



GROWING IN DISCIPLESHIP

Following Jesus means stepping into a journey that never ends. We are walking with a God who is living and continually revealing Himself. As we seek Him, we learn new things about His character, experience more of His goodness, and become more like Him. What an amazing journey!

This year, our theme is growing as disciples. In particular, we want to seek growth in these areas:

- Loving and Obeying God
- Loving our Families as our first ministry
- Loving our Community
- Stewarding our skills, time, and money
- Taking care of God's creation, including our own health

For some of us, these are familiar concepts; they are the same as the branches on the discipleship tree. But they are not only for others to grow in but for us as well. Discipleship needs to start with ourselves.

When we look at this list, it may feel like a big task. Sometimes the idea of discipleship can create a sense of pressure. But the truth is the opposite. Real discipleship brings freedom and peace for two reasons.

First, discipleship is about knowing God in a deeper way. We get to discover the God who created joy. We get to be with God who loves us more deeply than we have ever experienced elsewhere. That does not sound burdensome!

Second, discipleship is about imitating and becoming more like Jesus (Romans 8:29). Being led by the Spirit, we choose to walk in obedience to Jesus in our daily life. We exercise our gifts and talents to fulfill His purpose.

So how do we do it? Discipleship starts with being and results in doing. It comes from being close to Jesus and allowing Him to transform us. The more we trust Him and draw near to Him, the more His life flows through us and changes us from the inside out. Jeremiah describes it beautifully:

*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord.
He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream,
and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green,
and is not anxious in the year of drought,
for it does not cease to bear fruit.*

(Jeremiah 17:7-8)

So let's enter this year with expectation of all God will do in us and the resulting fruit that will come from our lives!



Reflect and Apply

JANUARY

Growing in Discipleship

1. What first came to mind when you heard the theme for the year?

2. What positive images, words, or verses come to mind when you think of the word discipleship?

What negative connotations come to mind? How can you bring these to God and align yourself with His idea of discipleship?

3. What excited you about growing in discipleship this year?

Which of the five areas listed above stands out to you as an area you would really like to pursue growth in? Why?

4. Read Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Timothy 4:7-8, and 1 Corinthians 9:24-26. What do these verses teach us about how we should approach spiritual growth?

5. Matthew 11:29-30 and John 10:10. What do these verses teach us about the journey of discipleship?