

I want to grow into the image and likeness of Christ.

GROW

#GrowWVC

Day 1: Vision

Read: Luke 19:1-10

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."
Luke 19:10

Do you ever lose your stuff? Your keys? Wallet? Purse? Cell phone? It happens to the best of us.

When we lose something of great importance, most of us pursue that which is lost with a high degree of intensity and a deep sense of purpose. Our mission becomes one of intentionality!

As we read the story of Zacchaeus, we see the heart of Jesus. He's pursuing the outcast. He's investing in the guy with the terrible reputation. He's seeking the lost. The story of Zacchaeus reveals the heart of Jesus – to seek and save the lost. The idea of being men and women who were dead in sin, being made alive in Christ is as relevant today as it was as Zacchaeus' time.

You were once lost. Dead in your sin. With no hope apart from God intervening in a miraculous way. Thankfully, God did intervene! He sent his one and only son, Jesus, to earth to redeem a people unto himself.

Jesus came to pursue and save you!

Reflect: At the cross, Jesus paid the penalty your sin deserved. In faith, you are saved through His sacrifice. Take a moment to remember what God did to seek and pursue you. What is your story?

Pray: "God, thank you for sending your Son to seek and save sinful people like me. May I not forget your pursuing love today."

Day 2: Gather

Read: Ephesians 4:7-16

"...when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up." Ephesians 4:16

The human body is complex. Bones. Muscles. Nerves. Tissue. Skin. All are important elements of the masterpiece that God created.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he uses the analogy of the human body to describe God's church. The comparison is a good one. Why? Because the human body needs all its parts to work in unity to reach its full potential.

In the same way, every role is important in the life of a healthy congregation.

Our corporate worship feels more robust when God's people are filling the auditorium with the sound of their voices singing in unison. The pastor's humorous illustration is funnier when others around you are laughing. The truth of scripture is more impactful when others are joining in agreement. If participation and engagement is lacking – taking the weekend off – the rest of the church feels the impact.

So, don't give up meeting together. Faithfully gather. Your presence can be a great source of encouragement to those around you.

Reflect: Consider the different people who sit around you at a weekend worship service. How might your worship experience be different if they didn't show up next week? How might their experience be different if you didn't show up?

Pray: "God, thank you for the people that make up Woodmen Valley Chapel. Thank you for a place to gather as your people to learn and sing your praises."

Day 3: Connect

Read: Hebrews 3:12-14

"For we have come to share in Christ..."
Hebrews 3:14

As a child, didn't we all hear about the importance of sharing? Some of us gladly participated, but others of us took our ball and ran home. (You know which one you are...)

Somewhere on our path to adulthood, many of us forgot the importance of sharing. We got jaded by the world, didn't find any real value in sharing, or simply got too busy to think about the significance of giving someone else something meaningful.

What does it mean to share? As a follower of Christ, we are called to share in the joys, the struggles, the pain, the grief, and the spiritual victories of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Believers are called to enter into the lives of others. We are challenged to be present with others. We are expected to engage deeply in the lives of other believers. To rejoice with those who rejoice; to mourn with those who mourn. In Christ, we are given the privilege of connecting with one another to share life.

Will you share?

Reflect: Consider a person from your past who has shared their life with you. Maybe it was a parent, a friend, a teacher, a coach, a mentor, or a pastor? Now, take a moment to consider someone you could connect with and truly share your life.

Pray: "God, thank you for the people in my past who have shared their lives with me. That was a gift! Please help me to have the courage to share both the highs and lows of my faith journey with the person you would have me to."

Day 4: Grow

Read: Matthew 16:21-28

"For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."
Matthew 16:25

The way of Jesus is not the way of the world. It's not easy. It's rarely safe. And it shouldn't be all about comfort and convenience. Yet these are the things that most of us seek – ease, safety, and comfort.

Think about it for a moment: don't you typically choose the path of least resistance? Aren't we all concerned about our safety? Don't we pay large amounts of cash for creature comforts? Truth is, we work hard to secure enough "stuff" to ensure some measure of all of these things.

Yet, Jesus himself casts another vision.

Jesus says the way to experience real life is to lose it. The way of gaining much is self-denial. This sort of upside-down, contrary-to-the-world thinking is not natural to us. We need a change of heart!

Only God can do the work in our hearts for us to turn away from our all-American idols. Only as we surrender all to Christ, can we grow to be more like Jesus.

Reflect: What did God call you to turn away from/give up in the past? Consider how He has grown you since you turned away. Write down three things that are different today because God changed your heart. Now, what is He calling you to lose today? What is keeping you from responding?

Pray: "God, make my heart like yours. Take away my desires for the things of this world, and give me more desire for the things of you. May I truly lose myself to find my life in you."

Day 5: Contribute

Read: Mark 10:35-45

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Mark 10:45

Are you competitive? Do you absolutely have to win the game? Defeat your opponent? Be known as superior to another?

We all have our moments, don't we!

In unimportant things like defeating your spouse at a game of chess, or important issues like winning the competition to secure a big contract for your company, most of us like to be victorious. Most of us revel in wins – big or small.

Yet Jesus teaches us something completely different!

In Mark's gospel, James and John bicker over who will have the seat of power once Jesus is gone. Shamelessly, they ask Jesus to grant them authority. Jesus' two-fold response is very direct. First, he tells them they have no idea what they're asking. Second, he informs them that their thinking is completely upside down.

Jesus challenges his followers not to fight for the seat of power, but rather to serve others as he has served us – sacrificially. Jesus calls us to lives of humility, modeled by faithful service.

Reflect: Think about the last time someone served you. Consider how that affected your heart. Consider someone in your life whom you could serve this week.

Pray: "God, please give me eyes to see the needs of people in our church, our city, and around the world. And then, give me the heart to do something about it."