

## PLANT Lesson 6: Habits for Spiritual Growth



### Q: God wants to connect with you. What is the best way for you to enjoy God's presence? Read Psalm 42:1-2. Do you relate to what the psalmist is saying?

Many of us believe that we are too busy to have time for God. We desire to draw near to Him but it just seems impractical and inconvenient. God is worthy of our time and if we want to abide in His Spirit then we will need to regularly connect with Him and allow Him to speak to us. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled!

### Q: How much of the Bible would you say that you have read? Why do you think it might be important to read the entire Bible?

Some people are content to read a couple of verses to encourage their spirit from time to time. The Bible is God's Word to us about His plan for our lives and for His creation. It is a love letter to us that reveals the great lengths He has gone to in order to bring us into His presence. The God of the universe wants to speak to us as we read His Word! Why wouldn't we want to consume ourselves with the words and the message in it. Not just one part of it is important, either. It's all important. It's all relevant. It all matters! And we shouldn't trust anyone else to spoon-feed us the words that God wants to speak to us Himself.

### Q: Read Psalm 145:3-7. When you hear the word meditation, what images come to mind?

Meditation is not a word that we often discuss in the context of Christianity, but we in recent times we have heard more about the eastern practices of meditation which are very different and not biblical. Eastern religion calls us to empty our minds and our spirits to achieve a spiritual elevation. We picture people in the lotus position and think of chanting a mantra... The Bible teaches us to fill our hearts with and minds with what is important to God. We meditate upon His Word, His will and His plan. Read Psalm 19:7-14 for a more biblical approach to meditation.

### Q: (From 1 Thessalonians 5:17) How can we have a habit of praying without ceasing? Do you know of anyone who models this well? What do they do to keep prayer a high priority throughout the day?

Having a habit of praying regularly isn't just about praying at the same time every day (though that can be a great practice!). We can pray throughout the day any time we face a challenge or experience a victory, to communicate with God what is on our hearts. Prayer can be the first thing we do in the morning or the last thing we do at night, but God also wants us to be in tune with Him throughout the day as well.

### Q: What is the purpose of prayer? What is the goal of prayer?

If God already knows what we need, He already has a plan, and He already knows the beginning from the end, then why should we need to pray? Well, prayer is largely for our benefit, and it is one of the ways that we grow our relationship to God. We bless His heart when we reach out to Him! He wants us to come to Him with our needs. The goal of prayer is to unite our hearts with the will of God and to find strength to carry out His plans for our lives.

**Q: How can we thank God for giving us everything we have? What do you think He wants us to do in return for these blessings?** This is not how we generally think about what we have been given or worked hard to earn. In reality, everything we have comes from Him. Everything really belongs to Him. It's not about how much we give to God, it's about how much we hold back. When we give back to Him (what already belongs to Him), we are honoring God and joining in His work in this world. Our time, our financial resources, our relationships ALL are blessings (and challenges) that God can use to mold us into the people He wants us to be for the purposes that He has in mind.

**Q: Have you ever kept a journal? If so, what are some of the benefits that you've found to be helpful with keeping a record of your thoughts and prayers?** With a journal you can look back to be reminded of God's goodness and faithfulness and His answers to your prayers. A journal can also help you to put your thoughts and emotions into words so that you can better grasp what is going on around you and how it is affecting you. It is also a way to keep you connected mentally and spiritually with what God is doing in your life. David and other authors wrote psalms in a similar way. It may not be for everyone, but you might find it to be just what you need to bring structure to your spiritual growth!

**Q: Why do you think that Christians have gotten out of the habit of fasting?** We like food! Eating is something that we do as a regular habit and part of what we enjoy about eating is the routine that it brings to our lives. Not eating also brings very real hunger pangs and possibly fatigue. Have you ever met a "hangry" person? It's a thing! Fasting isn't easy. It takes a certain amount of self-discipline that many people do not have. It's also not something that we hear a lot about or talk about often, even as Christians. Those considering a fast may wish to consult a doctor. But if you do a fast, you may find it to be a very rewarding experience!

**Wrap-up on the Class Assignment:** Share your life purpose statement if you haven't already. Keep this somewhere that you can review it from time to time as a reminder of how God has created you and for what purpose. Occasionally evaluate if you are making progress in your spiritual growth and in bearing fruit with your life so that God might be glorified through you!

1. Write down 20 or more blessings that God has given to you to build His kingdom.
2. Identify a couple of things about your life that are unique and interesting to talk about with others.
3. Bring everything together in a one-page description of how God might want to use your life for His purposes.
4. Boil it down to a one-sentence phrase that you can memorize and share with others.

#### **Memory Verse Final Review:**

**Matthew 13:31-32** - *"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

#### **PRAYER REQUESTS:**