

Gotta Plan?



A PLAN TO **G**ROW...

MINISTER...

CONNECT...

(Romans 12)

Introduction – God’s PLAN

“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”
(Ephesians 2:8-10, NLT)

Did you ever notice how our culture idolizes this notion of “busy”. Yet as the stress goes up often we start to miss out on life’s joy. Because of our busyness, our mood, our relationships, our priorities all end up out of whack and we find ourselves wondering what happened! Unfortunately, sometimes our faith and our church life can be just part of the busyness. But Jesus describes a different way. He doesn't want our life with Him to be just another added item to the to-do list; He wants it to become our core operating system. In doing this Jesus offers to help us get off Satan's Busy Treadmill and onto God's Pathway called “life to the full” (John 10:10b).

**B.ound
U.nder
S.atan’s
Y.oke**

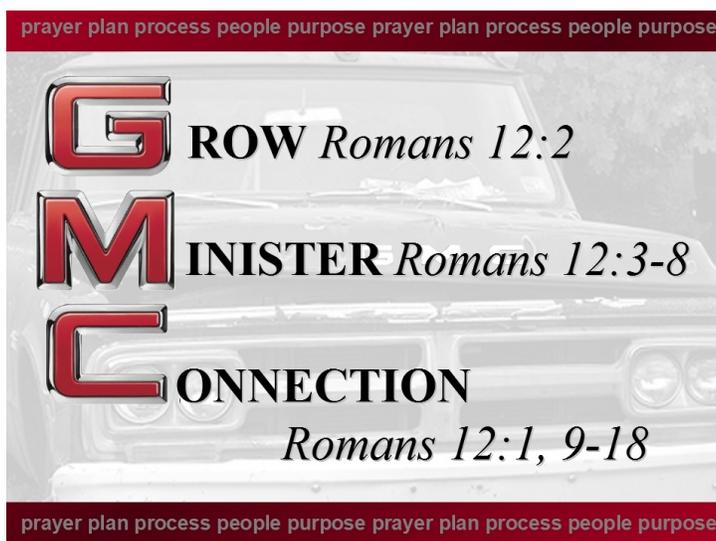
“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”
(Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30, NIV)

[NOTE: God's Pathway is easy with Jesus but it still involves some rather intense moments such as Jesus' requirement that anyone who wants to follow Him should take up their cross daily (Luke 9:23)]

At South Point we want to provide some tools to help people get off the world’s plan of artificially manufactured tasks and distractions. In doing this we want to help people find God's plan and purpose for their life but there are a couple of risks that need to be acknowledged. One risk is working halfway through the process and happily falling into what John Ortberg calls your, “shadow mission”. For example, you discover your spiritual gift and passion is teaching and you become such a busy teacher you never have time for God. The other risk is that these good tools become the artificial template that rigidly dictate limits to your life that God intends to blow past. So, please remember as we prayerfully move forward that this “plan” must be organically grown and repeatedly reviewed and revised as time moves forward and God seeks to do new things in your life.

GMC Explained

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, *in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper **worship**. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. **We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.** If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” (Romans 12:1-8, NIV)*



The goal here is *a plan to grow, a plan to minister and a plan to connect* (i.e. with God and others). Understanding our strengths, weaknesses, past experiences, passions, spiritual gifts, temperament and personal resources helps us to make this plan. The plan is suppose to be flexible yet clear and simple so that it fits with the speed of life, the pressures of family, the needs of the church and the call to daily live for Jesus.

To a significant degree the GMC plan assumes and relies on our work and time together as an integral component of the church family. If GMC helps people keep their work and time together as part of the church family **simple**, then that will free up people's *time to be Ambassadors for Christ* in our community (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). If GMC helps people make their work and time together as part of the church family **significant** then that will equip people with the *tools to be Ambassadors for Christ* in our community (Ephesians 4:11-13).

There is not a specific order for the G, the M and the C in this plan. The three should naturally flow and feed into each other. For example when we minister we give our energy and when we worship we charge up our energy.

A real plan

(concrete, personal, biblical, accountable)

For real people

(individual, Church Family, community, globe)

With a real God

(empowered by, in service of, proclaiming & glorifying)

Plan to Grow

God wants you to grow and there are a variety of ways to do that. Real spiritual growth however is holistic. Growth should include knowledge, understanding, personal experience, faith, character development, etc. This is a life long journey that requires a plan. Remember if you are coasting in your life with Christ you are probably going downhill. Because God made each of us unique it is reasonable to have a tailor made growth plan that works best for you! Whether we are talking about a plan to Grow, Minister or Connect we need to consider a few factors that in many ways work together.

Romans 12:2 say, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” There is a huge challenge laid out in this verse but before we get into the “what” and the “how” let's consider the “why”. In fact let's consider why we want to consider the “why” first?

There is a book called, “Start with Why” by Simon Sinek (and an excellent three minute and thirty nine second video summary you can search for on YouTube). Simply put, a good answer to the question “why” typically gives us a reason and motivation to start and stay attentive to a given task or consideration. Furthermore, the “why” also helps us evaluate whether or not what we are doing is working. *But does understanding our own motivation really matter to God?* Isn't God the biggest fan ever of obey without question or reason? It certainly is true that the idea of simple obedience is found in the Bible but God is the one who gave us our minds, our emotions and our freewill to choose. If God wanted robots He would have made robots. Instead He asks us to immediately begin our faith journey by using all our mind, heart, soul and strength to quickly and constantly be growing so that we can, “test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” In other words, so that we can begin to figure out, understand and appreciate the “why” of God's awesome plan for us and therefore be entirely motivated with absolute, unwavering devotion.

Awesome, but here's the thing – motivation fades! One, we forget the “why”, and two, we are not all motivated (*energized and encouraged*) by the same things. Hmmm? So the **key to starting** is motivating ourselves with the big “why” and the **key to continuing** is knowing what *gives us energy and encouragement* and using that to circle us back to the big “why”. Since it seems we currently live in a culture where taking personal responsibility is nearly a superpower let me ask what energizes and encourages you?

Motivation can come from inside you or from outside of you (intrinsic or extrinsic) and can usually be categorized as incentive based, fear based, achievement based, growth based, power based or social based. For example, I will buy myself a coffee and a muffin to enjoy while I read my bible. Or if I do not read my Bible everyday this week I will not go to the movies this weekend. Or my goal is to read the whole bible in 90 days. Or I want to study the fruit of the Spirit so I can learn to be more Christ like. Or I want to know everything the bible teaches about the tongue so I can gain control over mine. Or I want to learn all about creation in the bible so I can teach my Sunday School class.

What motivates you? I know I'm the type of person who needs to charge up before my work so I'll often reward myself before I have even started. I like to produce something with my effort so personal growth is great and something I can share with others is even better; like a sermon based on everything I learned this week in my personal bible study time. I am way too stubborn for fear based motivation. And goals are nice but I just change them if I don't achieve them.

Nobody learns anything if they are not adequately motivated but in order to maximize our learning and growth we need to think carefully through some of the critical factors such as our learning style and our learning environment. A careful reading of the scriptures quickly reveals God's use of a wide range of teaching methods.

Lecture (hearing)	Proverbs, Sermon on Mount, Psalms
Facilitator (doing)	Moses/Joshua, Jesus/disciples, God/Moses
Alone (contemplating)	David, Daniel
Experimental (examining)	Thomas

David for each style?

Lecture	Samuel	being rebuked
Facilitator	Jonathon	living in palace
Alone	bear/lion	protecting
Experimental	Goliath	fighting

Leaders... how did they learn? How did they grow?

Lecture	Paul	classroom
Facilitator	Moses	hands on journey
Alone	Noah	building w/ God
Experimental	David	life experiences

We will not grow if we aren't willing to be changed. Growth occurs when our desire for God's plan is greater than our desire for our own plans. What is your learning style? What keeps you motivated? What brings you delight? Where do you want to grow? How can you mix it up to keep it fresh? What has worked before? What has not worked before? What time is best for you and your schedule? What place inspires and helps with focus? How do you learn/grow best? How do you learn worst? The answers to these questions don't have to be what others might expect. Consider Phillip Shultz, a Pulitzer Prize winning Poet with dyslexia. He actually credits dyslexia and his struggle with writing for slowing him down enough to have time to think about each and every word carefully. Thus in the long run making him an unexpected but fabulous candidate to be a professional writer.

Primary Spiritual Growth Ingredients

There are three main ingredients required for spiritual growth:
prayer, scripture & relationships

We can read, study, "eat", and memorize God's Word but, on its own, it creates dry, irrelevant, "puffed up" and disconnected Christians. Alone the scriptures do not tend to lead to healthy spiritual growth.

We can pray "without ceasing" as the scriptures instruct us (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Yet on its own we often pray for things that God will not answer because His Word says differently. Alone, our prayers can lack wisdom and discernment and they can become the mere babble against which Jesus warned His disciples of (Matthew 6:7).

Relationships can be fulfilling. Without the other two ingredients, relationships can go sour and stale. Relationships, on their own, allow a place for whining and shallowness such as gossip, bragging, and of the cliché talk about sports and the weather.

Yet together prayer, scripture & relationships become the sunshine, water and rich soil we so desperately need for growth and maturity.

Secondary Spiritual Growth Considerations

H ANGING OUT with God.

Regular time with God.

A CCOUNTABILITY.

An accountable relationship with another Christian.

B IBLE MEMORIZATION.

Getting God's word into our hearts.

I NVOLVEMENT.

Commitment to Christ's church.

T ITHING.

Understanding and participating in God's generosity.

S TUDYING SCRIPTURE.

Discover the Bible personally (beyond just reading).

Practice: *Disciplines of Abstinence*

Solitude: The practice of spending time without any others or any distractions.

Silence: No noise or conversation. Just you and God.

Fasting: Abstain from food, media, entertainment, or anything else that occupies your time.

Frugality: Use your money for purposes outside your own needs for a time.

Chastity: 1 Corinthians 7:8, "Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

Secrecy: Do not allow anyone to know of the deeds you do or the money you give in order to avoid doing them for the wrong motivations. Only God needs to know.

Sacrifice: Stretch your sense of what you can do without for the sake of those who have less.

Disciplines of Engagement

Worship: Engage in corporate worship and include worship in your own prayer time.

Celebration: Practice being grateful and thankful both in your own relationship with Christ and with other believers. Express encouragement and thankfulness to others.

Service: Give your time to the church and/or to others. Ponder tithing your time.

Fellowship: Hebrews 10:25, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Confession: Practice confessing your sins to trusted people who will pray with you and be spiritual allies.

Submission: Submit to the proper people in the proper ways—fight against the sin of pride.

And of course these are just a brief sample of many helpful tools and spiritual practices available.

My Plan to Grow

Is my current plan for growing spiritually, so that I can daily become more like Christ, effective? _____

If yes... good work! Move down the page and copy your plan into the correct places.

If no... let's begin! Continue following along and moving toward your personal growth plan.

PRAY

Begin to envision a plan of "how to grow" over a period of time.

Create a working document that continually adapts according to your life stages and growth.

Begin a simple and significant set of habits that will endure.

Review your plan from time to time to keep it fresh, engaging and effective.

PRAY

Have I taken the time to pray? _____

If yes... well done! Continue down the path.

If no... take the time, starting now!!

What questions do I still need answers for to help me to make a plan?

Who will I ask about my questions? _____

How am I motivated? _____

What is my learning style? _____

What times through the day and week will I meet with God? (Consider this: In order to grow; which we understand is more than maintain; you are looking at an investment of about 4 hours per week or 35 minutes each day of the week or 2 hours one day & 20 minutes the other days of the week.)

Where will I meet with God? _____

What are some interesting options that I can do to grow?

What will I begin now to begin to grow? _____

Who will I share this plan with both as it is developing, once it is designed and when it is being reviewed? _____

Where can I mark down a reminder to review this plan in 3 or 4 months?

Notes: