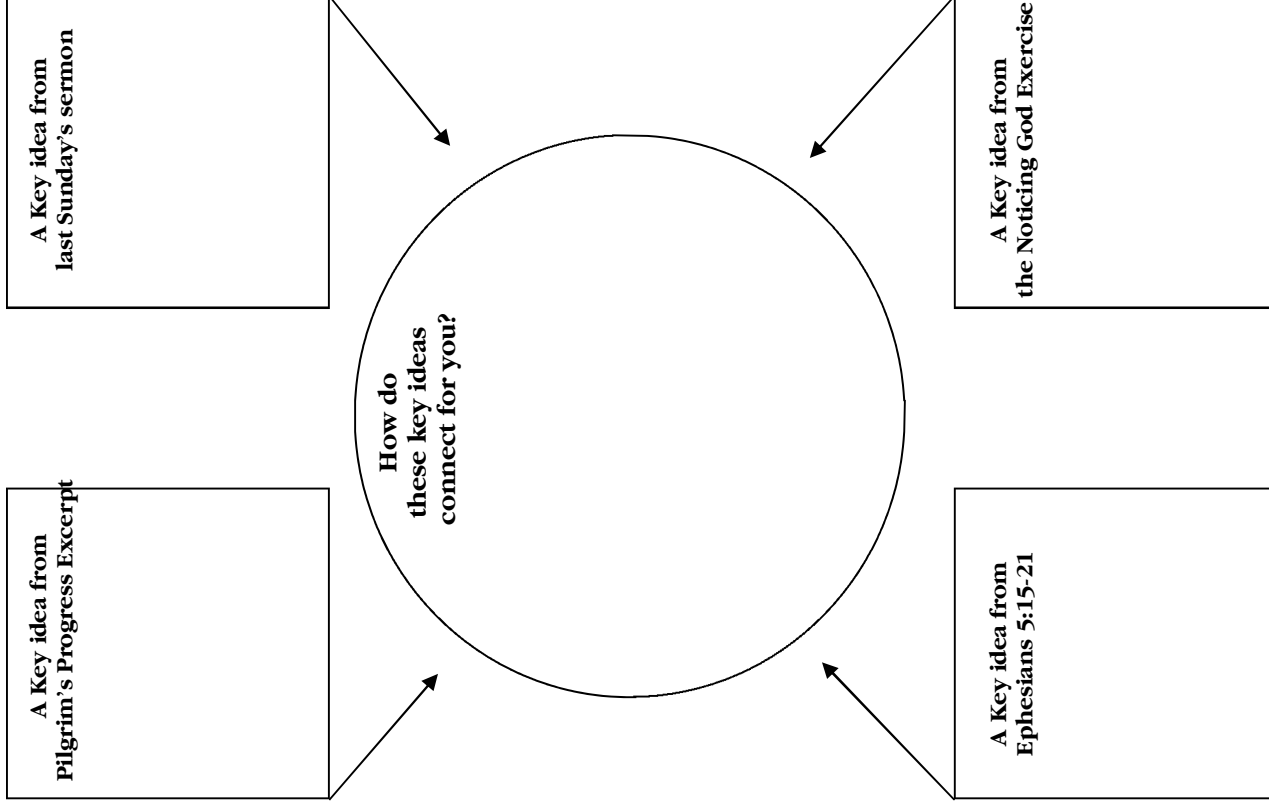


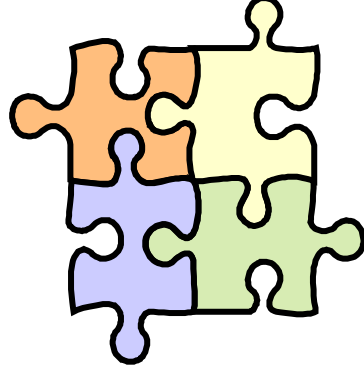
Connections: Putting the Key Ideas To-



The DNA of Spiritual Growth

A NEW CREATION

Part Two: The **Power** for Spiritual Growth



A 6-Week Small Group Study Unpacking These Questions:

- What is spiritual growth?
- How does spiritual growth actually occur?
- What is the point of spiritual growth?
- How can I take responsibility for my part of spiritual growth?

Plan for Part Two

BIG IDEA: When we are rescued by God, we are literally made a new creation, with a brand new existential center. This is one strand of power for growing spiritually. Because we are new, the Holy Spirit can now literally dwell in us, and this becomes a second strand of power for growing spiritually. Finally, God's gift to us of His living Word is accessible as power for our growing spiritually.

- Review the Short Answers (2 minutes)
- Read the selection from *Pilgrim's Progress* (10 minutes)
- Review *Main Sermon Points* from last Sunday (15 minutes)
- Read the *Going Deeper* text (5 minutes)
- Discuss the *Going Deeper* questions (30 minutes)
- Do the short *Responding* exercise (15 minutes)
- Review the *Connections* homework for next week (3 minutes)

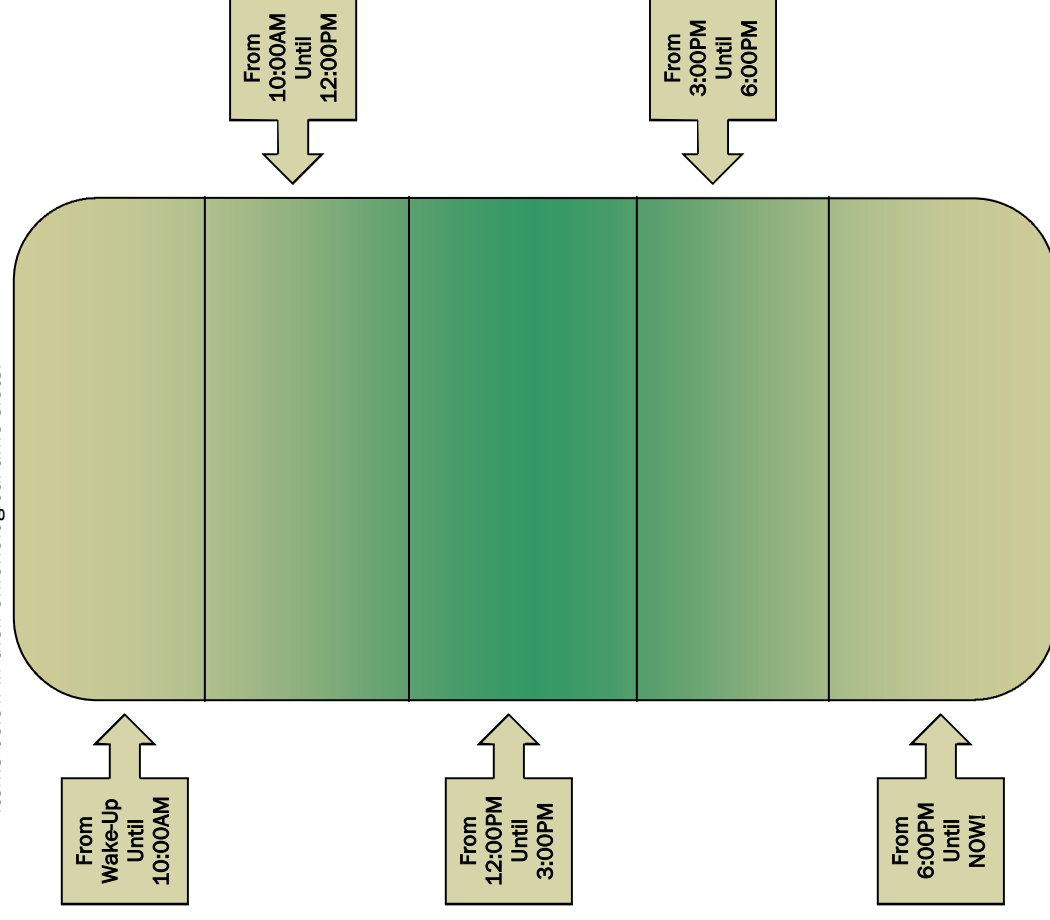
Short Answers to the Key

- **What is spiritual growth? (weeks 1-3)**
A gradual transforming of the whole self into the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29)
- **How does spiritual growth actually occur? (week 4)**
Through a synergy of God's shaping power and cooperating discipline (Phil 2:12,13)
- **What is the point of spiritual growth? (week 5)**
To become fit to partner with God in His Kingdom (Rev 5:10)
- **How can I take responsibility for my part of spiritual growth? (week 6)**

Responding Exercise: Attentiveness

PRACTICING THE ART OF NOTICING GOD

Close your eyes and reflect back on your day. See yourself waking up, and follow yourself mentally through every phase of your day. While you do this, look around for possible signs of God. What things happened, or didn't happen, that could signal God's active intervention in your day? Don't worry about being absolutely sure. Identify those things that "very possibly could have been tangible intrusions of God's grace" into your very ordinary day. Note those items below in their chronological time slots.



Digging Deeper Questions

THE WISE AND THE UNWISE

Read Jesus' parable in Matthew 7:24-27. According to Jesus, what makes a person wise or unwise?

CHECKING IN ON THE CONTEXT OF CHAPTER 5

Read the 14 verses that precede our passage, and determine if this context supports the answer you have just given regarding the wise and the unwise.

MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY

What does it mean to make the best use of time? Keep in mind the nuance of the Greek word "kairos." How well do you do at tuning into the Lord and what He is doing and saying all throughout the day?

THE WILL OF THE LORD

Paul contrasts foolishness with knowing the will of the Lord. What is it about knowing the will of the Lord that guards against foolishness?

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

Can you suggest some principles to one another that have been helpful for you in tuning into the will of the Lord in particular situations?

WINE

Paul contrasts drunkenness with being filled with the Spirit. What does this link suggest about the state of being filled with the Spirit? How are the two states similar? How are they dissimilar?

THE MARKS OF FILLING

Reread verses 18-21 and identify all of the normative marks that should distinguish a person truly filled with the Holy Spirit.

NOTICE, THEN, THREE ACTIONS THAT OPPOSE THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

Verse 15 warns against disobedience. Verse 16 warns against inattentiveness. Verse 17 warns against resistance to his will. These three warnings form a kind of personal checklist where we can look inward and see if we might be hindering the Spirit's desires to more fully fill us.

Pilgrim's Progress: Formalist and Hypocrisy

Christian espied two men come tumbling over the wall on the left hand of the narrow way; and they made up apace to him. The name of the one was Formalist, and the name of the other Hypocrisy.

CHR. Gentlemen, whence came you, and whither do you go? FOR & HYP. We were born in the land of Vain-Glory and are going for praise to Mount Zion.

CHR. Why came you not in at the gate which standeth at the beginning of the way? Know ye not that it is written that "he that cometh not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber?" (John 10:1).

Formalist and Hypocrisy said that to go to the gate for entrance was, by all their countrymen, counted too far about; and that therefore their usual way was to make a short-cut of it, and to climb over the wall as they had done. CHR. But will your practice stand a trial at law?

They told him, that custom, it being of so long standing as above a thousand years, would doubtless now be admitted as a thing legal by an impartial judge; and besides, said they, if we get into the way, what matter is it which way we get in? If we are in, we are in: thou art but in the way, who, as we perceive, came in at the gate; and we are also in the way, that came tumbling over the wall; wherein now is thy condition better than ours?

CHR. I walk by the rule of my Master: you walk by the rule working of your fancies.

To this they made him but little answer; only they bid him look to himself and said that, as to laws and ordinances, they doubted not but that they should as conscientiously do them as he. Therefore, said they, we see not wherein thou differest from us but by the coat that is on thy back, which was, as we trow, given thee by some neighbors, to hide the shame of thy nakedness.

CHR. By laws and ordinances you will not be saved, since you came not in by the door (Gal 2:16). And as for this coat that is on my back, it was given me by the Lord of the place whither I go; and that, as you say, to cover my nakedness with. And I take it as a token of his kindness to me; for I had nothing but rags before. I have, moreover, this mark on my forehead, of which perhaps you have taken no notice, which one of the Lord's most intimate associates fixed there in the day that my burden fell off my shoulders. I will tell you,

Main Sermon Points from Last Sunday

A LITERAL NEW CORE

When we surrender our lives to Jesus and commit to following Him, we are, according to Jesus words in John 3:3, born from above. At the very center of our human self, a new core is created. Paul calls this a “new creation.” This supernaturally-birther core is the seed of the new person we will eventually become. It is directly powered by God’s Kingdom and offers the first streams of power to live life like Jesus. There is a lot of old habits, patterns, values, commitments, instincts clogging up the system of the human self, but the center is fresh and clean and alive: the fulfillment of the ancient promise to Ezekial where God promised the miracle of a new heart (36:26).

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

This new core is called by Paul a temple where the Holy Spirit is invited to dwell. This indwelling of the Holy Spirit is promised by Jesus, and He tells us that with His presence, greater things we will do than even He has done! But there is a catch. We learn from Paul that the Spirit in us is a gentleman, and we can “grteve” or “quench” Him. It is a great tragedy to be given the unimaginable resources of the Holy Spirit, only to ignore His presence and power, or even worse, lock Him up in the proverbial closet of our heart. Thus Paul calls us to be filled with the Spirit.

A WORD PIERCING MARROW AND BONE

Along with the two power sources of a new heart and the indwelling Spirit, God gives us His living and vibrant Word, which never comes back void without accomplishing the purposes for which God sends it forth (Isa 55:11). This Word is so piercingly potent that it is able to discern between that subtle fabric between soul and spirit (Heb 4:11). The Word of God is power-packed, seeing that through it God created all that exists. And this power is packed into a book that we can open up and read and release into our lives: the Bible.

Digging Deeper: Filled With the Spirit

15 Look carefully then how **EPHESIANS** you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, **16** making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. **18** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, **19** addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, **20** giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **21** submitting to one another

NOTES ON THE TEXT

Jesus contrasted the wise and the unwise in His parable about the house on the sand and on the rock (Matt 7:24-27)

“The Greek has two words for time: “kronos,” which refers to chronological time, and “kairos,” which refers to the “right time” or the “ripe time” or “the opportune moment.” The latter is used in this passage.