# FIVE MARKS

SPIRITUAL GROWTH GUIDE



# THE BEST INDICATOR OF OUR MENTAL WELL-BEING IS THE STATE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Psalm 139:23-24

We've learned how to keep our bodies healthier from things such as routine physical checkups. However, we tend to ignore our mental and spiritual health.

But, what are some vital signs of a healthy, growing relationship? Jesus said the greatest commandment is:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and the second greatest is to, "love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 22:37-39

He also gave us the commission:

"Go make disciples of all nations...,"

Matthew 28:19-20

which means He wanted us to reach the world with the gospel.

#### **SO THE QUESTION IS:**

- Are we growing in our love for God? How about our love for other people, those close to home and those far away?
- Is the gospel transforming our lives so we can help transform others with the knowledge and understanding of the saving grace only He can provide?

#### WE HAVE IDENTIFIED WHAT WE CALL

# THE FIVE MARKS

#### OR PURSUITS OF A GROWING DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST:

# 1. LIVE OBEDIENTLY

know God, know His word, remain in Him.

#### 2. CONNECT INTENTIONALLY

with others in community.

# 3. SERVE SELFLESSLY

by using our gifts, talents and resources.

# 4. GIVE GENEROUSLY

to God who gave us everything.

# 5. SHARE WILLINGLY

about the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

### THE PURPOSE

This Spiritual Growth Guide is not a tool to see how you measure up against other people, and it isn't a tool to see how close you are to perfection. We all know we'll never be perfect this side of heaven, so there's no need to panic!

#### This guide will help you evaluate your present spiritual health by using the Five Marks.

It will also give you direction for developing a plan to grow in one or more of these areas over the coming months or year. The action steps themselves don't make you spiritual. However, they can suggest practical ways to step out in faith, which by the very nature of putting your faith in Christ will help grow your relationship with Him.

# **HOW TO USE THIS AS A GUIDE**

#### Take the Spiritual Health Assessment.

As you take the Assessment, remember this isn't a test of how "perfect" you are.

This will simply help you identify the areas in which you are strong and the areas where you are weaker and in need of some support. And just like your physical health, second opinions are a great tool to counter and to balance your own views of yourself.

Consider asking a friend or spouse to fill it out for you too.

Once you've finished, proceed to the "What Now?" instructions that follow it.

# SPIRITUAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT

TIP: Take a photo of this page and email/text it to a friend to fill out for you.	Sha	are Will	ingly T	otal	
I regularly pray for those who don't know Christ	1	2	3	4	5
I look for opportunities to build relationships with those who don't know Jesus	1	2	3	4	5
I feel personal responsibility to share my faith with those who don't know Jesus	1	2	3	4	5
I find that my relationship with Jesus comes up frequently in my conversations with those who don't know Him	1	2	3	4	5
I am confident in my ability to share my faith	1	2	3	4	5
Share Willingly about the hope we have in Jesus Christ I am open to going anywhere God calls me, in whatever capacity to share my faith	1	2	3	4	5
	Give	Gener	ously T	otal	
I handle money in a way that frees me from financial bondage	1	2	3	4	5
I take the initiative and seek out ways to be generous to others in need	1	2	3	4	5
I regularly give a portion of my income to support the work of my church	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoy meeting the needs of others without expecting anything in return	1	2	3	4	5
I regularly use my time and resources to care for the needs of others	1	2	3	4	5
A review of how I use my money, time and resources shows I give back generously to God and others	1	2	3	4	5
Give Generously to God who gave us everything					
	Ser	ve Selfl	essly T	otal	
I often find ways to use my God-given gifts and abilities to serve my neighbors or my community	1	2	3	4	5
I often reflect on how my life can have an impact for the Kingdom of God	1	2	3	4	5
I am currently serving God with the gifts and passions He has given me	1	2	3	4	5
I use my time to serve God	1	2	3	4	5
I understand how my painful experiences are opportunities to minister to others  Those closest to me would say my life is a reflection of giving more than receiving	1 1	2	3 3	4	5 5
Serve Selflessly by using our gifts, talents and resources	1	2	7	A	F
Co	nnect I	Intentio	nally T	otal	
There is nothing in the way I talk or act concerning others that I would not be willing to share with them in person	1	2	3	4	5
There are no unresolved tensions or conflicts in my relationships	1	2	3	4	5
I gather regularly with a small group of Christians for fellowship and spiritual encouragement	1	2	3	4	5
I have an easy time receiving advice, encouragement and correction from others	1	2	3	4	5
I have a deep and meaningful connection with others in the church	1 1	2	3 3	4	5 5
Connect Intentionally with others in community I am open and honest about who I am	1	2	7	4	E
	Live	Obedi	ently T	otal	
I find I am making better choices to do what is right when I am tempted to do wrong	1	2	3	4	5
I can praise God during difficult times and see them as opportunities to grow	1	2	3	4	5
I connect regularly with God through prayer and invite Him into my daily activities	1	2	3	4	5
I read God's Word daily and it has changed how I view and interact with the world  I am quick to confess anything in my life that does not look like Christ	1	2	3	4	5
I trust God's way with every aspect of my life (relationships, resources and life choices)	1 1	2	3 3	4	5 5
Live Obediently (know God, know His word, remain in Him)			_		_
Live Obediently (know God, know His word, remain in Him)					

TIP: Take a photo of this page and email/text it to a friend to fill out for you.

See next page for instructions.

# WHAT NOW?

# You did the Assessment! Now you are ready to take a next step toward a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Here's how...

#### 1. Identify One of the Five Marks You Want to Strengthen.

Based on your Spiritual Health Assessment, we suggest you work on either the Mark with the lowest score or one the Holy Spirit may be nudging you to consider. Once you've chosen a Mark, locate the corresponding section in this Spiritual Growth Planner below.

#### 2. Choose a Walk, Jog or Run Step in the Mark You Chose.

In the corresponding Mark section, choose one next step on which to focus.

You will find a beginning step (walk), an intermediate step (jog), and a more advanced step (run) for each of the 30 questions found in the Spiritual Growth Guide. Pick the step you want to take, and always feel free to customize a step.

#### Pace yourself! It might be just one step for now. Often, less is more.

You can always do another down the road. While you may need to be challenged, you also need to be realistic in your expectations. Otherwise, you might become discouraged and give up. So, consider starting off with a walk step—a target you can easily hit in the next thirty days. Then, you can move on to a jog step—a more challenging goal, and so on. Again, feel free to customize a next step to fit your situation or need.

#### 3. Find a Spiritual Partner.

Make it a point to pair up with a spiritual partner who can help you follow through on the growth steps you have chosen to take. You can help each other turn good intentions into reality.

A spiritual partner is an individual of the same gender (or spouse) who is committed to helping you deal with all of life's challenges and triumphs.

This person should be a good friend who encourages you, helps with accountability when needed and actively supports you as you take spiritual risks and face your unique obstacles. This will be a give and take/iron sharpening iron relationship so be open, committed and trustworthy to each other. Good places to look for this kind friend are from people in your small group or ministry team members.

# LIVE OBEDIENTLY

Using the chart below, choose a step you would like to take. Feel free to customize a step to fit your situation or need. Remember, just choose one step, not one from each section. For further reading material, see the Resources at the end of this Growth Guide.

ASSESSMENT	WALK	JOG	RUN
I trust God's way with every aspect of my life (relationships, resources, and life choices).	Identify one area of your life you are holding back from God. Share your challenge with a friend. How can you work on this thing to surrender it to God?	Set up a plan for giving up one thing you have held back from God. You may need to ask a friend or spouse to hold you accountable to do this.	Fast (voluntary go without) from the things you have trouble surrendering to God. The Suggestions section at the end lists several helpful tips for fasting.
I read God's Word daily, and it has changed how I view and interact with the world.	Begin reading the Bible five minutes a day every day. Use a resource like The Next 30 Days to get started. Get a free copy at Next Steps or online (see Suggestions section).	Set aside time to study God's Word on a daily basis. Pray and ask God for insight into His Word and how it can apply to your daily life. Try journaling your thoughts, which is further explained in the Appendix.	Memorize Scripture. Choose some scriptures from your daily reading to memorize. Make it a priority to hide God's Word in your heart.
I am quick to confess anything in my life that does not look like Christ.	Ask God to show you any unconfessed sin in your life. Confess each to God. Then, read and believe the promise of 1 John 1:9.	Join a small group where you can regularly share your struggles and celebrate your growth.	Find a spiritual partner of the same gender and establish a relationship of accountability. Evaluate your character based on <i>Galatians 5:22-23.</i>
I connect regularly with God through prayer and invite Him into my daily activities.	As you pray, include ACTS: Acknowledge God's goodness, Confess your sin and need for Him, Thanksgiving, Share needs and make requests for yourself and others.	Establish a regular quiet time with God. Tip: Pick a consistent time, place and practice to make this spiritual discipline effective.	Create a prayer journal of people in your personal life. Pray for them one or more times a week. Focus on those hard to love: family, neighbors, people who don't know Jesus. Note any answers.
I can praise God during difficult times and see them as opportunities to grow.	Memorize <i>Philippians 4:6-7</i> . Share what you are learning with a friend or mentor.	Journal about your circumstances to see how God is working in and through them. Reflect on <i>Romans 8:28</i> . Spend some time reminding yourself of God's work by re-reading what you have written.	Minister to others by taking the pain you have experienced in your life, and join ministries at church specifically focusing on meeting the needs of those who are struggling where you have struggled (2 Corinthians 1:4).
I find I am making better choices to do what is right when I am tempted to do wrong.	Identify the areas of your life where you struggle with temptation. Confess these to God, and commit to moving away from them.	Identify the lie leading to the sin that tempts you. Replace that lie with God's Truth.	Find a spiritual partner of the same gender to whom you can regularly confess your sin (James 5:16).

# **CONNECT INTENTIONALLY**

ASSESSMENT	WALK	JOG	RUN
I am open and honest with others about who I am.	Have a friend or spouse complete a copy of the Assessment questions. Discuss openly the differences between how your friend/spouse views you and how you view yourself.	Honestly share your faults and struggles with someone who will commit to praying for you on a regular basis.	Share your story with your small group about how God helped you in your struggles.
I have a deep and meaningful connection with others in the church.	Stop by Next Steps at your Hope campus after worship to learn ways to connect.	Take the Discovery Class at Hope, and find out how to get involved (see Resources).	Invite others to your small group, or invite them to serve with you in a ministry.
I have an easy time receiving advice, encouragement, and correction from others.	Establish a friendship and share something of your life with that person.	Find a spiritual mentor and meet with him or her about a specific issue in which you would like to grow.	Be a spiritual mentor to someone else or to a mentoring group.
I gather regularly with a small group of Christians for fellowship and spiritual encouragement.	Attend a small group weekly.	Invite others to your small group.	Lead a small group or mentoring group.
There are no unresolved tensions or conflicts in my relationships.	Pray for someone with whom you have a conflict. Make this a regular prayer that will move you towards reconciling the relationship.	Make it a point to seek forgiveness or give forgiveness to someone with whom you have a conflict (Matt. 5:23-24).	Go out of your way to speak and act kindly to someone with whom you formerly had conflict (Romans 12:14-21).
There is nothing in the way I talk or act concerning others that I would not be willing to share with them in person.	Make a firm commitment to not participate in gossip or backstabbing (Proverbs 11:13; 16:28).	Make it a point to share directly with a person instead of talking about that person behind his or her back (Matt. 18:15).	Challenge those who gossip to speak directly to the person first. Remember, don't be self- righteousness. Rather, speak in kindness.

# **GIVE GENEROUSLY**

ASSESSMENT	WALK	JOG	RUN
A review of how I use my money, time, and resources shows I give back generously to God and others.	Give to the church or someone in need.	Find things around your home that are in good/great condition that you could sell or give to bless others. Anything you haven't used in a year is fair game!	Deliberately change your lifestyle so you can give more generously. Say no to wants so you can be generous and set new priorities.
I regularly use my time and resources to care for the needs of others.	Pray for a need that someone has. When you see him or her, make it a point to ask about it, and pray for that person on the spot.	Find someone who has a need in your small group or at church; and then, help meet that need.	Rally your small group to care for someone who has a need. Draw on the group, your Area Pastor or Campus Pastor for someone to help.
I enjoy meeting the needs of others without expecting anything in return.	Take a Bumper Crop bag this month and fill it with groceries (or similar one- time serve).	Commit to doing Bumper Crop or Backpack Buddies each month this year in your community. Find information at gethope.net/localhope. Or, ask your campus staff team about other local needs.	Encourage your group or others to serve with you to meet needs in the Triangle for Jesus.
I regularly give a portion of my income to support the work of my church.	Begin percentage priority giving. Pick a percentage to start with, and let it grow over time as your faith grows.	Give the first 10% of your income to your church on a regular basis.	Give sacrificially from your abundance above the first 10%.
I take the initiative to seek out ways to be generous to others in need.	Read The Treasure Principle by Randy Alcorn.	Volunteer with your church campus team at least once in the next two months.	Organize your small group's next service project.
I handle money in a way that frees me from financial bondage.	Track your expenses (every dollar!) this week, and see where it goes by category. If you are married, have an honest talk with your spouse, and assess your habits and the condition of your finances.	Take a course such as Financial Peace or the online Financial Foundations, which is free from Hope to get you started getting out of debt and getting more margin in your finances. gethope.net/classes	Get Financial Coaching for eight weeks to get personal help with budget, savings, and debt elimination. gethope.net/classes

# **SERVE SELFLESSLY**

ASSESSMENT	WALK	JOG	RUN
I understand how my painful experiences are opportunities to minister to others.	Write out how Christ has healed or used a painful experience in your life for God's glory.	Share with a friend or your small group how Christ has healed or used this painful experience for God's glory.	Share this painful experience with your pastor to see if you can use it to help others in your church.
Those closest to me would say my life is a reflection of giving more than receiving.	Go out of your way to meet a practical need for someone in your neighborhood, work or small group this week.	Take on a short-term volunteer project at church or in the community. See gethope. net/localhope.	Become a team member in a Hope ministry, host/ lead a small group or serve regularly in your community as a volunteer.
I use my time to serve God.	See your family, job/ school as a ministry. Pray daily for God to use you!	Serve in a once-a-month ministry at church such as First Impressions or Bumper Crop (stop by Next Steps after worship).	Evaluate and rearrange your priorities (and lifestyle if you need to) so you can invest more time serving selflessly (Matt. 6:33).
I am currently serving God with the gifts and passions he has given me.	Take time to browse gethope.net/serve and note areas of potential interest. Come up with one or two top picks to pray about this week.	Commit to serve in a ministry and go to NextSteps after worship. Or, fill out the "I'll try it" on one of the opportunities at gethope. net/serve.	Enlist others to your ministry team. Help train others; or perhaps, lead a ministry team or small group.
I often reflect on how my life can have an impact for the Kingdom of God.	List five ways your life can impact the Kingdom. Seek a Hope staff member if you need help.	Read <i>What's So Spiritual</i> <i>About Your Gifts</i> ? by Henry Blackaby.	Commit to serve within a ministry for one year, and give it your all!
I often find ways to use my God-given gifts and abilities to serve my neighbors or my community.	Do an online search for volunteer opportunities in your community, or ask on Next Door about needs. Identify one or more to check out. Be Hope where you are!	Volunteer in your community via Local Hope (gethope.net/localhope), or ask your campus staff team about other local needs.	Enlist others or your small group to join you in your local community ministry, or start a ministry if God leads.

# **SHARE WILLINGLY**

ASSESSMENT	WALK	JOG	RUN
I feel personal responsibility to share my faith with those who don't know Christ as their Savior.	Read <i>The Art of</i> <i>Neighboring</i> by Jay Pathek & Dave Runyon.	Lead or co-lead your small group through a study focused on evangelism such as Go Fish by Andy Stanley.	Lead a small group for seekers such as Explore God (see exploregod.com for easy to use, free online group study resources & training how to do it).
I look for opportunities to build relationships with people who don't know Christ.	Take the initiative to strike up conversations with your neighbors. Go on walks and be neighborly.	Invite a neighbor(s) over for dinner or to watch a game.	Host a block party, "movie night" or other neighborhood get together. Partner with neighbors who want to help.
I regularly pray for those who don't know Christ.	Write the names of several people who don't know Christ (where you live, work, and play), and pray daily for their salvation.	Take regular prayer walks. Silently pray for neighbors, for salvation and other needs they have. Get to know people!	Encourage your small group for names of unsaved friends (see the Walk step), and hold each other accountable to share your faith with them.
I am confident in my ability to share my faith.	Write out your testimony and share it with a friend. Go to anchoredstudy.com Unit 6 for how to do this.	Memorize the Romans Road verses (see Suggestions).	Lead or co-lead your small group through a study focused on evangelism (see Resources).
My heart is full of passion to share the good news of the gospel with those who have never heard it.	Do a prayer walk in your neighborhood this week Silently pray for neighbors and get to know people.	Volunteer for a local cross cultural mission project. Visit gethope.net/localhope.	Talk to your small group or ministry team about going as a Global Hope team. Or, if you've led a team, become a GH Ambassador.
I find that my relationship with Jesus comes up frequently in my conversations with those who don't know him.	Ask co-workers, classmates or others how their weekend was. If they ask about yours, share about church.	Invite friends who express interest in Christ to church or other activities where they will hear the gospel.	Share your story and the gospel with someone who does not know Christ as his or her Savior.
I am open to going anywhere God calls me, in whatever capacity, to share my faith.	Visit gethope.net/global- hope. Look over and pray about upcoming trips.	Go on a Global Hope mission team.	Serve as a Global Hope team leader. (You must first have gone on a GH team.)

# RESOURCES

#### **Suggestions:**

1. **Journals** - Journaling can be as simple or as complicated as you want to make it. Some people prefer an organized method to follow, but the point is always to put down in writing your thoughts and feelings about your life, Scripture you're studying, or your growing understanding of God. As humans, we tend to forget our struggles of the past mainly because we are dealing with the problems in the present. This is where journaling can be so helpful.

By looking back in your writing, you can see God's faithfulness and how He helped you through a particular season in your life. It is an account of your journey walking with God.

2. **Fasting** - The purpose of a traditional fast is to abstain from food for a particular period of time to better focus on your relationship and dependence on God. This is a powerful tool for some Christians if used in the right way.

By focusing on God and depending on Him to sustain you, it gives you a greater understanding about the role God should have in your life. He should be first!

There is also a more nontraditional way to fast that can be incredibly effective. You can fast from television, entertainment, social media or anything that distracts you from your relationship with God. To prepare for a fast, consider the following:

#### What is the purpose of your fast?

- · Start with something small like eliminating one meal or one evening of no television.
- During that time, you should pray, read the Bible, worship, etc.
- Remember, you should focus on God and your relationship with Him.
- 3. **Global Mission Trip** Choose to go on a short-term mission trip with Global Hope. Through these missions trips you get a better understanding of other people's need for Jesus and a better understanding of the heart of God. Check out the short-term missions opportunities that are available at **gethope.net/global-hope**.
- 4. **The Romans Road** What if you need to share the key passages of the Bible that explain the gospel? One easy way that stays entirely within the book of Romans is the so-called Romans Road verses:
  - Romans 3:23 "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
  - Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
  - Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
  - Romans 10:9-10 "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."
  - Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

You can fill in explanations or your own story between the verses. If you memorize these verses, you can share the good news of Jesus to anyone, anywhere!

#### LIVE OBEDIENTLY - RESOURCES

	WALK	JOG	RUN
BOOKS	Before Amen Max Lucado (a good "walk" step book on prayer) The Purpose Driven Life Rick Warren	Victory Over the Darkness Neil Anderson  The Celebration of Discipline Richard Foster  Why Trust the Bible? Greg Gilbert (short, entry level apologetics resource, great for college)	Discipleship Essentials Greg Ogden (a resource for making disciples)  Christian Beliefs Wayne Grudem (get grounded in biblical doctrines)
SMALL GROUP STUDIES	Anchored - free online, six weeks. Anchoredstudy.com	The Forgotten God Francis Chan (RightNow. org*)  The Circle Maker Mark Batterson (RightNow.org*)	Experiencing God (12 sessions, member study/ discussion guide version) Henry Blackaby

<sup>\*</sup>RightNow Media - This is a library of more than 14,000 streaming Bible studies for individuals and small groups. Hope subscribes so that you can get it free at **gethope.net/rightnow-media**. Just create your free account, and you can total access. Once on RightNow, search and check out DA Carson's The Disciplines of Abiding.

# **CONNECT INTENTIONALLY - RESOURCES**

	WALK	JOG	RUN
BOOKS	Love Does Bob Goff	Boundaries Henry Cloud Building Up One Another Gene Getz	<i>Mentor Like Jesus</i> Regi Campbell
SMALL GROUP STUDIES	Life Rules Andy Stanley (6 weeks, short video segments + questions, RightNow.org)	Building Church Community (Henry Cloud - 8 very short video segments, do 2-3 per meeting to discuss. Just give everyone a way to take notes, then ask "What stood out most to you?" and go from there. Excellent! RightNow.org)	The One Anothers (more intensive, 6 part video by Tony Evans, free on <u>RightNow.org</u> )

# **GIVE GENEROUSLY - RESOURCES**

	WALK	JOG	RUN
BOOKS	The Treasure Principle Randy Alcorn	Financial Peace Dave Ramsey  The Total Money Makeover Dave Ramsey  Managing God's Money Randy Alcorn  When Work and Family Collide Andy Stanley	Money, Possessions and Eternity Randy Alcorn
SMALL GROUP STUDIES	Life, Money, Legacy Dave Ramsey (3 sessions, great starting point, free on RightNow. org)	Breathing Room Andy Stanley (4 sessions, free on RightNow.org)	Balanced Andy Stanley (6 sessions free on <u>RightNow.org</u> )
CLASSES	Financial Foundations (free online at gethope.net/financial- foundations-2)	Financial Peace University (gethope.net/fpu) Financial Coaching (8 weeks, gethope.net/ financialcoaching)	

# **SERVE SELFLESSLY - RESOURCES**

	WALK	JOG	RUN
BOOKS	Crazy Love Francis Chan  What's So Spiritual About Your Gifts Henry & Mel Blackaby	Improving Your Serve Chuck Swindoll	Simply Strategic Volunteers Tony Morgan (enlisting, leading, building volunteers) When Helping Hurts Steve Corbett, Brian Fikkert et al. (social action, missions)  Spiritual Leadership: Updated Oswald Sanders (principles of excellence for all believers, servant leader)
SMALL GROUP STUDIES	Crazy Love Francis Chan 10 short videos, but can be done in 6 weeks, RightNow.org. Get a copy of the Crazy Love "workbook" on Amazon for group discussion questions.). ncourage everyone to get the book, Crazy Love, and read ahead.	Chazown (life vision) Craig Groeschel (5 week group study RightNow.org)	Developing a Servant's Heart Charles Stanley 6-10 weeks

# **SHARE WILLINGLY - RESOURCES**

	WALK	JOG	RUN
BOOKS	What On Earth Am I Here For? (based on Purpose Driven Life) Rick Warren How Good is Good Enough? Andy Stanley	The Art of Neighboring Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon	Questioning Evangelism Randy Newman
SMALL GROUP STUDIES	Go Fish (6 week video curriculum by Andy Stanley free on RightNow.org)  Anchored (Hope Community Church, especially units 1 and 6, anchoredstudy. com)	The Gospel at Work (6 session small group study, free, video driven, RightNow.org)	Explore God (6 week study for seekers, online, free, easy to lead. Visit <u>exploregod.com</u> )