

The Seven Practices of a
Fruitful
Christian

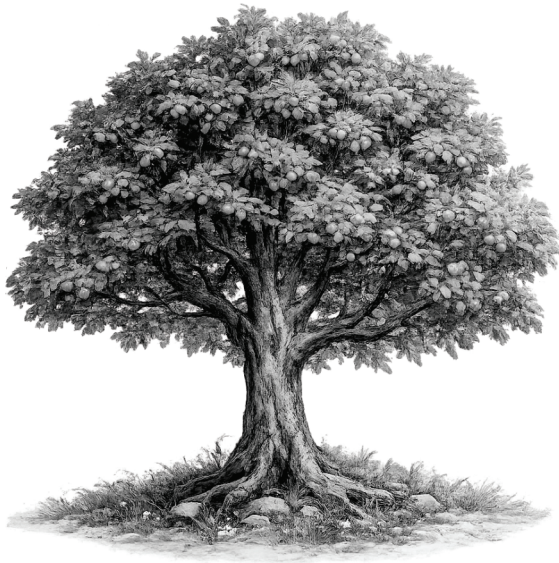
A Personal Spiritual Growth

A detailed painting of a lush landscape. In the foreground, a dirt path winds through a field of tall grass and numerous white daisies with yellow centers. To the right of the path stands a large, full-canopied tree with green leaves and many ripe, reddish-orange fruits hanging from its branches. In the background, rolling green hills and mountains are visible under a bright, slightly hazy sky with soft clouds. The overall style is reminiscent of a classic oil painting.

Mike Falkenstine

The Seven Practices of a
Fruitful
Christian

A Personal Spiritual Growth Assessment



ONE:EIGHT
CATALYST
RESOURCE

The Seven Practices of a Fruitful Christian:
A Personal Spiritual Growth Assessment

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The author would be happy to communicate with you about any questions, comments or suggestions you may have. Please follow Mike on X/Twitter and Facebook at MikeonMission.

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Introduction



I guess because I'm a writer and a lover of all things reading and writing, I've always been partial to a good homonym. It's fascinating to me that in the English language we have words that are spelled and pronounced the same, yet can carry different meanings.

The word practice is a homonym and can have at least two different meanings. Let me show you what I mean. In English, there is a difference between practicing something and the practice of something. Practicing refers to the act of doing something repeatedly—like practicing the violin—in order to improve. The practice of something, like the practice of discipleship, is a defined area of life that requires ongoing attention. When you participate in the practice of something, it becomes an established habit or discipline.

In the New Testament, in the life of a Christian, we see that there are certain things that we should be practicing. The apostle Paul, writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4 about Scripture reading, preaching, and exhorting the church in Ephesus, writes, “Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.”¹ The writer of Hebrews has a similar tone when he writes, “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.”²

In these verses, we see an emphasis on repetition, intentionality, and progress over time. This language comes

1. 1 Timothy 4:15

2. Hebrews 5:14

from the world of training and exercise. Discipline is the structure that makes consistent practice possible, and practice is the pathway through which spiritual maturity develops. We must practice these seven practices until they become established patterns in our lives. But the goal is not merely to practice them—the goal is to be formed by them, so that they shape who we are and how we live as followers of Christ. It's with these thoughts in mind that I present to you the Seven Practices of a Fruitful Christian. These are not simply ideas to understand, but areas of life Scripture calls us to engage in consistently. As we practice them over time, they begin to shape how we think, how we live, and how we follow Christ.

It is my hope and prayer that as you walk through these practices, you will not only grow in your own relationship with Christ, but that your life will begin to bear fruit and impact others as well.

There are three quick items I'd like to briefly cover before I set you loose to discover these seven practices. First, what is a fruitful Christian? Second, why is it important to be a fruitful Christian? And finally, how can you get the most out of this book?

So what is a fruitful Christian? I've written a whole chapter on being fruitful for Christ as one of the Six Marks of a Disciple, but here I can give you a quick summary. A fruitful Christian is someone who is growing in their relationship with Christ, living in obedience to Him, and helping others do the same.

John 15 provides the clearest picture of how this works in the life of a Christian. Jesus says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine;

you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”³

A quick note here: We cannot bear fruit apart from Christ. Jesus tells us to “abide in me, and I in you.” The word abide means “to remain in” or “to stay in.” The implication is clear: Jesus must be at the center of our lives, and we must depend on Him for everything if we are to bear fruit.

Second, why should we strive to be a fruitful Christian? Jesus makes this very clear when He says, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”⁴ As we bear fruit, two important things are happening: God is glorified, and we demonstrate that we are truly disciples of Jesus. If you are a Christian, you want both of those things to be true in your life.

Thirdly, let me give you a few notes on how to get the most out of this book. For each practice, you will see a short introduction, followed by a Bible study. I encourage you to read carefully and make notes about each passage of Scripture. After the Bible study, you'll find reflection questions to help the passages sink in more deeply.

Next, you'll see a Personal Assessment section with questions and a rating scale to help you evaluate where you are in each practice. This is not meant to discourage you, but to help you identify areas for growth.

You will also find a Next Steps for Growth section, where you can begin to take practical steps forward. I encourage you, if possible, to go through this book with others who can help hold you accountable as you grow.

Finally, there is a Tools You Can Use section, which includes resources developed by One Eight Catalyst to help you grow

3. John 15:4-5

4. John 15:8-9

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in each of these practices. You can find all of our resources at **EquippingDepot.org**. In this section, you'll find that each resource listed will fall into one of four categories, which also correspond with how they are cataloged on the website.

Thank you for taking the time to assess your life and your walk with the Lord through this book. I am praying that God will use it in a powerful way as you seek to become a fruitful Christian.

Practice #1:

Daily Engagement with God's Word



I love the Bible for several reasons, but mostly because it is clear that it is truly the inspired Word of God. Think about that for a minute: we have access to the very words of God.

You've probably heard the same answer from a pastor that I have when asked, "How do I know God's will?" The answer is, "Read your Bible." That may seem a bit simplistic, but it is true. If we really believe what Paul writes to Timothy "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work,"¹ then we can understand why pastors are quick to give that answer.

Consider this for just a minute: almost everything we know about God comes from the Bible. Everything we know about who Jesus is, what He has done for us on the cross, and what it looks like to be a fruitful believer in Him comes from Scripture. We don't get that information anywhere else. It is our only authoritative source for these truths, and because of that, if we want to be fruitful Christians, walking with Jesus daily and seeing Him use us, regular engagement with the Bible is not optional... it is essential. Apart from regular engagement with God's Word, a believer cannot grow in maturity or bear lasting fruit.

Fruitful Christians engage daily with God's Word because it is the primary means by which God reveals Himself, shapes their thinking, and directs their lives. On the other hand, a

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Christian who neglects Scripture gradually loses clarity about truth, wisdom, and obedience.

As a believer consistently takes in Scripture, their minds are renewed, their discernment is sharpened, and their lives become increasingly aligned with God's will. Over time, this steady intake of truth produces spiritual maturity and leads to a life that bears fruit.

And as you'll see in the “Next Steps for Growth” section, this kind of steady intake is not limited to 30 minutes with the Lord in a quiet time each day. That's a great place to start, but I've found in my own life that when I am engaging with God's Word throughout the day, my entire day is different because of it.

In addition to daily reading, this includes meditating on Scripture—taking a passage you've read and reflecting deeply on it, allowing it to shape your thoughts. I also love Scripture memory for this same reason. We read in Psalm 119 that we should “store up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”² Our minds are constantly filled with thoughts, and replacing those with truth is one of the clearest ways to engage with God's Word throughout the day.

I have found that committing verses to memory so that God's Word is readily available in my heart and mind is incredibly valuable.

I'm hopeful that you will find at least one new insight in this section that leads to deeper engagement with God's Word.

Bible Study on this Practice

Read each of these passages carefully, then answer the questions in the Reflection section. As you read each passage, feel free to write down notes about what you're seeing in each passage under the reference.

2. Psalm 119:11

Psalm 1:1–3

2 Timothy 3:16–17

Joshua 1:8

2 Timothy 2:15

Reflect What You're Reading

What do these passages teach about the importance of Daily Engagement with God's Word in the life of a believer?

What commands or promises related to Daily Engagement with God's Word do you see?

What stands out to you personally as you read these passages?

Rating Scale:Personal Assessment

Take the opportunity in this section to do an assessment of how you're doing in relation to engaging daily with God's Word. You'll see a set of questions, together with a rating scale. For each question, write in where you see yourself on the scale and why you're at that rating.

I regularly spend intentional time reading or studying Scripture.

I seek to understand what a passage means before applying it.

God's Word influences my decisions and priorities.

I memorize or meditate on Scripture.

I am growing in my knowledge of the Bible.

Reflection Questions

As you assess yourself in this practice of a fruitful Christian, take some time now to reflect on your answers with a look toward growth in this practice.

What patterns do you notice in your assessment?

Where are you growing?

Where might God be inviting you to grow further?

Next Steps for Growth

At One Eight Catalyst, we want you to not only know about these practices, but to also be growing in them. In this section, please take some time to begin to develop regular practices toward growth.

Develop a regular habit of Bible Reading. Work through a book of the Bible or follow a reading plan to build consistency and familiarity with the whole counsel of God.

As you read the Bible, find tools that will help you study the Bible carefully, taking time to understand what a passage means in its context.

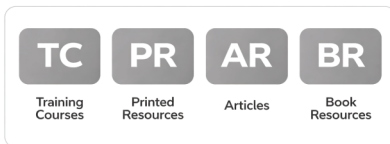
Develop a regular habit of memorizing Scripture. There are a number of online tools to help get you started. Pastor and

Insight for Living founder Chuck Swindoll has said about Scripture memory, "I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture... No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends!"³ That has certainly proven true in my own life. The fruitful Christian will have God's word hidden in their hearts.

Praying through Scripture has been one of my personal favorite ways to daily engage with the Bible. I particularly like praying through the book of Psalms. Try taking a Psalm a day, read through it and stop every so often to pray back to God what you've just read in that Psalm.

What other ways do you like to engage daily with God's Word? Write your responses here:

Tools That Can Help



5 Day a Week Bible Reading plan - PR

How to Interpret the Bible worksheet - PR

Bible Trivia Worksheet - PR

Time Alone with God Worksheet - PR

3. Charles R. Swindoll, Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1983)

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How to Memorize Scripture Worksheet - PR

3-Point Bible Study Worksheet - PR

Practice #2:**Dependence on God through a Life of Prayer**

I love reading the Psalms. It is by far one of my five favorite books in the Bible. Composed mostly of prayers that are meant to be sung, or more specifically, inspired prayers written as poetry and designed to be sung by God's people, the Psalms give us language for approaching God. Whenever I am spending dedicated time in the Word and in prayer, I am almost always taking a Psalm and praying through it, repeating back to God the very words He has given us.

I was recently reading and praying through Psalm 147, and verse 5 caught my attention as the psalmist writes, “Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.” In the original Hebrew, this phrase “his understanding is beyond measure” has the meaning that God's understanding is so vast, so complete, and so perfect that it cannot be measured, counted, or exhausted. This attribute of God, that He knows all things perfectly, past, present, and future, fully, immediately, and without error, is called omniscience.

When we enter into a relationship with God through Christ, His omniscience is something we can completely depend on. There is nothing God does not know, and there is no part of our future that is a mystery to Him. This is one of the reasons we can depend on Him fully: He is the ultimate source of all strength, guidance, and provision.

With that kind of confidence, when we come to God in prayer, we can be certain that He is fully aware and fully able.

No detail is too small to bring to Him. This includes requests for daily needs, such as spiritual guidance and physical provision. Paul gives clear instruction to the church at Thessalonica: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”¹ In other words, we rejoice because God is in control, we pray continually because we depend on Him, and we give thanks because we trust Him.

Paul gives a similar instruction to the church at Philippi as he writes, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”² Anxiety gives way to peace as we bring everything to God in prayer.

This kind of dependence begins to shape how we live. When a friend shares a need, we pray with them immediately. When a decision needs to be made, we bring it to God first. When uncertainty arises, we turn to Him rather than relying on ourselves. Prayer becomes not just something we do, but a pattern of life.

Over time, this “praying without ceasing” aligns our desires with God's will and deepens our relationship with Him. It produces a life marked by trust rather than worry. And that is essential for the believer who desires to bear fruit, because fruitfulness is ultimately the result of God working in and through us.

Dependence on God through a life of prayer is not optional. It is essential. It is how we live in daily reliance on the One who knows all things and works all things according to His perfect will.

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

2. Philippians 4:6-7

Bible Study on this Practice

Read each of these passages carefully, then answer the questions in the Reflection section. As you read each passage, feel free to write down notes about what you're seeing in each passage under the reference.

Matthew 6:9–13

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Philippians 4:6–7

John 15:1-5

Reflect What You're Reading

What do these passages teach about the importance of Dependence on God through a Life of Prayer in the life of a believer?

What commands or promises related to Dependence on God through prayer do you see?

What stands out to you personally as you read these passages?

Rating Scale:



Personal Assessment

Take the opportunity in this section to do an assessment of how you're doing in relation to dependence on God through a life of prayer. You'll see a set of questions, together with a rating scale. For each question, write in where you see yourself on the scale and why you're at that rating.

I intentionally bring my needs, decisions, and concerns to God in prayer rather than relying on myself.

I maintain a regular pattern of prayer throughout the day, not just at set times.

When I feel anxious or uncertain, I turn to God in prayer rather than trying to solve things on my own.

My prayer life reflects trust in God's wisdom, timing, and ability to work in my circumstances.

I regularly pray not only for my needs, but also for others and for God's purposes to be accomplished.

Reflection Questions

As you assess yourself in this practice of a fruitful Christian, take some time now to reflect on your answers with a look toward growth in this practice.

What patterns do you notice in your assessment?

Where are you growing?

Where might God be inviting you to grow further?

Next Steps for Growth

At One Eight Catalyst, we want you to not only know about these practices, but to also be growing in them. In this section, please take some time to begin to develop regular practices

toward growth.

Intentionally acknowledge your dependence on God in prayer. Begin your prayers by recognizing your need for Him—asking for wisdom, strength, and guidance rather than relying on your own understanding.

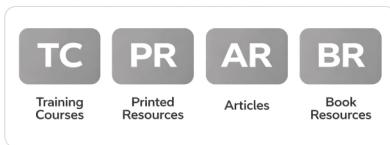
Set aside a consistent time each day for focused prayer. Start with a simple rhythm—morning or evening—and build consistency.

Pray with others when needs arise. When someone shares a concern, take the opportunity to pray with them in that moment.

Pray throughout the day. Develop the habit of short, frequent prayers as you go about your day—acknowledging God’s presence and seeking His guidance.

Use Scripture to guide your prayers. Pray through passages like the Psalms or the Lord’s Prayer, allowing God’s Word to shape what you say.

Tools You Can Use



How to have a Extended Time Alone with God Study - PR

How to Have a Quiet Time - TC

Practice #3:

Obedience to Christ and God's Word



As some of you may know, there's a theological discipline called hermeneutics, which is the process of correctly interpreting Scripture and seeking to understand what the biblical author originally meant in context before applying it to our lives. It's an important discipline because, as fruitful Christians, we want to know what the Bible is actually saying to us in a particular passage.

There are some passages of Scripture that are particularly tough to interpret—perhaps none tougher than Genesis 6:1–4. Reading this passage, we see that the “sons of God” find the daughters of men attractive, and they take them as their wives. But who are these “sons of God”? Faithful scholars offer different views that fall into three main categories: angelic beings, the godly line of Seth, or human rulers. There are whole academic conferences and journal articles dedicated to this topic.

When it comes to our obedience to Christ and God's Word as Christians, this is one of the easiest biblical topics to understand. We don't have a lot of disagreement about what the Bible says about this topic, mainly because it is so crystal clear. James, the brother of Jesus and a leader in the early Jerusalem church, wrote in his letter, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”¹ It seems to me that far too many in our churches today are good hearers of the Word, but those who are fruitful Christians become faithful in putting that “hearing” into “doing.” Of course, this

1. James 1:22-25

is first done by knowing God's Word, which is why daily engagement with God's Word is the first of these practices. A fruitful Christian cannot obey what they do not first understand, so regular engagement with Scripture is foundational.

In much of my writing on this topic in the past, some of the pushback I get is, “Mike, I understand what you're writing, but this is really hard to do!” My standard answer is, “When we have surrendered our lives to Christ and love Him, obedience becomes something you desire. He is your Lord and Savior.” Jesus speaks about this very topic in John 14 and 15. In John 14:21, Jesus states, “Whoever has my commands and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Not only is He showing us one of the “proofs” that we love Him, but we also see a beautiful picture of how a deepening love for Christ leads to obedience. In John 15, Jesus takes this a step further when He says, “You are my friends if you do what I command you... I have called you friends.”² Read that passage again and let it really sink in. Think about your friends and the relationships you've developed with them. If you're a Christian, Jesus wants to be your friend—to have that kind of relationship with you. Just as you would do anything for your good friends, that relationship with Jesus should lead to obedience to the commands He has given. As you'll see in the Tools section of this practice, we have a “50 Commands of Jesus” study you can do where we've listed all the commands. It's a great way to begin implementing them into your life.

So how do you begin in obedience to Christ and God's Word? It's a big topic, but let me give you a quick first step: identify a clear action step from each time in God's Word.

2. John 15:14

These action steps should be personal, practical, and provable, helping translate biblical truth into real-life application. Over time, this pattern of reading and responding cultivates a life marked by consistent obedience and spiritual maturity.

Bible Study on this Practice

Read each of these passages carefully, then answer the questions in the Reflection section. As you read each passage, feel free to write down notes about what you're seeing in each passage under the reference.

John 15:14

John 14:21

James 1:22-25

Luke 6:46

Reflect What You're Reading

What do these passages teach about the importance of Obedience to Christ and God's Word in the life of a believer?

What commands or promises related to Obedience to Christ and God's Word do you see?

What stands out to you personally as you read these passages?

Rating Scale:



Personal Assessment

Take the opportunity in this section to do an assessment of how you're doing in relation to obeying Christ and God's Word. You'll see a set of questions, together with a rating scale. For each question, write in where you see yourself on the scale and why you're at that rating.

When reading the Bible, I regularly identify a clear action step from each time in God's Word. These steps help me translate biblical truth into real-life application.

When God's Word challenges me, I respond with obedience rather than delay or excuse.

I know the commands that Jesus has given me, and I have a clear, consistent way to apply them to my life.

My daily decisions reflect what I know to be true from Scripture.

I obey God's Word even when it is difficult, inconvenient, or costly.

My obedience to God's Word flows from my love for Him and my relationship with Jesus.

Reflection Questions

As you assess yourself in this practice of a fruitful Christian, take some time now to reflect on your answers with a look toward growth in this practice.

What patterns do you notice in your assessment?

Where are you growing?

Where might God be inviting you to grow further?

Next Steps for Growth

At One Eight Catalyst, we want you to not only know about these practices, but to also be growing in them. In this section, please take some time to begin to develop regular practices toward growth.

Be sure to commit to daily time in God's Word. Obedience begins with knowing what God has said. It is difficult to obey Scripture if you are not regularly engaging with it, so make daily time in the Word a priority.

Identify one clear action step from each time in Scripture. As you read, ask, “What is God calling me to do?” Write down a specific response to what you've read.

Make your action steps personal, practical, and provable. Personal (involving you), practical (something you can actually do), and provable (with a clear result or timeframe).

Follow through on what you commit to do. Obedience requires action. Make it your aim not just to identify steps, but to carry them out faithfully.

Work through the “50 Commands of Jesus” study at EquippingDepot.org. This tool will help you clearly see what Jesus has commanded and give you a practical way to begin implementing those commands in your life.

Tools You Can Use



50 Commands of Jesus Bible Study Worksheet - PR

What You Do Shows Who You Are: The 6 Marks of a Disciple of Jesus - BR

The Importance of the Commands of Christ - AR

Searching for a Biblical Church: A How-To Guide - BR

Practice #4:**Living in Fellowship with Local Believers**

In many of our Christian circles, it seems like authentic biblical fellowship is a hard cat to corner. Is our current church model of coming together on Sunday morning, singing some songs and hearing preaching, followed by a nice restaurant lunch, what God wants from us? Or is there something more that we may be missing? For our purposes here, biblical fellowship with local believers is essential to becoming a fruitful Christian.

I'd like to start this examination in what may seem to be an unlikely place. In Matthew 7, part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we read that “every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.”¹ I often cling to this teaching because it is so instructive when it comes to being a fruitful Christian—and it is a teaching that is often overlooked. For this practice, we focus on what makes a Christian life akin to a healthy tree. A healthy fruit tree has deep roots, receives the right amount of water and sun, and is planted in the right place to produce fruit. In a similar way, a healthy Christian—one who is bearing fruit—has been transformed by God at the root, has a right relationship with Christ, and lives in obedience flowing from that love. Just as you don't need to tell a healthy tree to produce fruit, the same is true of a healthy Christian. Fruit is the natural result of a transformed life.

This is important in our context because healthy, fruit-bearing Christians understand that they cannot grow to maturity apart from meaningful, consistent fellowship with

1. Matthew 7:17-18

other believers. Biblically, this fellowship goes beyond the normal Sunday services we're used to. In Acts 2, we read that the early Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”² As we read on, we see a depth of relationship marked by generosity, shared life, and daily connection, resulting in the Lord adding to their number day by day.

This theme is emphasized even more in Hebrews 10, where we are encouraged to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works... not neglecting to meet together.”³ To “stir up” one another means that we intentionally press into each other's lives in a way that moves one another toward love and obedience. In other words, we are each responsible for the spiritual growth of others around us, just as they are responsible for ours. The “good works” we are called to pursue are the visible expression of a life bearing good fruit—actions that flow from a heart transformed by Christ.

You may be wondering how this is lived out in the context of a church. A couple of quick thoughts: first, this kind of intentional fellowship cannot happen if we only see each other on Sundays. The best examples I've seen are churches where believers meet regularly in smaller groups, often weekly, and are in contact throughout the week. In these settings, there is a deep level of both vulnerability and accountability. This includes speaking truth into one another's lives for the purpose of growth. Each member identifies areas where they want to grow spiritually and invites others to help them follow through.

This type of fellowship is not surface-level—it involves honesty, confession, and walking in the light together.

It is this kind of biblical fellowship that produces growth in

2. Acts 2:

3. Hebrews 10:24-25

Christ, obedience to His commands, and victory over sin. Biblical fellowship is not casual attendance or occasional gathering—it is an intentional, relational, and ongoing commitment to help one another grow in Christ.⁴

Bible Study on this Practice

Read each of these passages carefully, then answer the questions in the Reflection section. As you read each passage, feel free to write down notes about what you're seeing in each passage under the reference.

Matthew 7:15-20

Acts 2:42-47

Hebrews 10:24–25

Ephesians 4:11–16

Reflect What You're Reading

What do these passages teach about the importance of Living in Fellowship with Local Believers?

What commands or promises related to Living in Fellowship with Local Believers do you see?

4. For more detail about this, please refer to Chapter 5 of my book, *Keeping Watch Over Souls: The 6 Marks of a Church that Makes Disciples*

What stands out to you personally as you read these passages?

Rating Scale:



Personal Assessment

Take the opportunity in this section to do an assessment of how you're doing in relation to living in fellowship with local believers. You'll see a set of questions, together with a rating scale. For each question, write in where you see yourself on the scale and why you're at that rating.

I am meaningfully connected to other believers in a way that helps me grow spiritually.

I regularly spend time with other believers outside of a Sunday service.

I am known by others in my church at a level where they understand what is really going on in my life.

I am honest and open with other believers about my struggles, including sin.

I allow other believers to speak into my life and challenge me toward spiritual growth.

I am consistently meeting with other believers in a way that allows for encouragement, accountability, and spiritual growth.

Reflection Questions

As you assess yourself in this practice of a fruitful Christian, take some time now to reflect on your answers with a look toward growth in this practice.

What patterns do you notice in your assessment?

Where are you growing?

Where might God be inviting you to grow further?

Next Steps for Growth

At One Eight Catalyst, we want you to not only know about these practices, but to also be growing in them. In this section, please take some time to begin to develop regular practices toward growth.

Commit to a smaller group of believers where you can be known and grow. This may be a small group, Bible study, or a few individuals you meet with regularly. Growth happens best in relationships where there is consistency and trust.

Be sure you are consistently meeting with other believers

outside of a Sunday service. Biblical fellowship requires regular, ongoing interaction, so prioritize time each week to be with other Christians in a meaningful way.

Take a step toward greater openness and authenticity. Begin sharing more honestly about what is really going on in your life, including areas of struggle, and invite others to walk with you in those areas.

Invite others to speak into your life. Ask one or two trusted believers to help you grow by encouraging you, asking questions, and holding you accountable.

Be intentional about encouraging and strengthening others. Fellowship is not just about receiving—it also involves investing in others by praying for them, speaking truth into their lives, and helping them take steps toward obedience.

Make it a goal to regularly “stir up” one another to love and good works. Be purposeful in your conversations, asking how others are doing spiritually and how you can help them grow.

Tools You Can Use



Searching for a Biblical Church: A How-To Guide - BR

Being and Making Disciples in the Western Church: A First Steps Guide - BR

Practice #5:**Discovering and Using your Spiritual Gifts**

As we've seen in the introduction of this book, part of being a fruitful Christian is being involved in where God is at work. This includes the proclamation of the gospel and Christ's command to make disciples in our local area and around the world. When you stop and think about that, it is a significant responsibility. As I often say in my ministry, we are God's plan A for reaching the world for Christ—and there is no plan B.

For many Christians, that can feel like too big of a responsibility. If that's you today, I have some great news. When you became a Christian, God gave you special abilities to enable you to be involved in that work. We read in Hebrews 2 that gifts of the Holy Spirit are “distributed according to his will.” In other words, when you became a believer, the Holy Spirit gave you spiritual gifts to be used. Unfortunately, I often meet Christians who have little idea what their spiritual gifts are, which means they are not using them for the work of God's kingdom. You can see, therefore, why this is an essential practice for a fruitful Christian.

The subject of spiritual gifts is often misunderstood. To recap, spiritual gifts are abilities given to individual Christians by the Holy Spirit that enable them to participate in His work and His mission on earth. Each person who has trusted Christ as Lord and Savior has at least one spiritual gift, and discovering those gifts is crucial to becoming a fruitful Christian.

Spiritual gifts are different from natural talents. A natural talent is a physical or learned ability—such as musical skill, mechanical aptitude, or artistic ability—while a spiritual gift is a God-given capacity for spiritual service. That said, God often uses natural abilities as the means through which spiritual gifts are expressed. For example, someone with mechanical aptitude may have the spiritual gift of evangelism and, while helping with a car repair, may naturally use that opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with the person being helped.

So how do you begin to discover your spiritual gifts? One helpful tool is a spiritual gifts assessment, which may give you insight into how God has uniquely wired you. Your pastor may recommend one, or in the Tools section ahead, I provide a recommendation for an online test you can take from anywhere. It is also important to discover your gifts through active involvement—serving others, stepping into opportunities, and paying attention to how God uses you. As you do this, and as others speak into your life, your gifts will become clearer over time.

My recommendation is simple: put yourself in situations where you can serve and see what God does. If something doesn't seem to bear fruit, the assessment may need adjusting. In other words, discovering your spiritual gifts happens through both testing and experience.

One final note: In my book on the 6 Marks of a Disciple, I developed a study on spiritual gifts that many have found helpful. It outlines the gifts and where they are found in Scripture. I'll reprint that study at the back of this book for your use. My prayer is that God will help you discover how He has gifted you and how He wants to use you to reach the world for Christ as a fruitful Christian.

Bible Study on this Practice

Read each of these passages carefully, then answer the questions in the Reflection section. As you read each passage, feel free to write down notes about what you're seeing in each passage under the reference.

1 Peter 4:10–11

Romans 12:4–8

Ephesians 4:7-16

1 Corinthians 12

Reflect What You're Reading

What do these passages teach about the importance of Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts?

What commands or promises related to Discovering and Using Your Spiritual Gifts do you see?

What stands out to you personally as you read these passages?

Rating Scale:



Personal Assessment

Take the opportunity in this section to do an assessment of how you're doing in relation to discovering and using your spiritual gifts. You'll see a set of questions, together with a rating scale. For each question, write in where you see yourself on the scale and why you're at that rating.

I have a growing understanding of how God has uniquely gifted me to serve others.

I am actively serving in ways that use my spiritual gifts.

I regularly look for opportunities to serve others within the body of Christ.

I step into opportunities to serve, even when I am not completely sure how God has gifted me.

I am faithful to use the opportunities God gives me to serve, rather than waiting for ideal circumstances.

I see evidence that God is using me to impact others spiritually.

Reflection Questions

As you assess yourself in this practice of a fruitful Christian, take some time now to reflect on your answers with a look toward growth in this practice.

What patterns do you notice in your assessment?

Where are you growing?

Where might God be inviting you to grow further?

Next Steps for Growth

At One Eight Catalyst, we want you to not only know about these practices, but to also be growing in them. In this section, please take some time to begin to develop regular practices toward growth.

Begin serving where you are. Don't wait until you feel completely certain about your gifts. Step into opportunities to serve within your church or among other believers and trust that God will make your gifting clearer over time.

Use a spiritual gifts assessment as a starting point. Consider taking a trusted assessment to help identify areas where God may have gifted you, but view it as a tool—not a final answer.

Pay attention to where God is using you. As you serve, take

note of where you see fruit, where others are encouraged, and where your efforts seem to have the most impact.

Invite feedback from other believers. Ask trusted Christians how they see God using you and where they believe your strengths are. Often others can see patterns that you may not recognize on your own.

Be faithful with the opportunities God gives you. Rather than waiting for the “perfect” role, commit to serving consistently in whatever opportunities are in front of you.

Use your gifts to serve God's Kingdom, not yourself. Keep your focus on building up others and advancing God's work, rather than seeking recognition or personal fulfillment.

Tools You Can Use



Spiritual Gifts Study in this book

Online Spiritual Gifts Test (my favorite) -
<https://gifts.churchgrowth.org/spiritual-gifts-survey/>

Online Spiritual Gifts Test From Lifeway -
<https://shorturl.at/cfsmc>

Practice #6:

Knowing and Faithfully Sharing the Gospel



Of all seven practices of a fruitful Christian, this may be the most important. Knowing and faithfully sharing the Gospel is at the very center of what it means to be a Christian. Each of us has come to Christ as both Lord and Savior, and the Gospel is central to our very lives.

The word “Gospel” literally means “good news.” The Greek word euaggelion refers to the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ to provide salvation—a salvation we have now entered into. Paul summarizes this well in Romans 1 when he writes, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...”¹ The Gospel defines who we are as Christians, so knowing it well should be central to our lives. Having repented of our sins and placed our trust in Christ, we are forgiven, justified, and brought into a right relationship with God—realities that should shape how we live every day. And yet, I am often surprised at how many Christians are unsure how to clearly explain the Gospel. When asked to give a simple presentation, many hesitate or don't know where to begin. In some cases, Christians have never taken the time to learn how to articulate the Gospel in a clear and biblical way. Let me help you find a clear path toward growth in this practice.

The first step is knowing the Gospel. This is actually easier than you might think, if you're willing to put in a little “elbow grease.” In the Tools You Can Use section of this practice,

1. Romans 1:16

you'll find a link to an article I wrote entitled, What is the Gospel? It's a clear and concise summary designed to help you understand the message fully. I encourage you to read through it carefully—perhaps even print it out, highlight key sections, and work toward putting it into your own words. Many people have found it helpful to develop a simple, personal way of explaining the Gospel that remains biblically accurate while being natural to share.

You'll also find a link to a training video that walks through how to present the Gospel using the “Three Circles” method. This is just one of several effective approaches. The goal is not to memorize a script for its own sake, but to become so familiar with the Gospel that you can clearly and confidently share it in everyday conversations. As you internalize the message, it becomes more real to you—and more present in your daily life.

The second step is faithfully sharing the Gospel with as many people as you can. One way I often describe this is through the example of finding a great restaurant. If you have an incredible meal and receive excellent service, you naturally tell others: “You have to try this place!” How much more should we be eager to tell others about Jesus, who has completely changed our lives and given us hope and a new future?

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5 that “we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” This is why I often say, “We are God's plan A for reaching the world.”² If people are going to hear the Gospel, it will be because someone tells them—and God has chosen us to be those messengers. Jesus Himself gives us this command: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.”³

2. 2 Corinthians 5:20

3. Mark 16:15

As you come to know the Gospel deeply, may God give you a growing desire and boldness to faithfully share this life-giving message with others.

Bible Study on this Practice

Read each of these passages carefully, then answer the questions in the Reflection section. As you read each passage, feel free to write down notes about what you're seeing in each passage under the reference.

Romans 1:16

Romans 10:14-17

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Mark 16:15

Reflect What You're Reading

What do these passages teach about the importance of Knowing and Faithfully Sharing the Gospel?

What do these passages reveal about the power of the Gospel to save and transform lives?

What responsibility do these passages place on you to share the Gospel, and what should motivate or compel you to do so?

What stands out to you personally as you read these passages?

Rating Scale:



Personal Assessment

Take the opportunity in this section to do an assessment of how you're doing in relation to knowing and faithfully sharing the Gospel. You'll see a set of questions, together with a rating scale. For each question, write in where you see yourself on the scale and why you're at that rating.

I have a clear and accurate understanding of the Gospel and can explain it simply from Scripture.

I am confident in my ability to share the Gospel with someone else.

I regularly look for opportunities to share the Gospel in my everyday life.

When opportunities arise, I take steps to share the Gospel rather than avoiding or delaying.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel and am willing to speak about Christ with others.

I pray regularly for opportunities to share the Gospel and for boldness to do so.

I see evidence that God is using me to share the Gospel with others.

Reflection Questions

As you assess yourself in this practice of a fruitful Christian, take some time now to reflect on your answers with a look toward growth in this practice.

What patterns do you notice in your assessment?

Where are you growing?

Where might God be inviting you to grow further?

Next Steps for Growth

At One Eight Catalyst, we want you to not only know about these practices, but to also be growing in them. In this section, please take some time to begin to develop regular practices toward growth.

Take the time to learn a clear and accurate Gospel presentation. Work toward knowing it well enough that you can explain it naturally and confidently. As you develop it, practice sharing it with other believers and ask for feedback to ensure it is clear and faithful to Scripture.

Pray regularly for opportunities to share the Gospel. Ask God to open doors, to prepare hearts, and to give you boldness when those opportunities come.

Look intentionally for opportunities in your everyday life. Pay attention to conversations, relationships, and situations where the Gospel could naturally be shared.

Take steps to share the Gospel when opportunities arise. Resist the tendency to delay or avoid the moment, and trust God as you step forward in obedience.

Be faithful, not perfect. You don't need to have every answer or say everything perfectly. Focus on clearly sharing the truth and trusting God with the results.

Tools You Can Use



Video Course: Sharing the Three Circles - TR

What is the Gospel? - AR

Reaching Your Neighbors - PR

Shelves Breaking onto Solid Ground: Fruitful Engagement with Latter-day Saints - BR

Practice #7:

Making Reproducible Disciples of Jesus



Fruitful Christianity requires reproduction. The Apostle Paul, in prison, writing the last known letter—this time the second letter to the young Timothy—knew this to be true as well. In 2 Timothy 2, Paul writes to Timothy that, “what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”¹

So, what had Timothy heard from Paul?

As we review the life and letters of Paul, we know he heard much of the previous six practices of a fruitful Christian. We know he heard the Gospel and the urgency to share it. We know he heard about obedience to Christ, dependence on prayer, and engaging daily with God’s Word. Paul’s instruction, then, to Timothy, now serving in Ephesus, was: “Take what you’ve heard from me—all that instruction and training, and what you’ve seen me doing—and teach it to other men so they can do those things too. And choose men who show a heart to teach it to others.” I couldn’t define discipleship any better, so as I’ve put a definition to it, I’ve simply taken from Paul’s example to develop my longstanding definition of discipleship: Discipling others is the process by which a Christian with a life worth reproducing commits himself for an extended period of time to a few individuals who have trusted Christ, the purpose being to aid and guide their growth to maturity and equip them to reproduce themselves in a third spiritual generation.

1. 2 Timothy 2:2

When it comes to disciple-making, unless you're a longtime pro who has been discipled yourself and shown exactly how to disciple others in the same way you've been discipled, this process is very intimidating to almost all Christians. If that's you today, I have two things I'd like to communicate to you now. First, because I know you love Jesus, making disciples is something He is asking you to do. In fact, He commands you to do it. And because I know you love Jesus, you want to do what He's asking you to do. In the famous passage in Matthew, Jesus instructs us to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations."² In an interesting twist in this passage in Matthew 28, Jesus uses very similar language to Paul by saying that as you go make disciples, teach "them to observe all that I have commanded you."³ In other words, these things I've told you about—teach those very things to others you're discipling.

Secondly, remember verse 20: "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." You may not know how to make disciples, but Jesus is with you, and He is promising to help you. In addition to that, I want you to know that I've written a whole step-by-step book on how to make disciples, so if you want to obey Jesus in this area and you don't know how, I'm here to help you step by step. Between Jesus' promise and my written help, you can do it.

Bible Study on this Practice

Read each of these passages carefully, then answer the questions in the Reflection section. As you read each passage, feel free to write down notes about what you're seeing in each passage under the reference.

1. Matthew 28:19

2 Timothy 2:2

Matthew 28:18–20

Titus 2:1–8

2 Timothy 2:15

Reflect What You're Reading

What do these passages teach about the importance of Making Reproducible Disciples of Jesus?

What do these passages reveal about how discipleship is meant to be passed from one person to another?

What responsibility do these passages place on you to invest in others spiritually?

What stands out to you personally as you read these passages?

Rating Scale:**Personal Assessment**

Take the opportunity in this section to do an assessment of how you're doing in relation to making reproducible disciples of Jesus. You'll see a set of questions, together with a rating scale. For each question, write in where you see yourself on the scale and why you're at that rating.

If I don't know how to make disciples, I will commit to learning the process.

I am intentionally investing in the spiritual growth of one or more other believers.

As I intentionally invest in the spiritual growth of one or more other believers, I am also teaching them how to disciple others.

I am faithful to follow through in discipling relationships over time.

I see disciple-making as a normal and ongoing part of my Christian life.

Reflection Questions

As you assess yourself in this practice of a fruitful Christian,

take some time now to reflect on your answers with a look toward growth in this practice.

What patterns do you notice in your assessment?

Where are you growing?

Where might God be inviting you to grow further?

Next Steps for Growth

At One Eight Catalyst, we want you to not only know about these practices, but to also be growing in them. In this section, please take some time to begin to develop regular practices toward growth.

If you don't know how to make disciples, get the book Now You Can Make Disciples and learn the process of making disciples.

Begin by identifying one or two individuals you can intentionally invest in. Look for people who are open, faithful, and willing to grow.

Commit to meeting with them regularly. Consistency is key in discipleship—set aside intentional time to help them grow in their relationship with Christ.

Use the Word of God as your foundation. Walk through Scripture together, helping them understand it and apply it to

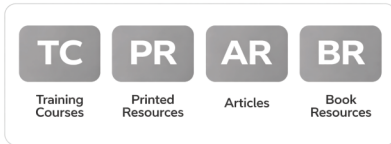
their lives.

Help them develop the same practices you are learning. As you invest in them, guide them in areas like engaging God's Word, prayer, obedience, fellowship, using their gifts, and sharing the Gospel.

Encourage them to begin discipling others. From the beginning, help them see that discipleship is meant to be passed on to others.

Be faithful over time. Discipleship is not a quick process—it requires patience, commitment, and consistency.

Tools You Can Use



Now You Can Make Disciples: A Step-by-Step Guide - BR

Additional Resources:

Spiritual Gift Study



The subject of spiritual gifts is often misunderstood. What are spiritual gifts, and how does God use them within His Church? They are abilities given to individual Christians by the Holy Spirit that enable them to participate in His work and His mission on earth. Each person who has trusted Christ as their Lord and Savior has at least one spiritual gift, and we read in Hebrews 2 that the 'gifts of the Holy Spirit are distributed according to his will.' (Through experience and testing, I believe I have at least three: Faith, Discerning Between Spirits and Apostleship.)

Spiritual gifts are different from natural talents in that a natural talent is a physical ability to do some activities better than others, like musical ability, mechanical aptitude or artistic skills. God can use these too, but a spiritual gift is a spiritual ability. Interestingly, natural talents are often the mode by which spiritual gifts can be used. For example, someone with a mechanical aptitude may have the spiritual gift of evangelism and while helping someone with a car repair, he or she may very naturally use that opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with the person who is being helped.

There are three main passages of Scripture that lay out for us the spiritual gifts that God gives to us as we accept Christ. Hopefully this resource will help you to discover what your spiritual gifts may be.

Below you will find each spiritual gift located under the heading of each of the passages where it is found, so that if

you would want to read about them in the Bible, you'll know where they are found.

1 Corinthians 12:8

Wisdom - to apply knowledge to life in such a way as to make spiritual truths quite relevant and practical in proper decision-making and daily life situations.

Knowledge - to seek to learn as much about the Bible as possible through the gathering of much information and the analysis of that data.

I Corinthians 12:9

Faith - to be firmly persuaded of God's power and promises to accomplish His will and purpose and to display such a confidence in Him and His Word that circumstances and obstacles do not shake that conviction.

Healing - to be used as a means through which God makes people whole either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually.

I Corinthians 12:10

Miraculous Powers – This spiritual gift is different than healing, in that those with this gift can bring about supernatural events that occur outside the bounds of what is natural. Casting out of demons and raising people from the dead may be a couple of biblical examples. (And before you cast this gift aside as inactive in modern times, I have heard of multiple stories of these types of events continuing to happen in our previous ministry in China).

Prophecy - to speak forth the message of God to His people.

Distinguishing Between Spirits (sometimes referred to as **Discernment**) - to clearly distinguish truth from error by judging whether the behavior or teaching is from God, Satan, human error, or human power.

Speaking in tongues - to speak in a language not previously learned through one's own human efforts, for the purpose of allowing unbelievers to hear God's message in their own language or the Church to be edified.

I Corinthians 12:28

Helps - to render support or assistance to others in the body so as to free them for ministry to others. Those with this gift often seem to know just the right thing to do to be of greatest assistance.

Administration- to steer the body toward the accomplishment of God-given goals and directives by planning, organizing, and supervising others.

I Corinthians 14

Speaking in Tongues- See note above from I Corinthians 12. For this to be a biblical spiritual gift, someone must be present who is able to interpret the language.

I Corinthians 14:7

Service - to identify undone tasks in God's work, however menial, and use available resources to get the jobs done.
Teaching - to instruct others in the Bible in a logical,

systematic way so as to communicate pertinent information for true understanding and growth.

I Corinthians 14:8

Encouraging (sometimes referred to as **Exhortation**) – to sense someone's need for encouragement and then come alongside someone with words of comfort, consolation, and counsel to help them be all God wants them to be.

Contributing to the needs of others - to willingly share one's material resources with liberality and cheerfulness, and without thought of being repaid.

Leadership - to stand before people in such a way as to attend to the direction of the church body with such care and diligence so as to motivate others to get involved in the accomplishment of these goals.

Mercy – spiritual sensitivity toward those who are suffering, whether physically, mentally, or emotionally, so as to feel genuine sympathy with their misery, speaking words of compassion and caring for them with deeds of love to help alleviate their distress.

Ephesians 4:11

Apostleship (sometimes referred to as Missionary, although I'm not personally a fan of that designation) – to plant new ministries and churches, go into places where the Gospel is not preached, reach across cultures to establish churches in challenging environments, raise up and develop leaders, call out and lead pastors and shepherds, and much more.

Prophecy - to speak forth the message of God to His people.

Evangelism - to be a gifted messenger of the good news of the Gospel.

Pastor - to be responsible for spiritually caring for, protecting, guiding, and teaching a group of believers entrusted to one's care.

Teacher - to instruct others in the Bible in a logical, systematic way so as to communicate pertinent information for true understanding and growth.

Spiritual growth doesn't happen by accident.

In the New Testament, we see that maturity in the Christian life is developed through consistent, intentional practice. In *The Seven Practices of a Fruitful Christian*, Mike Falkenstine identifies seven key areas Scripture calls every believer to engage in regularly.

These are not simply ideas to understand—they are patterns to be lived out. As they are practiced over time, they become established disciplines that shape how you think, how you live, and how you follow Christ. The goal is not mere activity, but transformation—becoming the kind of person whose life reflects Christ and bears lasting spiritual fruit.

Each practice includes a guided Bible study to ground you in Scripture, along with reflection questions and personal assessments to help you evaluate your growth. You'll also find practical next steps and helpful tools designed to move you from understanding to action.

Clear, practical, and reproducible, this resource will help you grow in your relationship with Christ—and equip you to impact others as you pursue a fruitful Christian life.

Mike Falkenstine is the Founder and President of One Eight Catalyst, a Christian organization dedicated to creating resources and delivering training that equips believers to reach their world for Christ. He has 32 years of experience in Great Commission ministry, including many years serving in China. He is the author of eight books focused on spiritual growth and disciple-making. Mike enjoys reading his Bible and spending time with friends over a cup of coffee. He has three adult children and one Wheaten Terrier.

