

The Invitation to Discipleship

# Why Spiritual Health & Growth is Important!

**H**ow do you know if growing spiritually? Most people mistakenly measure their behavior and their emotions. So we are going to take a little Spiritual Growth Survey that asks twelve critical questions that will help



*Isaiah 43:19 Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

you take a closer look at if you're being changed on the inside to become more like Christ.

## Why should we ask questions about our Spirituality?

Disciples of Jesus are continually drawing closer to God and becoming more like Jesus. More and more they're loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and they're loving their neighbor as themselves — even in difficult situations. Christlikeness is about a steady, reliable character! It is an apprenticeship of devotion that looks like the pursuit of a man or woman after God's heart. It is knowing his presence, becoming like Christ, and doing what Jesus did. We call it Active Christianity.

Now, is being transformed more into the image of Christ an easy, upward path?. In the best case, sometimes we go forward and sometimes we slip backwards, In most cases it is a path of trial and error, listening, developing, and even failing from time to time but, the trend over time is becoming more like Jesus. This is why we are told in Scripture...

### **2 Corinthians 13:5 ESV**

***Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!***

Will you pass the test or flunk out? The KJV calls folks without the aptitude to discern their personal spirituality reprobates!

## Examining Ourselves!

o, I'm gonna throw out some questions that will challenge our spiritual acuity and savvy as Christ followers. Answer each question by comparing yourself today with your spiritual growth and health from about one year ago. To score yourselves, count how many yes answers you have

out of the twelve questions. Each yes indicates that in that area you are growing spiritually.

- Do you hunger for more of God in your life, longing to know Him more intimately? (The closer you are to the Lord the closer you want to be.) Or, do you wait for next Sunday to interact?
- Can you name people whom you are increasingly dependent on as “Christ’s Followers” for God’s care and guidance? (You need one such relationship to survive and two or three to thrive.)
- Are you more aware of your sins and shortcomings and saddened by how they hurt God, others, and yourself? (In other words when we understand our own depravity does it produce healthy Godly sorrow condemnation, emptiness, and isolation.)
- Are you more gracious in response to your struggles and struggles of others’ too? (Receiving God’s forgiveness and favor and sharing it with others.)
- Are you more welcoming of people’s feedback on ways you can improve your personal life or ministry? (Viewing it as an opportunity to learn and grow rather than being defensive, condemning yourself, or judging the person who challenged you.)
- Are you more controlled by God instead of yourself or others? (For instance, obeying God’s Word, trusting Him with money and time, focusing on what He thinks over what others think, and relying on what He provides rather than food, sex, drugs, work, or unhealthy relationships.)
- (Take a deep breath before you consider this one!) Does dogma, pride, or pedigree, wounds, scars, or unforgiveness, limit your ability to be stretched or changed when the Lord is doing something new or different than you are used to?
- Are you more aware of God’s presence? (Spontaneously thanking Him for blessings, praising His goodness, listening for His voice, or experiencing Him ministering through you.)

- Do you know what God smells like and how you smell to Him? Of the Spiritual Five Senses... the least experienced is Smell! (Taste, See, Hear, Touch, Smell)

**T**aste - Psalm 34:8 ESV *Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!*

**S**ee - John 14:9 ESV *Jesus said to him, Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?*

**H**ear - Deuteronomy 6:4 ESV *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*

**T**ouch - Luke 6:19 ESV *And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.*

**S**mell - Ephesians 5:2 ESV *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

*2 Corinthians 2:15 ESV For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,*

*2 Corinthians 2:14 ESV But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.*

Simply put... Any time you associate something you smell with something you know God did is how He smells! Examples: Chapparel in the Forest after a fall rain, The scent of pine and cedar on a warm summer day, The Zumwalt Prairie grass as the wind blows up the canyon walls of the Imnaha. A Hay Barn on a Frosty Spring Morning. A Fall evening around a fire ring while making Smores. A 2-stroke Dirt-bike, or Top Fuel Dragster. He is in all of it!

- Is the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) more evident in how you treat yourself and others?

- Do you have a greater desire to practice spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible reading, study, community worship, silence, or fasting? (Rather than doing them out of duty or not doing them at all.)
- Are you living with a greater sense of divine mission, passionately using your gifts to serve God? (In your work, ministry, relationships, or special projects.)
- Are you better able to endure hardships and difficulties with a positive attitude, appreciating that you're part of God's Kingdom, and trusting in the Lord to help you to learn and grow through them? (Rather than developing a negative attitude, blaming God or others, or seeking only to "fix" the situation.)
- Do you have more hope and excitement about going to heaven to be with Jesus so that you can worship and serve Him more fully? (Rather than dreading death or wanting to hold onto life on earth.)

Out of the 14 questions... How many did you answer "Yes" to?

It should be apparent by now that we all have room for the development of our Spiritual healing and growth! Are You Growing Spiritually or is your Apprenticeship Passive?

Here is a light-hearted example of Passive Christianity! (Because we all have a tendency to roll this way!)

## Jake, The Rancher

Jake, the rancher, went one day to fix a distant fence. The wind was cold and gusty and the clouds rolled gray and dense. As he pounded the last staples in and gathered tools to go, The temperature had fallen and the snow began to blow.

When he finally reached his pickup, he felt a heavy heart, from the sound of that ignition, he knew it wouldn't start. So Jake did what most of us do, if we'd have been there... He humbly bowed his balding head and sent aloft a prayer.

As he turned the key for the last time, he knew he'd lost his luck, They found him

three days later, frozen stiff in that old truck. Now Jake had been around in life and done his share of roamin' But when he saw Heaven, he was shocked -- it look just like Wyomin'.

Oh, there were some differences of course, but just some minor things, One place had simply disappeared -- the town they called Rock Springs. The BLM had been shut down, and there was no grazin' fees, and the wind in Rawlins and Cheyenne was now a gentle breeze.

The Park and Forest Service folks -- they didn't fare so well, They'd all been sent to fight some fire in a wilderness called Hell. Though Heaven was a real nice place, Jake had a wondering mind, So he saddled up and lit a shuck, not know'n what he'd find.

Then one day up in Cody, on a cold fall afternoon, He saw St. Peter coming, and he knew he'd be there soon. Of all the saints in Heaven, his favorite was St. Peter, Now, this line, it ain't needed but it helps with a little rhyme and meter.

So they set and talked a minute or two, or maybe it was three, Nobody was keepin' score -- in Heaven time is free. "I've always heard," Jake said to Pete, "that God will answer prayers, But one time I asked for help and well, He just plain wasn't there.

Does God answer prayers of some, and ignores the prayers of others? That don't seem exactly square -- I know all men are brothers. Or does he randomly reply, without good rhyme or reason? Maybe, it's the time of day, the weather or the season.

Now I ain't trying to act smart, it's just the way I feel, And I was wonderin', could you tell -- what the heck's the deal? Peter listened very patiently and when Jake was done, There were smiles of recognition, and he said, "So, you're the one!

That day your truck, it wouldn't start, and you sent your prayer a-flying, You gave us all a real bad time, with hundreds of us a trying. A thousand angels rushed to check the status of your file, But you know, Jake, we hadn't heard from you in quite a while

And though all prayers are answered, and God ain't got no quota, He didn't recognize your voice, and started a truck in North Dakota.

Here in lies the contrast between Active or Passive Christianity — Do you practice the The Shema Way of living or The Wing and a Prayer way of living! (Where you access God in the pinch for spiritual health, growth and engagement.)

## Here is the real Question!

Are you ready to examine you spirituality and become a powerfully engaged follower on the Path of Jesus? Here is your invitation.

This is what I call the start of a Soul Renovation Project. Will you come along?