that all we need to do is live our lives and be around non-Christians and that somehow our faith will rub off on them and they will magically believe - that being the message is more important than preaching the message. In this model, we find most Christians sitting in their homes watching Netflix all day, maybe getting together with the neighbors every now and then, but keeping the relationship mostly cordial and zero-pressure.

Purely proclamational evangelism comes from the theory that we just need to preach and tell and it doesn't matter how people perceive us in the midst of our preaching - that preaching the message is more important than being the message. In this model, we find most Christians standing on street corners shouting "Turn or Burn!" or debating with hecklers.

In reality, the two models must work in tandem. The only exceptions are when you have little to no capacity to engage in one type. For example, if you're sitting next to someone on an airplane and the Spirit prompts you to share your faith, there's not much room for relationship-building, so go full proclamational. But always be tactful in how you communicate - let your words be "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6).

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## Systematic Evangelism

Step 1: *Find a Non-Christian.* Notice I didn't say "Find a Non-Christian Who is Willing to Talk About the Bible With You." Non-Christians are literally everywhere. I'm sick of Christians telling me, "I just don't know any non-Christians." Look around. Do you have a neighbor? Do you go to the gym? Do you play with your kids at the mall? Do you walk down the street? Do you go to church? You just found some non-Christians.

Step 2: *Introduce Yourself to the Non-Christian.* Okay, this is a "no dip, Sherlock!" situation, but seriously ... for some reason this is the stopping point for 99% of Christians. "I'll observe non-Christians, but don't ask me to say 'hi' to them."

Step 3: *Assess and Respond.* This is the meat. Figure out just how far away from Christ the person is and take steps to move them forward. Each "Christian's job" section is a middle-point between the two phases of what usually has to happen to get from one to the next.

### *Relational Phases*

- **Antagonism:** The non-Christian lives in intentional defiance of God, openly insulting Christians. They don't have true relationships with Christians because they despise them.
  - The Christian's job here is simply to engage with new people. If you happen upon one of these people, just be friendly, whether the person knows you're a Christian or not.
  - In game terms, this is your "instigate" phase. This phase lasts approximately 10 seconds.
- **Aware of Messenger:** The non-Christian has some relational connection to a Christian. It may be nothing more than recurring acquaintances, but that's fine.
  - The Christian's job here is to follow-up with the person. Don't overdo it by smothering the person, but don't neglect him either. Try to engage in a one-on-one setting.
  - In game terms, this is your "isolate" phase. This phase can last anywhere from a week to several months.
- **Favorable Attitude Toward Messenger:** Simply put, get the non-Christian to like you. If you're a Bible-thumping, condemning street preacher, you're going to fail here every time. Be witty, charming, and overall a high-value person. As you self-improve, other people will want to be around you and will like you.

- The Christian’s job during this phase to get to the next is to start gradually exposing the non-Christian to your spiritual beliefs. This is best done passively at first. ”Sorry, can’t hang out Tuesday. I have a Bible study. How about Wednesday?” It’s as simple as that. Because they already like you, when they realize you’re a Christian this will begin to challenge their stereotypes about Christians.
- In game terms, this is the start of escalation. This phase typically lasts a few weeks to months.
- **Aware of Messenger’s Spiritual Beliefs:** The non-Christian should now know from passive cues that you are a Christian. Although their respect may initially decline a small bit at that discovery, their relational history with you will be overpowering - especially because you haven’t been reinforcing the negative stereotypes about Christians up to this point.
  - The Christian’s job during this phase is to begin transitioning natural exposure of his beliefs to intention conversation about the non-Christian’s spiritual beliefs and life philosophies.
  - Escalation continues. This phase can last anywhere from weeks to years before hitting the next milestone.

### *Proclamational Phases*

- **Comfortable Discussing Spiritual Things:** The non-Christian now has no problem engaging in regular spiritual conversations and somewhat expects it as part of the friendship. He is fairly transparent about his own views and beliefs and is starting to become curious about the Christian’s thoughts, although he likely doesn’t ask directly because he still thinks he knows what Christians believe.
  - The Christian’s job here is to communicate empathy and sympathy toward the non-Christian with regard to his/her life experiences that have formed the basis of his/her spiritual beliefs.
  - If the relational phases can parallel the IIE model of getting to sex, the proclamational phases are where actual spiritual reproductive acts happen, so on the DEVI plane, this is your E. First, you must develop an emotional connection with God to share in God’s compassion for the lost person standing in front of you. Second, the non-Christian needs to see that you care about him on more than a rote, intellectual level. Once comfort is established, the path to ”positive reaction” is usually pretty short - days to weeks.
- **Positive Reaction to Spiritual Conversations:** This is easier today than it was a few decades ago. ”Sex, politics, and religion” were taboo topics. Most generations after the baby boomers actually enjoy talking about things their parents found to be taboo.
  - The Christian’s job in this phase is to introduce his own views into the conversation naturally, and to be ready to respond to questions in a way that accounts for the non-Christian’s worldview. You don’t have to have actual answers to all of these questions - only know how to explain the reason for your own faith. As with fitness tests, the non-Christian is trying to figure out how strong your own convictions to your faith are more than they are trying to figure out whether or not Christianity itself is rational. All non-Christians intuitively understand that Christianity can fit within a rational, logical framework (although some are in denial); they’re more interested in prodding every different angle about you specifically.
  - In the DEVI system, this is where variety creeps in. First, God has to work in you in a variety of unique ways to inspire you to start and continue these conversations. Second, you have to engage in the conversations with the non-Christian in numerous ways to bolster the fact that you really know and believe what you’re talking about - that you’re skilled and spiritual things aren’t boring. Getting from ”positive reaction” to ”acceptance of possibility” is much longer than the last phase. This can be anywhere from the first good conversation to years.
- **Acceptance of the Possibility the Message is True:** After much conversation, the non-Christian, without actually making a profession of faith himself, acknowledges that he cannot deny your beliefs and that everything in the Bible may actually be true, despite his present rejection. The non-Christian may never verbally admit this, but if you’re perceptive you’ll know when he’s here.

- At this point, the believer’s role is minimal. The believer must be consistent in demonstrating his faith in his own lifestyle. Any inconsistency will set the non-Christian back several phases or reintroduce the negative stereotypes that you had previously broken. The Christian must also continue to be intentional at instigating these conversations in an isolated setting and escalating to the Gospel. The focus of your interactions should shift to a 1 Cor. 2:4-5 mentality: ”My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”
- In the DEVI system, this is where dominance takes over. First, because God his the husband and he must now dominate the the show from here. You can plant and water, but only God can make it grow. Getting to the next phase is 100% up to God. You cannot force it to happen. You, as the bride, must actually be submissive to God’s initiative at this point. Second, you must dominate spiritual conversations with the non-Christian. Once he accepts the possibility that the Gospel may be true, you must balance your passionate insistence on the importance of his acceptance in Christ with the fact that you’re dealing with someone in a fragile state, whose entire world-view up to the present is slowly crumbling away as he realizes eternity is in the balance and he don’t know what’s real and what’s not anymore. There is no time-frame here. It works at God’s pace.
- **Acceptance That the Message is True:** The the work of the Spirit alone, the gap from ”possibility” to ”actual belief” is crossed. But this intellectual acknowledgment is not enough - ”Even the demons believe that - and shudder!” (James 2). The new-Christian must also now commit his life to following. But this is where the discipleship process begins.
  - The Christian’s job is now to affirm the new-Christian’s beliefs through ongoing conversation about the meaning and applicability of the Gospel to daily life, and get the non-Christian engaged in the 7 basics gradually (see 301).
  - In the DEVI system, this is where immersion happens. First, you are overwhelmed with the Spirit’s work through you that you are immersed in your own relationship with God. Second, thew new-Christian now desires to become immersed in his newfound relationship with Jesus and you’ve got to be there to help him. Don’t leave him as a spiritual orphan.

## 305 Quiet Times

*Everyone knows we should spend daily time with God. Unfortunately, this usually ends up feeling like a chore. Why is that? How can we have a right perception of our time with God that rejuvenates us instead of draining us?*

### Meditation

Meditation is a substantial part of the RP world. It helps a man focus, process his thoughts, hone in on his vision, and regain a sense of perspective about the world around him, assisting him in holding frame and maintaining an amused mastery and abundance mentality.

Although there is value in general meditation, as Christians we know there is greater value in focused meditation. Joshua 1:8 says, ”This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” That’s right - you want a formula for prosper and success? Meditate on God’s Word and be careful to do everything written in it. That’s the path.

### Quiet Time

A Christian’s time in the Word is his life blood. John 1 tells us that Jesus is the Word of God. We also know that the Scriptures are Spirit-inspired. They’re also a record of everything the Father has done. No matter how you look at it, if you want to know and love God, you’ve got to go through His Word to do it.

The most basic method of having a quiet time involves three steps. (1) Pray that God opens your heart to love Him and receive what He wants to show you. (2) Read a passage. (3) Prayerfully reflect on the passage and how it can help you be more like Jesus in very practical ways. A quiet time shouldn't be an in-depth research session. Put down the commentaries, concordances, internet references, and study notes. Just read casually and absorb what God has to offer. Then meditate on what the Spirit is trying to do in your heart through the passage - or maybe even through something else entirely that has been weighing on you, and the passage is merely a vehicle to orient your gaze back toward Christ. The reflecting should resemble the phrase, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

If you lack anything else in your faith - make this one thing a priority above all else. I believe you will find that emphasis on a daily quiet time will develop in you a compulsion for all other areas of the faith, and thus all other aspects of our walk with Christ cannot appropriately grow if one isn't spending daily time in the Word.

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## Relationship and Rest

The most often missed aspects of quiet times are the ways it's meant to be intensely relational and restful. Most people see quiet times as a chore - something they have to do to keep learning new things about the Scriptures. This is not God's design.

### Relationship

Imagine being on a date with your wife. You ask, "Tell me about your childhood." She obliges with a 5 minute story. You follow up with, "Okay, now tell me about your trip to Europe as a teenager." She answers. You continue, "Okay, now tell me about your favorite concert," and this is how the date goes. You get home and how's she going to respond?

If it's all about the information, you'll never get to sex. You need kino, flirting, teasing, isolation, escalation, etc. What's the point of the date if it's not leading anywhere? If you just wanted to gather information about your spouse (or her about you), couldn't you have done that at home? Or couldn't you have sent her a questionnaire from your office desk? The point of the date is to build the relationship.

Now, try going the next 3 months with no alone time with your spouse except maybe 15 seconds before eating a meal and see how well the relationship flourishes and how revitalized your bedroom gets. [Hint: It won't work!] Have you spent some alone time with God yet today?

Initiate, Isolate, Escalate. God's trying to initiate with you all the time - are you willing to follow him into isolation and let him escalate within your spirit? Can you take what God's trying to do with you and implement those same tactics on your wife?

- Or let me get to the point: maybe your wife isn't responding to your initiate because you're rejecting God the same way she's rejecting you. She's just following your lead. **Show her how she should act with you by modeling that behavior with how you react to God's initiation.** That's how you'll lead her.

### Rest

I can't write about QTs without touching on this subject. Everyone complains, "I don't have enough time!" or "I'm just not motivated ..." Boo hoo. *Man up and get it done* is what I used to say. Now I realize that there's a fundamental psychological problem that causes these types of attitude: we see it as *work* and not *rest*. It's a chore that must be checked off our list, and it's always more fun to procrastinate work. "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Do you *Netflix and chill* at the end of a hard day? I can't count the number of people I meet who say, "I don't have enough time," but somehow manage to have 20 minutes for a TV show. "That's not fair," they

say, "you want me to give up my only down time during the week to do another *thing*?"

Therein lies the problem. Human brain chemistry has been so warped by the addictive noise we receive through our 5 senses that we dread the thought of giving it up for stimulation in our 6th sense - our spirit. Consider:

- **Touch/physical stimulation:** working out, sex, "self-gratification," massages, chiropractors, back scratching, long baths/showers, drugs
- **Taste:** food, wine, pop/soda, beer, candy, ice cream, drugs
- **Smell:** candles, cooking, camp fires, nature
- **Hear:** music, nature sounds, interpersonal conversations, OD-ing on sermons, books on tape, radio advertisements
- **See:** porn, Netflix/Hulu, movies, billboards posters, video games

*Be still and know that I am God.* (Psalm 46:10)

*It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord ... Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him.* (Lamentations 3:25-28)

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## Conclusion

It's easier said than done, but if you can learn to weed out the noise in life that fills your 5 senses, you will find your greatest rest in basking in what God has to stimulate your 6th sense - not the intellectual curiosity of what the Bible has to teach you, but the Spirit-filled peace that comes from letting your spirit rest.

Intellectual comprehension of Scripture is a good thing, but it is often the greatest enemy of our spiritual ability to escalate in our relationship with God, rest in His strength, and re-center our focus through meditating on His Word.

Similarly, if we employ quiet times with God in response to His initiation, which is ever present, I have found in my own life that my wife tends to follow my lead and is more responsive to my initiation, to resting in my strength, and to re-centering her focus away from the noise in her hamster and toward the focused path I am laying out for our family. She is a reflection of you.

## 306 Scripture Memory

*I'm amazed at how little the church endorses and teaches this fundamental discipline. If God's Word is what sustains us, we'd better know it inside and out. Memorization and meditation are the way we do that best.*

Scripture memory is probably the most overlooked of all the basics. It is an essential part of the Christian way of life that somehow gets lost on the masses and isn't preached from the pulpit. Why?

- "It's too hard"
- "My mind doesn't work like that"
- "I can barely remember where I put my keys"
- "I can always just look it up on my phone"
- "It's enough to just know the gist of a passage"

## Biblical Imperative

What does the Bible say? This blows me away every single time. What is the greatest command? Deuteronomy 6:5 - "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

What is the very next verse after the greatest command? Another command: "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts" (v6). Why is this the very next verse? Because the best way to obey God's Word is to memorize God's Word! David says the same thing: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word ... I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:9-11).

Song of Songs 3:8 also says of the mighty men of Israel: "All of them wearing the sword, all experienced in battle, each with his sword at his side, prepared for the terrors of the night." The Word is our sword (Ephesians 6:17). Who charges the front lines with his sword still in its sheath? Or who tells the enemy, "Hold on, I know I've got a weapon for this somewhere, just let me find it"?

For some reasons, most pastors just don't talk about this. Looking for sermons on YouTube, John Piper is about the only one who has any appreciable content on the subject. Let me link you to one of my favorite sermons on the subject, if you're interested: [here](#)<sup>1</sup>. Don't know where to start? Here's where I began<sup>2</sup>.

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## How To

### References

First and foremost: memorize the references. Why?

- If you ever forget the verse, you know where to find it again.
- Lots of people will have trouble buying into the "trust me, it's in the Bible somewhere" excuse
- When you share it with someone, they may need to look it up for context, like the Bereans of Acts 17

### Meditation

Regarding methodology, I like to use what I call "piecemeal meditation." Break the verse down into several components and let each one seep into your mind gradually. So, if I were memorizing 1 Samuel 12:23, I would say ...

- "As for me," and then ponder what that means
- "As for me, far be it from me" and then try to meditate on what might cause a person to say something like that
- "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord," and then meditate on the aspects of why we shouldn't sin against the Lord and how the "far be it from me" attitude factors into that.
- "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you" - how does failing to pray fit into the rest of the concept and how often do I make that mistake?
- "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you; and I will teach you the way that is good and right" - what does teaching people have to do with prayer? Ask all kinds of other questions about the passage.
- Add the reference at the end every time.

By doing things this way, you're not just memorizing words, but meaning and application as well. You're meditating on Scripture in a way that commits it to memory with a purpose. Then repeat it several times.

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<sup>1</sup><http://turret2.discipleshiplibrary.com/AA032.mp3>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.navigators.org/resource/topical-memory-system/>

## Organization

In fact, Dawson Trotman suggests a verse isn't truly memorized until you've reviewed it every day for 49 days after the day you learned it. To help keep verses organized, I use what's called a verse pack, which can fit in your pocket to be pulled out whenever it's convenient - most easily used between sets or while doing cardio at the gym.

My discipler has one of the most impressive systems I have seen on Scripture memory. As a result, he has a verse for virtually every single scenario I have ever brought to his attention. His system?

- In the front pouch of the verse pack, keep verses you're currently trying to memorize. Review those multiple times a day.
- In the opening of the pack, keep verses you memorized within the last month that you still need to keep reviewing. Those should be reviewed once a day.
- The pouch on the other flap on the inside is for long-term verses (over a month) that either need to be reviewed or honed. He would also review these once a day.
- All of his back-logged verses were divided into 30 groups and a new group entered that back pouch every day so that every verse he knows was reviewed at least once a month. If he had trouble, it went into the other middle pouch for closer review.

## Bulk Memorization

I have developed my own niche in Scripture memory through working on longer passages. I find that by doing successive verses, it's easier to maintain a flow from one topic to the next. This also helps me understand and meditate on verses because I don't need to open my Bible to get the context - it's already stored in my heart and head, making application that much easier.

Again, the gym/cardio is a great time to get this done. Record yourself reading the passage and play that sucker on a loop, pressing the "restart" button every time you begin to falter.

If you want a verse pack, let me know and I'll PM you a number where you can order one ... or several - I like to hand them out to people I disciple after they get their first 5-10 verses down as a motivator.

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## Why Does Any Of This Matter?

Because part of being a man is being disciplined. We shouldn't just discipline ourselves on matters that affect our outward appearance, like lifting and dieting. Much of MRP content is about developing emotional and mental discipline as well, such as passing tests, abundance mentality, amused mastery, stoicism, etc.

As Christians, developing spiritual discipline is even more important than all of the above. Sure, Scripture memory has a mental component, but the spiritual benefits are undeniable.

Most notably, John 1 references Jesus as the Word of God. The Bible is literally an expression of everything Jesus has to say to us as God's voice to the world. By internalizing the Word, we are asking Christ Himself to dwell within us. Think on that as you pick out your first verse to get started with.

## 307 Assurance of Salvation

*One of the most often-asked questions in Christianity is, "How do I know if I'm actually saved?" Jesus gave us a clear test to filter the faithful from the frauds: "By their fruit you will recognize them." What does this mean and how can we find the assurance we need?*

Looking back at the 7 basics, you might notice that the first one is actually "The Gospel/AoS," but since

401 addressed the Gospel, I'll not re-hash that.

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## "I Never Knew You"

Assurance of salvation is the first thing I teach to every new believer. I don't do it from a standpoint of trying to convince them of something that might not be true. God forbid I give someone false assurances! No, I'm more concerned with the paralysis that a new believer often experiences in doubting the sincerity of their faith and wondering if they're really "saved" at all. So, they need a direction to be pointed in.

The thing is, as 1 Samuel 16:7 notes, "man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." This is a great sentiment to say, but is often not helpful because we don't have the ability to see the heart - even our own!

In Matthew 7:21-23 Jesus talks of **MANY** people who will say to him, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" How many of you have prophesied and cast out demons? How many of you have enough mighty works under your belt that you'd have the gall to boast about them to Jesus? How many of you were so certain of your faith that you'd be so bold as to argue with the all-knowing God on Judgment day like this?

But Jesus' answer to them is: "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." Wait - so prophesying in Jesus' name and casting out demons in Jesus' name is sin? Sure, if your heart isn't in the right place. That's why it's so important to remember that God looks at the heart, not our outward behaviors.

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## The Test

But if we can't see the heart, how can we ever have assurance in our salvation? Good thing Jesus gave us the answer immediately before that passage I just cited. In Matthew 7:15-20 he sets the stage by warning people of false prophets who think they are and appear to be genuine believers, but who actually aren't saved at all. To figure out who these people are he gives a clear test: "**By their fruit you will recognize them.**" Let me go on quoting him:

*So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.*

I highlighted that section in bold simply to note this: it's not enough to declare, "*I didn't produce any bad fruit!*" A tree that fails to produce good fruit is also cut down and thrown into the fire. So, no one can argue, "But God, look at how much sin I avoided!" No, God will say to that tree, "I don't care about all the bad fruit *you didn't produce* - I want to see the good fruit *you did produce.*"

Interestingly, Luke 13 adds some clarity on this saying. Jesus tells a parable of a tree that isn't producing fruit and suggests it be cut down. Another man says, "Hold on, let me try to protect it and fertilize it first, and if it does produce fruit, great; but if it doesn't after a year, then go ahead and cut it down." The implication I get from this is that if you aren't making any effort to grow in your faith, you'll just be cut down; but if you're in a position where growth is happening, God will give you some more time to start producing your fruit, but he won't wait forever.

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## What Is The Fruit?

### What it isn't ...

This is the part where most people falter.



- **Good Works:** Most people assume the fruit is "good works." But remember: IMMEDIATELY after giving this test Jesus talks of people who did great and mighty works - things that many of us have not even done - and yet says that they're still going to be cast away. So, I'm going to nix this idea.
- **Fruit of the Spirit:** Other people like to assume Jesus is referencing Galatians 5. I always found this suggestion somewhat absurd, given that Galatians hadn't been written yet (56AD) and Jesus never talked about "fruit of the Spirit" in that way on his own (30-ish AD). I can't imagine Jesus saying, "I'm going to say something and reference a concept that you'll have no idea what I'm talking about for another two and a half decades ... but just let me say it anyway." The notion that Jesus may have talked about the fruit of the Spirit on his own and the Gospels just didn't record it calls into question the sufficiency of Scripture in its ability to interpret itself, and it is also inconsistent with the fact that Paul typically cites his sources when making a reference.
- **A Heart Directed Toward God:** I've heard some people argue this. It makes no sense to me. The whole point of Jesus giving the test in the first place is so that other people can discern from their observations of a person whether or not someone is truly "in Christ." Going back to an internal, unobservable test would defeat the point of what he's trying to convey and make that passage practically worthless.

### What It Is ...

Instead, let's back up one more section. In Matthew 7:12-14 Jesus lays out the golden rule: "whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also for them." He follows this immediately with, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

Translation: "If you want to walk down the narrow gate and wish others would help steer you in that direction, you should be helping others do the same." That's your fruit: your disciples.

Oh, by the way, this is perfectly aligned with the other time Jesus talked about fruit and plants. Here are a few examples:

- In the parable of the sower, we are the soil. The Gospel is the plant that springs up in us. The fruit is what blossoms from the Gospel springing up in us, which contains more seed to "produce a crop 30, 60, even 100 times its yield." In other words, the "fruit" is the multiplication of the Gospel in us into other soil. We also see that the soil is condemned even when the plant springs up. The only soil that is praised is the one that yields a larger crop - the one that was actually able to produce a fruit that can start that crop forming.
- In the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26-29) the seed is planted in the soil and springs up - and eventually "when the grain is ripe" (i.e. has its fruit) "at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." What is Jesus usually talking about when he references a "harvest" when describing the Kingdom of God? That's right: new believers.
- Jesus says in John 12 that "unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." He's talking about how his death will save many. But he's also noting the nature of a seed falling from a plant to produce new life. What part of a plant has seeds in it? The fruit. The point of the fruit is to bear the seed that, when finally separating on its own into new soil, will produce new life to be cultivated into producing new fruit and so on. We call this evangelism and discipleship.

Also, feel free to reference the parable of the minas, parable of the talents, Jesus cursing the fig tree, the parable of the two sons, the parable of the tenants, and pretty much all of John 13-17 (which is the last supper - Jesus' parting words and compulsion toward discipleship before his crucifixion), and 1 John 3-5 (or really, the whole book). All of these things affirm that a person's fruit is that which grows out of the Gospel within him to spread more seed, yielding a crop beyond himself which must be harvested. In short, the fruit is evangelism and discipleship.

## What I Did Not Say

Now, I did NOT say that the "fruit" is necessary for salvation. On that point I am undecided, but tend to lean against such a claim. All I am saying is that if one wants to be secure in his salvation, he must ask himself: *Where is my fruit?* Or if you want to test the salvation of someone else with observable evidence, ask: *Where is his fruit?* Is this a perfect test? No. A perfect test would be if we could see into a person's heart and soul. We can't do that. So, Jesus said, "With what you can observe, here's the test I'm going to give you: *By their fruit you will recognize them.*"

## What I Do Say

If you haven't built a lifestyle of evangelism and/or discipleship and you can't name anyone who is following Jesus today because of your life, you might be saved ... but you'd also be right to question whether or not the opposite might be true instead. You'll never have assurance of your salvation.

If, however, you have a long line of good fruit - a harvest of people who are following Jesus today because of your life - you have observable evidence to give you security in the fact that God is doing through your life what you could not accomplish without him, therefore you must be in Him

## 308 Prayer

*Everyone understands the value of communication in intergender relational dynamics, but what about the spiritual dynamic in our relationship with God? How can we communicate with him effectively? What's the point of prayer in the first place?*

It's time to introduce the last of the basics for this series, though there's no particularity in the order in which I wrote these.

### Conversation Artistry

I take it as a given that everyone here knows how to pray. If you know how to talk to a person, you know how to pray. It's really that simple.

That said, RP talks about being conversational artists, and this is a concept I've been employing in my faith since long before RP, which only makes more sense now. Consider: there are some who are great conversationalists and some who aren't. Some who inspire with their words, others who make people laugh, others who help people understand, and others who evoke curiosity. What are you doing with your words in your conversations with God?

- If everyone else knows you as the "funny man," have you ever tried to make God laugh? He already knows the punchline, but I still love re-hearing old jokes.
- If you're the constant encourager, have you communicated encouraging thoughts toward God? Sure, he already knows what will unfold, but sometimes people like hearing it anyway.
- If people know you for talking about complex ideas, are you sharing thoughts thoughts with God and brainstorming together? Obviously he already knows more than you could ever tell him, but how can you learn if you don't share your brilliant theories with the one who knows how to take them to the next level or to fine-tune an otherwise rough-shod idea?

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### Prayerful Attraction

Let me add one more to the above non-exclusive list:

- Are you great at picking up girls with one-liners? When was the last time you tried to use prayer to enhance God's attraction to you?

You see, we're usually so concerned about our emotional passion and connection to God that we often forget we need to make ourselves desirable to him as well - to enhance his emotional passion for us.

In a conversation with the rich young man, despite that it ended poorly for him, when the man said, "Teacher ... I have kept all these [commands] from my youth," Jesus' response is unusual in all of Scripture. Before Jesus proves his point, we see the Scriptures say: "Jesus looked at him and loved him." Why? Jesus obviously knew the character of his heart. He knew the man's obedience wasn't genuine. He knew the man would turn away at the challenge to sell everything. Nevertheless, the man's words inspired love in Christ for him.

*Matthew 15:8*

Now, everyone's going to jump down my throat: *What about Matthew 15:8?!?* Sure: honoring God with your mouth and not your heart has little value. It doesn't do much for the relationship. That's like my wife dressing up in her sexiest lingerie and whispering dirty things in my ear, then acting like I'm crazy when I try to take her right then and there.

You see, even if she had no intent to follow-through, her words still affected me. They still aroused me. How horrible it is when they're hollow, yet even better when they're true!

So it is with your prayers to God. Are you saying the things that will cause him to love you? To enhance his passion for you? As His bride, are you talking about all the ways you're going to please him and tickle that spiritually reproductive bone in his spiritual body?

- Note: If you're not aware by now, I equate physical reproductive acts (i.e. sex) with spiritually reproductive acts (i.e. evangelism) as a biblical parallel God intended to establish, just as I do physical child-rearing (parenting) with spiritual child-rearing (discipleship).

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## Structure

A lot of people like to use the ACTS acronym: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication/Stuff. Sadly, this misses the single most important aspect of prayer itself: that prayer is first and foremost about relating with our God. You would have a pretty sucky relationship with your wife or LTR if you never communicated with one another.

I know, RP talks a lot about "let her speak more" and just STFU and the 2/3 rule and all that ... and God models this pretty darn well with his bride. But the fact is that most conversations between spouses shouldn't be purely logistical, they should be relationship building. Our conversations should be enhancing attraction and deepening intimacy, and if they're not doing this then we start to feel like business partners rather than horny lovers.

To that end, I rework the acronym into REACT.

- **Relate:** Tell God how your day was; ask him about his; make him laugh and let him make you laugh; share something you learned; practice every aspect of your conversational artistry.
- **Entrust** - Lift up to him those things which are important to you and ask that His will be done. Trust him with what's concerning you, but also let him know how you'd like it all to be worked out ;) This is a better replacement for "supplication/stuff," in my view.
- **Adore** - Praise him for the great things he has done and for who he is - because he deserves it!
- **Confess** - Acknowledge your sins, faults, etc. and ask forgiveness.
- **Thank** - For what he has done, for forgiveness, for grace, etc.

## Pray That Means

With regard to making requests of God, another thing that has been quite helpful to me is to pray the means, not the end. Most people want to skip to the end because that's easier, but that also requires very little faith. Saying, "God, please help my friend come to faith" is one thing, but saying, "God, please give me the words to say to help my friend come to faith" is an entirely different monster. The same is true for, "God, please cause it to stop raining for three and a half years ... **SO THAT** your people will return to you" (see James 5:17).

Paul prays this type of prayer often and we should follow in his model. Consider:

- Ephesians 1:17 - He prays for "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation [means] **SO THAT** you may know Him better [result]."
- Ephesians 1:18-19 - "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened [cause] ... **IN ORDER THAT** you may know the hope ... his glorious inheritance and his incomparably great power [result]"
- Ephesians 3:18-19 - "may have power together with all the Saints, to grasp ... the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge [cause] **THAT** you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God [result]."
- Philippians 1:9-10 - "that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight [cause] **SO THAT** you may be able to discern what is best and be pure and blameless [result]."
- Colossians 1:9-10 - "asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding [cause] **SO AS TO** walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him [result]"

This list could go on indefinitely and gets really interesting, not just with things like Elijah's prayer for it to stop raining, but with Elisha, who didn't pray, "God, please save me from my enemies," but instead said, "God, Strike this army with blindness" (2 Kings 6:18).

Are you bold enough to pray for specifics, or are you hiding behind vague generalities, hoping that your faith in the power of prayer will not be shaken if you avoid asking for anything too specific? Are you so insecure of God saying "no" or that he'll choose to fulfill your request a different way? It's been said a million times that men are overt and women are covert. Don't we as men wish our wives would communicate a little more overtly when they actually want something done and it's not just about sharing feelings? Being that we actually are men, despite being Christ's bride, should we not do him this favor in how we pray and make requests?

## 309 The Discipleship Process

*You've heard me say it a million times by now: God called us all to be disciple-makers. Once we're spiritually mature enough to follow God on our own, how can we start leading others to do the same? And how can we teach others to do the same for even more others?*

### Introduction

I do a lot of talking on this sub about the mission to make disciples, but I have yet actually to explain what I mean when I say that. As you probably know by now, I firmly believe that a person cannot be satisfied on this earth - sexually, relationally, spiritually, monetarily, etc. - if he is not living out the reason for which he was put here. 404's Circles Illustration should illustrate this and the temporal nature of the satisfaction we find in the things of this world.

But it's not just about emotional stability and internal satisfaction in Christ that makes us godly men. It is the fact that we live on mission. It is that we have a purpose that matters and we can call others to join alongside us. For 7 years, including my dead bedroom, I did not understand why my wife was so unhappy when I was doing all I could to please her. It was only after I stopped trying to please her and invited her

along a mission outside the home that our relationship started getting back on track.

Just as I could not be satisfied in Christ without living out my purpose in Christ to make disciples, she could not be satisfied in me without living out her purpose to be a helper to me. When I had no purpose, she could not help. Or when my purpose was something lame, like making money and having a cush life, she knew that her help toward me was (1) really a pursuit of her own selfish interests and not my mission, and (2) a vain pursuit that rendered her position as my helper meaningless and fruitless. There is no satisfaction in that or any joy in following a leader who lives like that.

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## What Is Discipleship?

Most people want to use dictionary definitions. "A disciple is a follower." "Discipleship is anything that helps people follow Jesus." With these types of generalities, we see churches assume that Sunday morning sermons are "discipleship" because it gives people something to follow. But this is not what Jesus modeled. Jesus did model preaching, but that's not what he meant when he called the 12 his disciples and invited them into something more.

My definition is based on a look at what Jesus did with the 12, which they then modeled with others: *Purposeful, intentional relationships that provide a model for someone to become more like Christ in spirit and purpose.* Let's break that down.

- Purposeful: It's not just "let's just hang and whatever happens will happen." You go in with an agenda, just like Jesus had an agenda when training his 12. Having an agenda does not undermine the integrity of the relationship; it only directs it.
  - Intentional: No learning by osmosis or passive expectation. You have a plan. You might deviate from that plan frequently, but you know that on the whole the relationship should be moving from point A to point B, and if it's not you know how to start it in that direction again.
  - Relationships: This isn't just some student-teacher session. It is a bond of love and koinonia oneness that you're trying to foster. Like Elijah to Elisha, the person you're working with should be longing for a portion of your spirit to be left behind with him, just as Jesus gave us his. This only happens from an intense depth of love for one another.
  - Model: There's no room for "do as I say, not as I do." People don't follow hypocrites. The discipler must live out what he preaches and show the disciple what it looks like. In Matthew 10:24 Jesus makes it clear that you can't lead someone farther than you are yourself. See also 208 for more info on this.
  - Christlike: The goal of any man - or any Christian in general - should be to live as Christ would live in our shoes. Contextually things change, but we want to be transformed into the image of Christ.
  - In Spirit: That our internal character would reflect Christ and take after his image.
  - In Purpose: That our purpose for living and all of our actions would be oriented around the same goal Jesus modeled for us: reaching the nations with the Gospel through spiritual generations of disciplers living and laboring among the lost.
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## The Path

Here it is. This is what I use to gauge: (1) where a person is on their spiritual journey, and (2) what needs to happen to take them the next step forward.

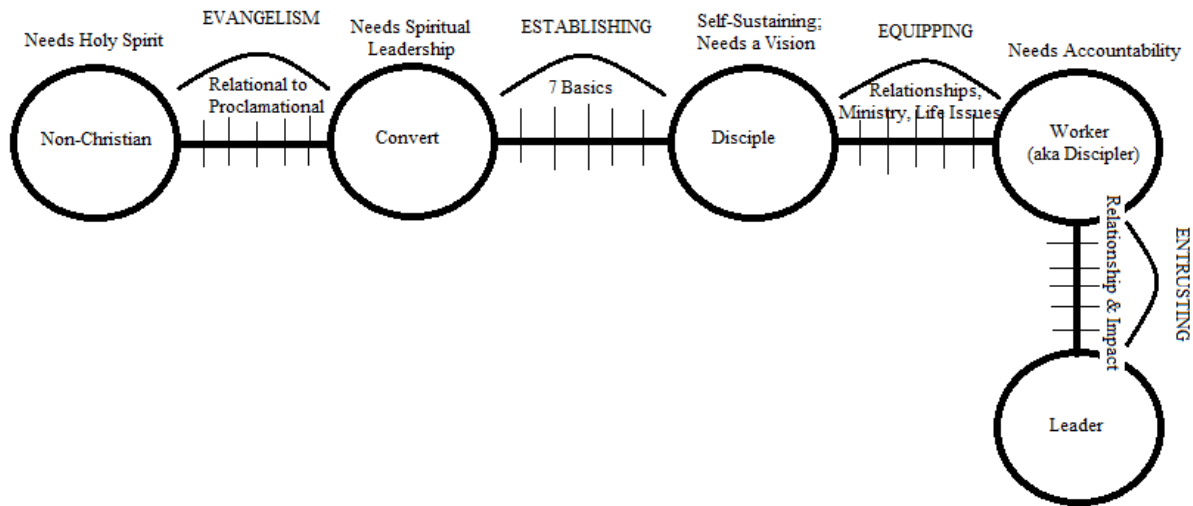


Figure 1: The Path

## Non-Christian

The Bible is clear that we're all born into sin and start here. No one is excluded. No one is born saved. As much as we'd like to say otherwise, we cannot save anyone. Only Jesus can save a person, which happens through the drawing influence of the Holy Spirit. Non-Christians need the Holy Spirit. But the Bible is also clear that the Spirit works through the existing body of believers. That's you. You must work together alongside the Spirit, who will use your effort to reach the non-Christian.

This "effort" is called evangelism, which is a systematic (albeit sometimes unintentionally so) and sometimes organic process for leading someone into a relationship with Christ who is not otherwise already in such a relationship. This process typically starts with building a relationship or rapport with the non-believer and leveraging that trust for the sake of the Gospel by verbally communicating Christ with a non-believer at some point.

## Convert

This is someone who is freshly saved and often hungry to grow and learn. In the absence of spiritual leadership, the convert becomes complacent and either remains as a convert or back-pedals away from the faith altogether (or in the Calvinist view, was never really a true convert to begin with). Most Christians never advance past the convert stage.

The spiritual leader's job is to establish the convert in disciplines by which he can continue growing in his faith indefinitely without the need for indefinite spiritual leadership, just as a parent's job is to raise their kids such that they can survive on their own as adults without their parents' indefinite provision. Those disciplines have already been covered in 301-308 as the 7 basics, but I leave room for tweaking and adjustment. Again, this "path" is not a step-by-step GPS directive; it's an atlas with countless roads that will get from point A to point B. Some paths will be more efficient than others, but sometimes it's fun to

take detours along the way at the expense of efficiency.

## **Disciple**

The disciple is self-sustaining. You could throw him in the middle of a third-world country where Christians are being persecuted with no church in sight and he'd still be practicing and growing in his faith. He knows how to read the Word, pray, share his faith, etc. But he lacks a vision for his role in the greater work that God is doing. That vision is the ministry of discipleship that Jesus started, which when caught will enable him to see this process as a whole, where he fits in it, where others are in this process, and he will have the internal compulsion to help people move forward, including himself.

In order to aid him in this process, he must be equipped with several tools to help him. Those tools might be additional disciplines beyond the basics. It might be theological understanding. It might be a strong familiarity with the Word. It could be practical life skills, like charisma, passion, humility, etc. It could be practical things in one's life that help him connect with others, like his good looks, having a respectable family, house, and car, etc. All of these tools can usually be summarized in three categories: things that foster (1) relationship-building, (2) ministry skills and understanding, and (3) character development.

## **Worker/Discipler**

Where the disciple is self-sustaining, the discipler is others-sustaining. He is no longer pursuing his own spiritual growth; he takes on responsibility for the spiritual growth of others, through the help of the Spirit and on the authority of Christ. He sees fruit from his ministry in the form of those who are following Jesus today because of his life - not just that they said a prayer or had an emotional experience, but in that they are continuing to live for Christ. The worker should also see that those he influences are not just becoming disciples themselves, but are also becoming workers and leading new generations. If the worker/discipler is only seeing *disciples* produced and not *disciplers*, he may actually only be a disciple who needs to re-catch the vision for generational ministry.

His greatest need is accountability. It is not always easy living on mission for Christ, but through the fellowship of other workers and leaders it can be done. At first that accountability will be small because he will have very few people who share his vision. This is because the church is often weak and waters down its concept of discipleship from what Jesus modeled. But as he disciplines others, they will become his peers. He will watch as they even surpass him in maturity, and rejoice with their growth, as John said, "I have no greater joy than seeing that my children are walking in the truth."

## **Leader**

The leader is a Worker/Discipler who not only engages in his own personal ministry, but who oversees other workers/disciplers. He helps them organize and coordinate. These might be people he has personally disciplined or their disciples, as the generations flowing from his life grow, but it could also be other people he has not disciplined who are ready to live on mission for the Gospel in the manner Christ modeled. On the path the worker and leader are vertically aligned with no horizontal progression because there is no inherent spiritual maturity distinction between them. I have known workers more mature than leaders or vice versa, but each hold their position because of the nature and quality of their gifts. That said, all people regardless of their spiritual gifts are called to be at least workers, though only a few will take on the added responsibility of being leaders.

Because of the peer mentality between them and the importance of the koinonia bond of oneness between them, and Paul's compulsion that we be one in "spirit and in purpose," an immense amount of trust must exist between workers and leaders. If the leader has disciplined the worker himself, this should be natural. But the balance of relationship and impact (see 103 for more on all this) is met in that when we are of one "spirit" that is our relational bond and when we are of one "purpose" that is toward the impact the Spirit would have us commit on our world through the purpose Christ gave us of disciple-making.

## Notes On Using The Path

1. Anyone in any phase can lead someone as far as they are. A convert can make more converts. A disciple can make more disciples. A discipler can make more disciplers. A leader can train more leaders.
2. No one can lead anyone further than they are. A convert cannot train someone to be a disciple or worker or leader. A non-Christian cannot disciple someone. A worker cannot train a leader. This is not only a biblical mandate (reference above), but a practical reality.
3. People constantly fluctuate forward and backward in this process. I have seen countless workers get lazy and return to "disciple" mode, where they stop reproducing their lives. This is a decline in spiritual maturity - a falling away. I have also seen leaders who step down and focus on their own personal disciple-making ministry rather than trying to coordinate others'. This is not a spiritual maturity falling away, hence the vertical representation on the path.
4. You can be between two points. These 5 circles are not representative of where someone is; rather they are mile-markers along the journey as a whole. "I'm somewhere between convert and disciple" is a perfectly legitimate place to put yourself or to evaluate someone else in where you believe they are.
5. Very little of this progression depends on how much you know. I have known workers and leaders who could not articulate the difference between something as theologically front-lined as Calvinism and Arminianism. I have also known people who are PhD level scholars who have never passed the convert stage because they have not mastered the disciples or are not otherwise living for Christ other than their intellectual pursuits. For that matter, I've known non-Christians who have more theological understanding than many workers and leaders.
6. The primary function of this path is not to label people, but to give an evaluative process for understanding what someone else's next step might be in their journey toward living out the calling Christ gave us to make disciples. The person utilizing this path should become reasonably proficient in evaluating quickly where a person is, as this will assist him in helping that person move forward. This applies even in a contact-ministry sense where you only have a short time with one person.

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## Where To Begin

If you don't know who to disciple, for many of you the answer will be obvious: **YOUR WIFE**. To be clear, you shouldn't go in with pre-fabricated assumptions about what "discipleship" looks like and try scheduling a weekly session for you to teach her things. For some of you that might work, but for many it won't.

Instead, remember the definition of discipleship: *Purposeful, intentional relationships that provide a model for someone to become more like Christ in spirit and purpose*. Note that it doesn't mean a weekly meeting session or a time of teaching, nor does it mandate joint prayer together. All of these things might be part of how you, specifically, implement discipleship based on your gifts, personality, and character traits. But they are not necessarily universal principles for all.

What I do recommend is discerning what your specific gifts, personality, and characteristics are, and then leveraging those toward your discipleship efforts. So, if you're a very structured teacher-type, you might want to meet with someone one-on-one in a coffee shop with a pen and paper. If you're a more casual, hospitable person who likes to laugh, it'd probably look more like inviting a friend over for dinner and asking him personal questions during that time. If your gift is one of mercy and you tend to enjoy helping people in difficult times, then you might find most of your discipleship relationships beginning by helping meet a unique need the person you're discipling experiences, and then leveraging that act of mercy and service toward the person's spiritual growth.

So, when starting with your wife, look back at the process image I linked to above and evaluate where you believe she is, then evaluate where you are. If you're behind her in the process, you've got to work on yourself first. If you're ahead of her (as you should be), then look toward what the next step for her might



be. If she's part way between convert and disciple, figure out which of the basics she's lacking and find a relationally potent way of leading her into developing that aspect of her faith. If she's not having quiet times, how can you get her to start? If she's never shared her faith with a co-worker, what can you do/say to help lead her in that process, and how can you model that for her to see in your own life so that she can follow you in doing it? If she's already fluent on the basics and a disciple and you've got the vision, how can you impart that to her in a way that she will receive it? In all of this, 205 becomes immensely helpful, as that's going to give you different methods of communicate beyond just a rote teaching session that many of you might otherwise be drawn into based on social stigma of what you think discipleship is supposed to look like.

Whatever context you want to create for discipleship, regardless of how formal or informal it might look, make sure you're remaining conscious of the mile-markers. If you've been discipling someone for a year and you've never had a conversation about their quiet times or prayer life, you're doing something wrong (yes, there are WRONG ways of discipling someone). But if you don't hit those points in the first 2-3 months, depending on the context that might be perfectly appropriate. But if you're meeting with a non-believer, for example, you probably shouldn't be doing much in the way of vision-casting, and if you've got someone who's a new convert, trying to evangelize won't be helpful when he really needs the basics. Again, this isn't a step-by-step GPS coordinate directive; it's an atlas with many different roads to get to the same destination, but you will always cross different longitudinal mile-markers regardless of whether you're in Canada when you cross it or South America.

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## Final Thoughts

Because we have already addressed the fundamentals of evangelism and the relational/proclamational paths in 304 I won't rehash that any further, although I do invite further discussion on evangelism as a process itself and how it fits into the greater scheme of discipleship. That's where it all starts, after all.

I also already addressed the 7 basics in great detail in 301-308, and thus will not be re-hasing the establishing process. That said, if there are lingering questions not on what the basics are or why they are important to impart to others, but on how to teach them to other people, that's another conversation that would be worth having, but I won't initiate it without a demand to do so.

Instead, the rest of the 300 series will be focused on the ins and outs of the equipping and entrusting processes. I will have posts offering tools and illustrations to address some of most common issues that arise when people start to catch the vision for disciple-making and want to be all-in.