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Steps

to

Growth



Steps to Growth

A companion to the
Discipleship Dynamics Assessment©

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An Initiative of the
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Introduction

The Discipleship Commission of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland and Labrador has partnered with Discipleship Dynamics© to help serious Christ-followers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in personal discipleship. Discipleship Dynamics has created an assessment, which you have already completed, to measure discipleship effectiveness in five key dimensions: Spiritual Formation, Personal Wholeness, Healthy Relationships, Vocational Clarity, and Economics and Work. Evaluating these areas leads the participant to one of forty outcomes in personal discipleship. Discipleship Dynamics offers a fantastic tool to help assess personal discipleship and give a snapshot of spiritual maturity. We would like to partner with them and offer an additional resource that will enable you to take some measurable action steps towards living intentionally and growing closer to Christ. With their permission, we have used the DDA headings and have created 'growth suggestions' based on those headings. Together, we can say, "I am a disciple by choice!"

How to Use This Tool

The Discipleship Dynamics Assessment© has helped you accurately determine your spiritual strengths and weaknesses. This Steps to Growth document will offer suggestions and help believers create a personalized growth plan that will support their growth into spiritually healthy disciples. Some of us learn and grow best in an environment of freedom with less structure. Some of us are concrete thinkers and like to have visible goals to work towards. This tool is a list of suggestions that may help you, depending on how you learn and where you are in your spiritual development. If you need to work on a certain area of your spiritual life, as demonstrated by your DDA results, you can use the growth suggestions as a starting point. However, the listed suggestions are not the only means by which one can grow in a particular area. You may create your own action plan! It helps to write down your goals, keep them visible, and don't take on too much at once. Perhaps you would like to choose one or two areas that you need to work on; then choose a growth suggestion (or create your own) and concentrate on those areas. God will honour your faithfulness and desire to grow. Your efforts, combined with the Holy Spirit's guidance, will lead you to fruitfulness and productivity. Attempting to master many areas at once will only lead to frustration and likely failure. Start small and continue building. Consistency is the key.

Many areas of our growth can be accomplished individually, but there is a special significance in growing together in community. If you have a close, trusted friend, share your discipleship goals

and help keep each other accountable. This will help keep you on the right track. Accountability partners can help motivate and encourage us. Don't underestimate the power of growing as a disciple in a team of like-minded believers.

As you embark on this journey of discipleship and spiritual growth, don't forget to commit the process to the Lord. Neither growth nor spiritual formation is for the sole purpose of reaching a target. Rather, it is for the purpose of pleasing God, bringing glory to His name, and being better equipped to reach the lost in order to fulfill the mandate of Christ. We commit ourselves to the Lord and to His plans for our lives, which involves our growth as disciples. "I am a disciple by choice!"

1. SPIRITUAL FORMATION

SF Outcome 1: Love the Word of God

Growth Suggestion A: As pastors or leaders, we can sometimes find ourselves in a rut of reading the Bible only for sermon preparation or other ‘required’ ministry obligations. We’re ashamed to admit that Scripture reading as a discipline, for the purpose of spiritual formation, has long fallen by the wayside and has either ceased to exist or has been replaced by sermon or leadership preparation. Reading the Bible for sermon material and reading the Bible for devotional purposes are two very different things.

As leaders, we will never be able to lead others into deeper relationships with God and to a love of God’s Word, if we are not there ourselves. You need to develop or re-develop a consistent habit of reading or studying God’s Word. Don’t make a massive change; make a small change and build from there. Start by reading one Bible verse **every day** for a week and think about what it means. After you’ve been successful, do the same for a month. You know how significant a personal devotional time is, so begin to make a small step in this direction, be consistent, and your health as a disciple will grow with each passing day.

Growth Suggestion B: Follow a 30-day Bible reading plan. If you miss a day, try to catch up. If you miss 3 or more consecutive days, start the plan over. Scripture reading should be a joy, not a burden. The goal is to develop **consistent habits** in studying the Word of God. You will be better able to live out a “life worthy of the calling you have received” when you are immersed in Scripture.

Growth Suggestion C: Read a chapter a day and spend 20 minutes meditating on the passage of Scripture. Start a **devotional journal** of thoughts related to your Scripture reading. What is God teaching you?

Suggested Growth Resources:

PAONL Bible Reading Guide

www.youversion.com

The Divine Mentor (Wayne Cordeiro)

Notes:

Suggested Growth Resources:The Air I Breathe: Worship as a Way of Life (Louie Giglio)
Here I Am to Worship: Never Lose the Wonder of Worshipping
a Saviour (Tim Hughes)
The Unquenchable Worshipper: Coming Back to the Heart of
Worship (Matt Redman)

Notes:

SF Outcome 4: Listen to the Voice of God

Growth Suggestion A: When we pray, it's easy to just fill time by talking. In a conversation, if one person does all the talking, the other doesn't get a chance to speak. It's the same with God. If we don't pause to listen, He won't speak. Think of it as the difference between giving a mental "to do" list for God versus having a personal conversation with Him. Spend a few moments each day practicing **listening** to God in silence. Try to limit distractions as much as possible.

Growth Suggestion B: In your personal time with God, regularly ask, "God, is there something I need to hear from you right now?" Then **be silent**. If you need direction for something in particular, you should ask God, then be silent. God will respond to you wanting to hear from Him. Ask and listen.

Growth Suggestion C: Do you ever wish God would just use an audible voice? In most cases, He doesn't. God directs our thoughts and desires during our time with Him. We often wonder if those thoughts are from us or from God. It's in continued prayer and communion with God that we learn to distinguish the voice of God. Sometimes, God doesn't give us the big picture, but He gives us next steps. Work **on listening and following** God's next steps for your life, even when they don't make sense.

Suggested Growth Resources: The Power of a Whisper (Bill Hybels)
Sacred Echo (Margaret Feinberg)
Immediate Obedience: The Adventure of Tuning in to

God (Rod Loy)

Discerning the Voice of God: How to Hear When God Speaks (Priscilla Shirer)

Notes:

SF Outcome 5: Pursue Biblical Principles for Living

Growth Suggestion A: During your **devotional time**, when hearing sermons, or in Bible-centered conversations, be mindful to ask the question, “How does this biblical principle apply to my life today?”

Growth Suggestion B: As we become more in tune with the Spirit, we will have a greater desire to know the ways of God. This life-long process is an outflow of our personal sanctification and personal holiness. Evaluate your personal holiness and look for an area of weakness. **Yield** that area of your life to the Spirit and work towards Christlikeness. Make decisive steps towards improving in that area.

Growth Suggestion C: Evaluate an area of your life that you consistently fail to improve. Find a wise Christian friend or mentor and discuss your shortcoming truthfully. Between the two of you, come up with an **action plan** for improvement, including regular accountability.

Suggested Growth Resources: Biblical Foundations: Principles for Pentecostal Believers (Donald F. Johns)

SF Outcome 6: Share the Gospel Wisely With Others

Growth Suggestion A: Many Christians find it very intimidating to share their faith, particularly given that our culture can be intensely hostile toward Christians. Sharing the Gospel is most effective in the context of a relationship with another person. Methods that were successful in years gone by don't tend to be as effective at the present. If you don't have a relationship with any non-believers, ask God to open a door to build one. When building a relationship with a non-believer, pray and ask God to open the door to share. **Don't rush** what God hasn't facilitated. Your first task may be simply to casually mention that you go to church or to mention an event that you attended at church. Allow God to guide your conversation.

Growth Suggestion B: Once you've developed a relationship and a sense of rapport with a non-believer, begin to talk freely about your life and what's important to you. Your friend may believe that "that's ok for you and I'm happy that you have faith" but not be interested in sharing it. You need to **demonstrate** to your friend, via your life and words, that Jesus has changed your life. Yet, be sensitive and non-judgmental in sharing what God has done for you.

Growth Suggestion C: There will come a point in a relationship where you must **take a risk** - a risk in telling your friend that you believe that the Gospel message is for everyone. Ask God to give you wisdom as you go out on a limb and explain why Jesus is relevant to the entire world. Your friend trusts you and will listen to you on the basis of your relationship. However, follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and not your own desire to 'save' him/her. You must respect your friend's right to either accept or deny the Gospel. Your call is to faithfulness in sharing the Gospel.

Suggested Growth Resources:

- Becoming a Contagious Christian (Mark Mittelberg, Lee Strobel, Bill Hybels)
- Just Walk Across the Room (Bill Hybels)
- Reimagining Evangelism: Inviting Friends on A Spiritual Journey (Rick Richardson)

Notes:

SF Outcome 7: Enjoy the Fellowship of the Local Church

Growth Suggestion A: In your practice of regular church attendance, do you find yourself dreading church services and other gatherings? Are there times when you have to drag yourself to attend or find yourself wishing you could just stay home? If this is a problem for you, ask yourself why. Believers should **enjoy** the company of other believers and the worship that is shared with the gathered community. Share with a pastor, presbyter, or Christian friend and ask for help.

Growth Suggestion B: The gathering of believers is more than just being in the same room, listening to the same sermon. We are meant to pour into each other's lives. At each gathering you attend, ask God to **lead you** to someone else that you can encourage, pray for, or share with.

When you participate in church life, and contribute to the wellbeing of others, you will find joy in belonging.

Growth Suggestion C: The church is a community and a family. We must be intentional about sharing our lives with one another. It's easy to talk about the good parts of our lives — our accomplishments, careers, and families. But it's much more difficult to discuss family problems, lost jobs, mental illness, problems in parenting, etc. We must intentionally open our lives to the community of faith and learn to do life together. In doing so, we find great freedom as well as support and encouragement. Make a conscious effort to **share openly**, particularly when it's difficult. A small group is the ideal setting for this type of engagement.

Suggested Growth Resources: From Belonging to Becoming (Mike Clarensau)
The Irresistible Community: An Invitation to Life Together (Bill Donahue)

Notes:

SF Outcome 8: Cultivate Solitude

Growth Suggestion A: Choose a **regular time** for one week and set it aside to spend it in silence and solitude. Be sure to leave all electronics in another room, as they are one of our greatest sources of distraction. If you're a young parent, you'll have to do this before the children wake or after they go to bed, but it's probably more important for you than any other group of people. Allow God to refresh your soul and give you strength.

Growth Suggestion B: Solitude demands rest for mind, body, and soul. In the hectic pace of life, Christians often don't give their bodies the rest they truly deserve. Work towards overcoming resistance and carving out time for solitude in your life and for that of your family. While daily solitude is needed in short doses, healthy disciples need longer periods of solitude for deeper refreshing. At least once a week, preferably during your Sabbath, observe a more extended **time of solitude**, allowing the cares of your life to slip away as you rest in the Lord.

2. Personal Wholeness

PW Outcome 1: Humility

Growth Suggestion A: Jesus didn't look to glorify Himself. He didn't seek attention. Today, Christians live in a culture of selfies, drama, and a constant need for ego-feeding. Think about the way you talk and what you talk about. Are you subconsciously seeking attention, looking for compliments or affirmation? Are your posts on social media for the purpose of attention or to feed your ego with 'likes' and comments? Humility doesn't boast, doesn't have a need for ego-feeding, and doesn't seek attention. What is the root of your need for attention? **Evaluate** areas of your life where you are secretly looking for attention. If there is more than one area, choose one and begin to make changes by purposely trying not to draw attention to yourself.

Growth Suggestion B: Lacking humility is problematic when dealing with other people. If you insist on having the last word, or often think that your opinion is superior to that of others, chances are you have trouble listening to, and considering the views, opinions, input or suggestions of others. It is not wise to always dominate the conversation or situation in your marriage, friendship, or workplace, and put forth a 'my way or the highway' attitude. People who live like this ostracize people closest to them, create discord in their workplaces, and cause others to resent their company. In situations of conflict or differences of opinions, **be intentional** to hold your tongue and allow others to voice their opinions. Realize that your thoughts don't negate the thoughts of others. Take a humble stance by allowing someone else to 'win' the conversation, argument, or discussion. This can be a very difficult process, but will be valuable in moving forward in growth towards Christ-like humility.

Growth Suggestion C: Many Christians are comfortable with humility, but only to a certain extent. Some people still tend to guard certain areas of their lives and keep them buried, because they resist the feeling of embarrassment or humiliation that would accompany being transparent. Is this you? There may be some elements of your life, perhaps buried deep inside, that you should share in your attempt to help others. For example, there may have been an element of your history that you're almost ashamed of. Perhaps it's a previous sin, addiction, personal choice, etc. **Sharing** this element of your life with those close to you or for the purpose of testimony will inevitably lead to greater humility, but may also encourage others to a deeper level of transparency as well.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Humility: True Greatness (C. J. Mahaney)
Jesus Was Not a Rebel: How to Grow in the Power of God Through Humility and Submission (Brent Rudoski)
A World Unbroken: The Art of Humility (DVD Series)
Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership (John Dickson)

Notes:

PW Outcome 2: Positive Self-Image

Growth Suggestion A: Do you find yourself overly concerned about what others think about you? This may be due to poor self-image. If you're dissatisfied with yourself, you need to revisit the idea that you are a person made in the image of God. Outside of sinfulness, which can't be excused, you were created exactly the way you are. The next time you find yourself apprehensive about your appearance, inhibited by your inadequacy, or frozen in fear of what others think of you, **remind yourself** that you are God's masterpiece and must be primarily concerned about what He thinks. You may even want to write this down and place it in on your mirror. Sometimes seeing is believing!

Growth Suggestion B: Not only should you be able to accept who you are, you should also rejoice in who God made you to be. While you may not have the same gifts and abilities as the next person, God has made you with gifts and abilities unique to you. Rejoice in what God has created by knowing and understanding your own gifts and abilities and maximize how you use them. Being effective in God's Kingdom by being useful will improve how you view yourself. Seek to find a new way to be used in your area of strengths. This may mean you have to stop working in other areas that are outside of your gifts. Operating in your strengths will energize you and help you view yourself in a healthy way.

Growth Suggestion C: Sometimes more driven disciples can become too self-critical. Frustration ensues, as well as a sense of inadequacy when one is overly critical of their maturing process of either a spiritual or personal nature. **Setting realistic goals** should be the first course of action for the believer who is too self-critical. Furthermore, **enlist a friend** or mentor to help you process your sense of inadequacy and self-criticism. Perhaps viewing yourself through a different lens will help you understand areas in which you are growing and improving. This will motivate you to continue to build and grow without beating yourself up after every mistake or failure.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Distorted Images of Self: Restoring Our Vision:
8 Studies for Individuals or Groups
(Dale Ryan and Juanita Ryan)
When God Whispers Your Name (Max Lucado)
The Silent Seduction of Self-Talk: Conforming Deadly
Thought Patterns to the Word of God (Shelly Beach)
<http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com>

Notes:

PW Outcome 3: Gratitude

Growth Suggestion A: Take one week and **plan ahead** for a “week of gratitude.” Every day of that week, plan to thank a person specifically for something they’ve done. Be sure that it’s more than the simple “thank you” and explain the reason(s) for your gratitude. For example, if you eat at a restaurant, rather than a quick “thanks” as you leave, tell your server, “Thanks for the excellent service. You’ve been so helpful and made our meal far more enjoyable.” Leave a generous tip as well! Another moment of gratitude could be to go out of your way to thank your child’s teacher for the time invested in your child’s education. Meet the garbage truck as it stops in front of your house and tell the workers, “You probably have a thankless job, but I wanted to say thanks for what you do. Your work in our community is important.” Thank a church ministry leader, store

clerk, co-worker, spouse, child, or friend. Sometimes the customary ‘thanks’ can be a cop out and not entirely genuine. Challenge yourself to give a genuine, thoughtful expression of gratitude to at least one person each day for a week. You’ll be blessed as you bless others!

Growth Suggestion B: Today’s culture is one of dissatisfaction. Most people have it so good that they tend to complain about things that don’t matter. These minor issues can change the outlook of an entire day! The next time you’re tempted to complain about something, catch yourself and counter that negative thought with a positive one. Instead of griping about your car being too cold in the morning, be grateful that you have a car to drive. Instead of getting upset when your coffee wasn’t made correctly, remind yourself that you are blessed to have money to waste (and that the coffee shop will likely replace your coffee with the correct one). Instead of whining about your spouse forgetting to take out the trash again, make the switch in your mind to thinking about how great it was that your spouse fixed the bathroom faucet yesterday. An attitude of gratitude **changes your perspective** and leaves no room for grouchy disciples.

Growth Suggestion C: There are people in the history of your development who have been very influential in some way. This could have been a pastor, teacher, coach, ministry leader, friend, or relative. Chances are, you’ve never told these people how big of an impact they’ve made on your life and how they’ve helped shape the person you’ve become. Challenge yourself to write a letter, send an e-mail, or telephone these people to tell them how thankful you are for them and the impact they have had on you. Don’t take the easy route and just say a quick, ‘thanks.’ Gather your thoughts, remember details, instances, or stories, and be specific about their role in your life. They may not remember those details, but your gratitude will be a great source of encouragement to them. It will also help you grow in your ability to express gratitude and live a life of thankfulness.

Suggested Growth Resources:

<http://www.unstuck.com/gratitude.html>

One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are (Ann Voskamp)

1000 Gifts App and Gratitude Journal App

Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us (Christine D. Pohl)

Notes:

PW Outcome 4: Manage Negative Emotions

Growth Suggestion A: Sit back and analyze if your emotional issues are serious (beyond everyday sadness, anger, etc). If you feel they are overwhelming or can't be pushed through, ask for the proper help you need. Mental illness is real; it's not a sign of weakness! Like any other physiological problem, it can and should be addressed with professional help. Proper, professional counselling, medication, and coping techniques are all ways to make you a better disciple. By dealing with your **emotional health**, you are taking ownership of what is happening in your own life and will be better able to serve God's mission on earth!

Growth Suggestion B: After determining whether or not you need professional help, you must also consider what you can do to help yourself. Think of a negative emotion you struggle with - pray and ask God to remind and convict you when you feel this emotion. Take note of how you feel and what caused this emotion (even write it down!) - and begin to ask God to replace those negative emotions with the opposing fruit of the Spirit (self-control instead of anger, peace instead of stress). **Awareness** is the first step!

Growth Suggestion C: Often times, negative emotions are connected to our **physical health**. Exercise, proper sleep and nutrition can all contribute to our emotional health. Begin to carve out intentional time to care for your physical body - start small and work your way up! Start a simple plan to care for your health - cutting back on junk food, going to bed at a consistent time, exercising regularly doing something you enjoy (walking, a sport, biking, etc) and find someone to do it with you - your emotional health will greatly benefit!

Suggested Growth Resources:

Splashing Over Practical Anger Management for

Christians (Mark Ian Thompson)

When You've Been Wronged: Overcoming Barriers to Reconciliation (Erwin W. Lutzer)

Secrets to Exceptional Living: Transforming Your Life Through the Fruit of the Spirit (Joyce Meyer)

The Me I Want to Be - DVD Series (John Ortberg)

Overwhelmed: Winning the War Against Worry (Perry Noble)

Notes:

PW Outcome 5: Hope for the Future

Growth Suggestion A: The Resurrection of Jesus provides hope for the future! It gives believers confidence in the life that is to come, but also in the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives today. Do you find yourself worrying about your future? **Memorize** Romans 8:28 and recite it every time you begin to worry. Learning to live a life of faith is a sign of Christian maturity. You don't know how the future will pan out, but you can put your faith and trust in the One who does! Have you become fearful for your family members who are not serving the Lord or worried about raising your children in such a godless age? It's easy to become fearful about your career, financial situation, or health. Yet, fear is not from God (2 Tim. 1:7). You must "never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God" (Corrie Ten Boom). There is hope in Christ for both your heavenly future and your earthly future. When doubt and fear arise, speak Scripture to your situation (think particularly about Mt. 6:25-34) and remind yourself of hope. Never focus on fear.

Growth Suggestion B: If you truly understand your future hope and it has changed your perspective on life, you must also **be willing to share** it with those you love. Perhaps you have friends or family who are seemingly hostile to the Gospel message. While you must respect their right to accept or reject the Gospel, ask God to prepare their hearts to hear about your blessed hope. Be sensitive to the Spirit's leading and when the time is right, share your hope and confidence for the future. Perhaps introducing them to the hope of the believer will help them come to faith.

Growth Suggestion C: Understanding your hope for the future gives you a new perspective on death. Death, for the Christian, is not to be feared. "To live is Christ, to die is gain!" Are you fearful of what happens when this life is over? Are you afraid of dying? Perhaps you're afraid of the pain

associated with dying, of the uncertainty of it all, for those left behind, or other issues surrounding death. If you find yourself gripped with a serious fear of death, take practical steps that would alleviate some of the uncertainty. You could begin by preparing a will. This would ensure that your assets would be cared for according to your wishes and that those you love would be provided for. You could also **reconcile** any broken relationships. Finally, recognize that there's a difference between being responsible and being obsessed. You can responsibly care for things now that are significant if you or a close loved one were to pass away. However, this is entirely different from allowing your mind to be controlled by an irrational fear of death.

A **Kingdom perspective** demands the realization that while you love your family, God loves them more. All the paperwork and planning in the world won't give you peace of mind in this area. Adopting a Kingdom perspective will enable you to live fully and freely, while also living responsibly. If this is still an issue for you, could do a biblical study on heaven to put your mind at ease regarding what happens after death. And if there is still concern you should seek the help of a professional Christian counselor who can help you overcome your fear and develop a hope for the future that you can rejoice in!

- Suggested Growth Resources:**
- Resurrected: Experience Freedom from the Fear of Death (Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell)
 - Living in Hope of Eternal Life: An Exposition of the Book of Titus (Paige Patterson)
 - Fearless: Imagine Your Life Without Fear (Max Lucado)
 - Restoring Broken Relationships: The Path to Peace and Forgiveness (Neil T. Anderson)

Notes:

PW Outcome 6: Clean Conscience

Growth Suggestion A: Do you struggle with things in your past that you keep beating yourself up over? This isn't helpful to your personal or spiritual development. God has forgiven your past.

Understanding God's forgiveness is imperative if you desire to live with a clean conscience and be able to get past sin and bad decisions in your personal history. As believers, we must understand that God doesn't keep bringing up our past and rubbing it in our faces. "Once again you will have compassion on us. You will trample our sins under your feet and throw them into the depths of the ocean" (Micah 7:19). As a first step to understanding this, find a rock and write on it a specific sin you've been struggling with, or something more general like "past." Find a body of water and drop the rock in! Understand that just as that rock is now long gone, so are your sins, your past, and the things you dwell on. Next time you find yourself focusing on your past, think about the image of the rock sinking and remember that your past is forgotten - let it go!

Growth Suggestion B: There may be people in your life who bring up your past or your faults. Perhaps they make you feel as though you are insufficient for ministry, leadership, or even salvation. Remember that Scripture tells you that no one can accuse you of wrong if you've made proper attempts to make it right (Rm. 12:9-19). On your discipleship journey, you have to **discern** between healthy and unhealthy friendships; they are never neutral. A close friendship can either build you up or tear you down. Healthy disciples and friends should seek to edify, build up, and encourage others. If you are involved in a negative relationship, it may require you to have a difficult conversation with your friend to let them know how you feel. Your friend may not realize their negative effect on you. If your friend is made aware of their behavior and is unwilling to change, you may need to distance yourself from the relationship for the purpose of your health and growth as a disciple. It's a hard choice, but a necessary one.

Sometimes believers can be in unhealthy relationships that they can't just walk away from. If you are in an unhealthy marriage, or have unhealthy relationships with family or an employer, a pastor can refer you to a Christian counselor who is able to help you navigate through these issues.

Growth Suggestion C: Often in positions of ministry/leadership, people find themselves torn between what they feel Scripture says or how they feel God is leading them and the opinions/traditions of others. As a spiritual leader, you have to **develop confidence** that your responsibility is to please God, not people. When making difficult choices or attempting to change the culture of the

ministry you're involved in, do not attempt to make these changes alone. Work with other leaders and mentors — partially for personal/spiritual support and partially to ensure you're on the right track. When attempting to navigate these changes, you must live with resolve and not bend to external pressure. You can't please both God and people (Mt. 6:24; Gal. 1:10). You must seek approval from God alone. If you're navigating through a difficult process in ministry or leadership, it may mean that you lose the favour of some people. If you are sincerely following the will of God, you should have a clean conscience about this and proceed according to the leading of the Spirit.

Suggested Growth Resources:

The Ragamuffin Gospel (Brennan Manning)

A Glimpse of Jesus: The Stranger to Self-Hatred
(Brennan Manning)

Named by God: Overcoming Your Past, Transforming
Your Present, Embracing Your Future
(Kasey Van Norman)

The Rules of Engagement for Overcoming Your Past
(Cindy Trimm)

Unstuck - CD Series (Chip Ingram)

Notes:

PW Outcome 7: Self-Discipline

Growth Suggestion A: Self-discipline is a difficult trait to master for any leader. Most believers could grow in this area. It could be in the area of physical health, laziness, lack of persistence in the spiritual disciplines, getting up or going to bed on time, properly managing finances, housework, diet, etc. Self-discipline in the area of physical wellness is not something that Christians talk much about. Perhaps they don't consider it to be spiritual (but it absolutely is). **Evaluate** an area of your **physical life** where you see a true lack of self-discipline. Use a journal, tablet, or smartphone to write down a few sentences about the problem. Then, make an easy-to-follow plan, suggesting only an attainable step to growth that you will commit to following for 7 consecutive days.

If you have poor self-discipline in the area of diet, write this down along with an attainable positive action plan and commit to it for 7 days. Journal about your progress during those days. Perhaps, for example, if you drink a lot of soft drinks, your first step to self-discipline in this area could be cutting out all soft drinks for 7 days and replacing them with water. If you're successful, continue for another 7 days. If not, start over. After 14 days of success, add an additional component to your plan. If you need to be more physically active, start with something attainable. If you're a couch potato, your goal shouldn't be to run 10K. Start with a goal of several 10-20 minute walks per week and continue from there. Discipline in the area of physical health will carry over to your spiritual health as well.

Growth Suggestion B: Many leaders struggle with **spiritual discipline** yet won't admit their difficulties. Perhaps they think, "I'm a spiritual leader, after all! How can I lead others into spiritually fulfilling lives if I am unable to live a life of authentic spirituality myself?" The quick answer is: you can't. Use a journal, tablet, or smartphone to write down a few sentences about the area in your spiritual life needing growth. Then, make an easy-to-follow plan, outlining an attainable step to growth that you will commit to following for 7 consecutive days.

If you have very poor discipline in the area of consistency in your devotional life, write down your problem and an attainable positive action plan for 7 days. Perhaps, you can start by acquiring a short, easy to read devotional book. Make a checklist for 7 days and commit to following the devotional during that time. If you're successful, do the same for another 7 days. If you're unsuccessful, start again. After following a devotional plan consistently for several weeks, you should add another element to your devotional time, such as Scripture memorization. The key is starting with a manageable goal, turning that goal into a habit, and continuing to develop self-discipline as you grow.

Growth Suggestion C: Perhaps you are a very disciplined person in all major areas of your life. You may want to challenge yourself by also incorporating the discipline of self-denial into your life. While all Christians are called to "deny themselves," being intentional about **self-denial** will draw you closer to Christ. Set aside a period of time to devote to self-denial for the purpose of drawing closer to Christ. Fasting is an obvious example of self-denial. However, you may need to remove other things from your life for a period of time. Why not remove all television and other technology from your life for 48 hours and replace the time you would have spent on those devices to prayer and listening to God. If you typically watch television on the weekends, devote a full

weekend to silence, solitude, prayer, reading God’s Word, and listening to His voice. This will take great **self-discipline**, but you will undoubtedly draw near to God and He will draw near to you (James 4:8). You will need to deny yourself of something that you enjoy or something that is valuable to you. It may be technology for some; it may be food or sweets for others, or it may be a leisure activity. The purpose of self-denial is to sacrifice for the purpose of drawing closer to God and developing the ability to hear Him more clearly.

- Suggested Growth Resources:**
- The Power of Habit (James Duhigg)
 - Canada’s Food Guide
 - Follow Me (David Platt)
 - The Daniel Plan

Notes

PW Outcome 8: Manage Personal Resources

Growth Suggestion A: The way you manage your income, expenditures, and debt commitments are huge indicators of your spiritual maturity. Believers are required to be good stewards of their resources. This can be exceptionally difficult for young pastors and leaders who are just beginning their careers and who are managing a budget for the first time. It takes some getting used to! Many young people are managing significant amounts of financial debt acquired through post-secondary education. This, coupled with low starting salaries, can be difficult to handle. One of the most freeing feelings is to be financially secure and stable and perhaps the best way to accomplish this is to **create a budget**. A quick Internet search will generate tons of resources for creating a budget.

Some quick tips include: 1) Make it a priority to pay more than the minimum payment on loans (student, visa, line of credit, etc.). This will lessen the length of time required to pay off the debt and lessen the amount of money lost to interest; 2) Organize and assess all financial statements from the past 6 months to see where your money is going. Sometimes people waste money without realizing it (i.e. Eating out, shopping for non-necessities, entertainment); and 3) Evaluate all your

bills to see if there is something you can eliminate. Cell phone plans and cable TV are nice to have, but they are not necessities. Cutting non-essentials to bring about financial stability is well worth the sacrifice. Cutting the cable bill can mean a \$600-\$1000 per year savings. Creating a personal/family budget, putting it on paper and sticking to it, will help you best manage your personal resources.

Growth Suggestion B: Scripture instructs Christ-followers to **be free** from the love of money (Heb. 13:5). Often the trend is that the more you have, the more you want. Do you find yourself becoming too attached to your bank account or your ‘toys?’ Maybe your attachment comes in the form of obsession with the numbers, the next payday, the interest rates, etc. Are you crazed over the new tablet or smartphone on the market and won’t rest until you have it? Are you constantly thinking about the ATV or snowmobile that you’d like to purchase next? Is the goal of your career to be able to take trips every year? If you answer ‘yes’ to any of the above, you may have a ‘love of money’ that is neither pleasing to God, nor spiritually healthy. Even those who are not in good financial standing can be obsessed with money and material possessions.

If you are too preoccupied with financial matters, perhaps you need to make some concrete changes in how to look at wealth. You will never be content with your life if you’re not content with what you have. If you’re serious about giving every area of your life to God, try getting rid of the item(s) that you are too preoccupied with. Donate the money to missions while striving to “be content in all circumstances” (Phil 4:11-13).

Growth Suggestion C: While most leaders don’t advocate for a “prosperity gospel” theology, they firmly believe that God honours **faithful giving**. He “loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). While you may be faithful and consistent in your tithe, missions giving, and other regular contributions, are you faithful to the subtle promptings of the Spirit to give outside of your regular offerings? What would you do if you felt prompted to give to a person or cause that would not result in an income tax receipt? What if you felt led to give to someone who you didn’t feel deserved your charity? If you open yourself to the guidance of the Spirit in terms of your finances, you can be assured that God will lead you to give, both selflessly and generously. Remain open to the Spirit’s prompting, give freely, and be careful to keep your giving private (Mt. 6).

Suggested Growth Resources:

Managing God's Money: A Biblical Guide
(Randy C. Alcorn)
Money, Possessions, and Eternity (Randy C. Alcorn)
The Treasure Principle (Randy C. Alcorn)
How to Be Rich: It's Not What You Have, It's What You
Do with What You Have (Andy Stanley)
[https://creditcanada.com/how-to-create-a-monthly-
budget](https://creditcanada.com/how-to-create-a-monthly-budget)
<http://www.compasscanada.org>
www.ynab.com

Notes:

Personal Wholeness Personalized Growth Plan:

Action Step 1:

Action Step 2:

Action Step 3:

3. Healthy Relationships

HR Outcome 1: Love Intimately and Unselfishly

Growth Suggestion A: Some people tend to be very ‘guarded’ in their relationships with others. If you are the type of person who has very few close relationships, perhaps there are reasons why you don’t or can’t allow others to know you deeply and intimately. Have you been hurt in past relationships? Perhaps your childhood didn’t include deep, personal relationships and doing so now feels uncomfortable. Do some **soul-searching** to try to understand yourself and why you hold others at an arm’s length. Don’t be afraid to enlist the help of a professional **Christian counselor** who will confidentially work through this with you, helping you to be more open and intimate with those you’re closest to.

Growth Suggestion B: Learning to love intimately can be difficult if you’ve been wounded in the past. It’s always harder to trust people when you’ve experienced broken trust. Learning to love intimately is to trust others with really knowing who you are. Whether it be your spouse, your closest friends, or your mentors, work on **trusting** these people and **sharing** your innermost thoughts, feelings, hurts, joys, goals, and fears. This won’t happen all at once (nor should it). But begin by sharing one very personal detail with someone you trust. This is the start of an authentic, intimate relationship.

Growth Suggestion C: Evaluate your closest relationships. Are they mutually edifying? Or are they one-sided and selfish? If you tend to take more from your friends or spouse than you give, your relationship is not mutually edifying and you are approaching that relationship selfishly. Intimate, healthy relationships can’t be one-sided. Pay close attention to the give and take in your closest relationships and make sure the **balance** is even. Intimate relationships will be drained if they are one-sided and selfish. Take concrete steps to ensure you feed the relationship and not just drain it.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Conflict Free Living: How to Build Healthy Relationships for Life (Joyce Meyer)

Hidden Dangers: Combatting Threats to Healthy Relationships (Kim Beckham)

Scary Close: Dropping the Act & Finding True Intimacy

by Donald Miller

Love as a Way of Life: Seven Keys to Transforming Every Aspect of Your Life (Gary Chapman)

Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life (Henry Cloud)

Notes:

HR Outcome 2: Forgiveness

Growth Suggestion A: Romans 12:19 instructs believers not to take revenge but to leave it to God. It's easy if you've been hurt to want to 'get even.' God doesn't want you to live with that kind of negative emotion hanging over your head. If you find yourself hanging on to these types of emotions, make a conscious decision to let it go. God is just and one day he'll settle the score. You need to relax in God's care and deny the impulse to 'get even' with those who've caused us pain. You know when you've succeeded at doing this when you can think of the person or situation that has caused you grief without feeling negative, angry, or sad.

Growth Suggestion B: Romans 12:21 says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." When you've been wronged, it is tempting to surround yourself with people who support your right to be angry. It is easy to let negative conversation and thoughts consume you, but that's not going to help you develop spiritually; in fact, the opposite is true. When you're confronted with the choice between forgiving someone or holding a grudge, recall the words, "overcome evil with good." Dwell on it. Meditate on it. This will help you forgive even when it's difficult.

Growth Suggestion C: If you've forgiven someone, but still hang onto the pain of the past, take it a step further by doing good for them. That person who gossiped about you last year? Drop off a coffee and muffin at work next time you're in his area. The one who damaged your property and won't admit it? Invite her over for dinner. Those estranged family members who treated you poorly? Send them cards in the mail. In doing these things, God will convict them of their wrongdoing and you'll be the 'bigger person' (Proverbs 20:21-22). In doing good for others, be sure to go about your tasks with a humble spirit and a loving heart.

While Christians need to be forgiving as a general rule, they must also establish healthy boundaries in their relationships. If you struggle with this end of the spectrum, perhaps by allowing yourself to be walked over or abused by another person, please find a trusted friend, pastor, presbyter, or counselor to speak with in confidence.

Suggested Growth Resources: Overcoming Emotions that Destroy: Practical Help for those Angry Feelings that Ruin Relationships (Chip Ingram and Becca Johnson)
Total Forgiveness (R.T. Kendall)
Bait of Satan (John Bevere)

Notes:

HR Outcome 3: Live in Harmony and Peace

Growth Suggestion A: Does it seem like whenever there is a disagreement or when other people don't meet your expectations that the problem is always someone else? It's funny how that works. You need to start evaluating the situations and people that really irritate or upset you a little more objectively. Is there a chance that you may be part of the problem? Are your expectations too high? Are you not gracious enough with others? Are you easily angered? If you find that others are always in the wrong, perhaps a trusted friend or mentor (or your spouse) can help you see things more clearly. **Ask** for their opinion and don't get angry when they give it to you. In order to live the life of peace that Christ has called you to, you must do your part.

Growth Suggestion B: When you are faced with a personal injustice or attack, how do you typically respond or react? Do you typically lash out or seek revenge? For many people, there is a natural desire to "get even" with their offender(s). We tend to think things like, "If she can talk about me behind my back, then I'll do the same" or "If he disrespects me like that again in public, I'm going to put him in his place." However, Jesus instructed his followers not to get drawn into petty arguments and drama. Rather, we should "turn the other cheek" (Mt. 5:39; Lk. 6:29). Do

acterized by tension and strife, you should both agree to ‘get away’ and spend some quality time together, away from the regular stress and pressure of everyday life and work. If your time and budget allows, plan a relaxing vacation away from home. If that’s not possible, look into a day trip or an evening out. Even an evening stroll or casual night out can be just the respite you need to **reset the tone** in your marriage. The key is that both you and your spouse need to agree that this is necessary and work towards lowering stress and tension in the home.

Growth Suggestion B: If you’ve been married for a while, it’s easy to fall into familiar patterns. However, these patterns aren’t always healthy, nor do they always fulfill both partners equally. Take some time to evaluate your marriage, what you’re putting in, and what you’re taking out. Be sure that you intentionally look for ways to **demonstrate your love** to your spouse in ways that are meaningful for him/her.

Growth Suggestion C: Every marriage experiences hurdles and difficulties. For some, there are major hurdles early in marriage in just learning to live together. It’s difficult going from being single and concerned primarily for your own interests to being married and having to consider another person in everything you say and do! For other people, hurdles are experienced in the empty nest stage, as you have to readjust to living together again, now that your lives aren’t completely wrapped up in the children anymore. Still for others, there are other difficulties that come; some even wonder if they’ve fallen ‘out of love.’ In any of these situations, know that you’re not alone. Other couples have endured similar and perhaps even worse trials than these. You may want to consider seeking the help of a marriage counselor, attending a marriage enrichment event, or watching a marriage enrichment DVD series together. Even couples that are experiencing ‘smooth sailing’ in their marriage could benefit from these helps. If you’re struggling in your marriage, don’t wait until it’s too late or the problems escalate beyond repair before seeking help. A word to the wise: If you are newly married or in a good place in your marriage, now would be a good time to **talk to your spouse** about your marriage and the ‘what ifs.’ Agree that you would see a counselor or trusted mentor if either spouse felt it was necessary. If you do this, when a difficult time comes, it will be much less of an issue taking that step — or even having the conversation.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Embracing God’s Design for Marital Intimacy (Focus on the Family)

Moving From Loneliness to Intimacy in your Marriage

Notes:

HR Outcome 5: Manage Sexuality

Growth Suggestion A: Perhaps one of the biggest problems in our society is the pervasive issue of pornography. Do you struggle with viewing questionable media content? This isn't a problem that is easily tackled solo. Talk to a trusted friend, pastor, mentor, or Christian counselor about the problem. You'll need to let go of your pride here. The vast majority of people have struggled with this at some point, but far less will actually admit it. Getting the support of another person will be the first step to making a change. You also need **accountability** to break free of a problematic habit. Have your support person keep you accountable in ways that are helpful and suited to you personally.

Growth Suggestion B: In order to effectively manage your sexuality, you need to identify areas of temptation. Upon identifying your temptations, you need to **create a plan** to help you from falling. If you struggle with inappropriate Internet usage, you need to limit or remove yourself completely until you have gained better control. Deactivating social media will help you limit your time online. Removing data from your smart phone or tablet and only using your computer in a public/common area will also help keep you from accessing inappropriate media. You may think that you have the willpower to avoid temptation without taking these steps, but if you've been struggling you need to make some obvious changes if you value living with purity and Christlikeness.

Growth Suggestion C: Scripture tells believers that they should entirely remove things from their lives that cause them to stumble (Mt. 5: 29-30; 18:8; Mk. 9:43). If with both accountability and a plan in place you are still unable to avoid stumbling into sexual sin you must **remove every trace** of temptation from your life. People have lost everything they cared about because their

sexual struggles became so deep and pervasive. If this means giving up your computer entirely, disabling data usage on your cell phone, and disconnecting cable television, then this is the price you must pay to be sexually pure. After a period of time and with the advice of your counselor and mentor, you can begin to reinstate technology on a trial basis. Your discipleship is more important than your connectedness. Spend this period of time investing in prayer and your relationship with God. Ask God to replace your sinful desires with passion for his Kingdom and use your free time to invest in his work.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Beyond the Scandals: A Guide for Healthy Sexuality for Clergy (G. Lloyd Rediger)

The Purity Code: God’s Plan For Sex and Your Body (Jim Burns)

The Pornography Trap: Setting Pastors and Laypersons Free from Sexual Addiction (Ralph Earle)

Sexuality and Spirituality, Pursuing Integration (William F. Kraft)

5 Steps to Breaking Free From Porn (Joe Dallas)
www.xxxchurch.com

Notes:

HR Outcome 6: Sensitive to the Marginalized

Growth Suggestion A: If we look around our churches, we often see mirror images of ourselves. Most of our members come from similar economic backgrounds, dress similarly, and maintain a certain amount of ‘normal’ in their appearance. What happens when a person unexpectedly arrives at church, looking like they’ve been wearing the same clothes for a week and maybe they smell badly? What of the person who snuffs a cigarette just outside the church doors and then walks in? What of the young man covered in piercings and tattoos? What of the young lady who is dressed to attract the wrong kind of attention? How do we treat these people? It’s not good enough to

offer a mere smile and a perfunctory, “Hello! How are you?” Take time to have a **genuine conversation** with the person. Find out a little of their story and make an effort to get to know them. When you surround yourself for too long only with people who are just like you, it’s easy to forget how to interact with people who are different. This needs to change if you are to grow as Christ’s disciples and be more sensitive to the marginalized.

Growth Suggestion B: Do you regularly and systematically care for marginalized people in your daily life? As an affluent society, we can easily become absorbed in our own lives and activities. However, God desires that we would reach out to those around us who are suffering. We easily talk about going into “all the world” with our evangelistic efforts, yet we haven’t effectively mastered reaching into our own communities. There is no shortage of ways to **get involved** or ways to **offer help** to those around us who need it. It could be as simple as visiting lonely senior citizens, providing support for single moms, helping an unemployed person develop skills to get a job, becoming involved with a soup kitchen, participating in Christmas hamper deliveries — the list is endless. The needs in each geographical area are unique. Find out what those needs are — who those people are — and look for creative ways to make a difference. It’s what Christ would have us do.

Growth Suggestion C: Some of us are very good at welcoming the marginalized into our churches, support groups, and programs. But are we as welcoming of these individuals into our personal lives? Some of these individuals need more than the phone number to another office or the name of another program to attend. Sometimes what is needed is someone who is willing to actually become a part of the messy life of another person. This isn’t easy and will come at a cost. However, you may find that by **investing** in the life of a person who genuinely needs guidance and support from a more mature Christian, that you will also grow in the process.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Side Door: How to Open Your Church to Reach More People (Charles Arn and Kwasi Kena)
Community Ministry (Carl S. Dudley)
Intentional Ministry in a Not-So-Mega Church:
Becoming a Missional Community (Dennis Bickers)
The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led By the Spirit (Craig Van Gelder)

Notes:

HR Outcome 7: Teachable Spirit

Growth Suggestion A: If you are unable or unwilling to listen to the advice or input of others, then you are basically asserting an unhealthy pride in yourself. It's as if you feel that you know better than anyone else. God's design for His people is that they live in community with one another. We need each other and we need the input, advice, and encouragement of other believers on a regular basis. No person will grow to reach Christian maturity without being teachable. Begin to think about times when other people have tried to offer advice or guidance. How have you responded? Did you always think that their input was irrelevant or unnecessary? Has no one offered you worthwhile advice or guidance? If this is your attitude, then perhaps you don't have a teachable spirit. On the other hand, if you are always open to constructive criticism and looking for feedback and advice, you are likely open to growth through the contribution of other believers. If you aren't sure if you have a teachable spirit, ask someone you trust to tell you what they feel your weaknesses are. Your reaction to such **constructive criticism** will determine whether or not you are a teachable person.

Growth Suggestion B: It's easy to find a groove in leadership or ministry. Once you find what you're good at, you do it and most likely you do it well. However, is there still room for improvement? Also, what about the things you avoid doing or do poorly? Having a system of **personal evaluation** is highly beneficial for any leader. While this is incredibly difficult for some, it is necessary for anyone who desires to grow and improve. If your workplace includes a periodic evaluation, ask for personal copies so that you can continually work on growth areas. If your workplace does not offer evaluations, ask for one. You could also do a personal self-evaluation several times per year to determine where you feel your strengths and weaknesses are and which areas require immediate attention. The most important element of evaluation, whether done by an outside party or done personally, is being open to constructive criticism. When weaknesses are identified, you

should then develop target areas for growth. No one is perfect, but you'll continually do better if you identify your growth areas and proceed to work on them.

Growth Suggestion C: Have you ever known a person who loved to 'pick apart' everyone else's weaknesses? Some people simply cannot be pleased and will always make negative comments and try to tear others down. The easiest response to this behavior is to ignore it. In many cases, ignoring the dissenting voice is entirely justified. However, there are some cases whereby someone is voicing a legitimate problem in the wrong voice/tone. Be careful not to dismiss your own flaws simply because it was brought to your attention in the wrong way. You need a greater level of maturity than that. This is part of having a teachable spirit. Perhaps you don't need to address the person who nitpicks your every move. However, if there is an element of truth in those complaints, you should be ready to accept the criticism and address the issue at hand.

Here's an example: if someone in your sphere of interest complains loudly and publicly that you play favourites and ignore certain people, you should **consider why** they feel that way. Is there any truth to it? If not, dismiss it entirely. If you can see how one might think you spend too much time with a particular group of people at the expense of others, without any justifiable reason, perhaps you should redistribute the time you spend with people. Being teachable involves how you respond to uninvited criticism as well as invited critique.

Suggested Growth Resources: A Teachable Spirit (Marie Humphrey)

Notes:

HR Outcome 8: Hospitable

Growth Suggestion A: For some, hospitality comes easy. Some people are naturally inclined to share their homes and lives (and likely food!) with others. If this comes naturally to you, then you are already poised to share the Gospel with unbelievers and mentor younger Christians in your home. However, for some people, this is very difficult. If you are even remotely introverted, you are likely to find that hospitality doesn't come easily to you. While you shouldn't beat yourself up over this, you should try to **push yourself** to take steps in this direction. Introverts can actually

function very well in small group settings, so focus on inviting one or two people at a time, rather than a group of people, and in this environment you can thrive.

Growth Suggestion B: Our lives are often so busy and so scheduled, that we feel like there's no time left for hospitality or entertaining. If you feel this way, you're not alone! Challenge yourself to **carve our time** in your family's schedule to make sure there's time for hospitality in the midst of the chaos of day-to-day life. Some people may be able to do this weekly; for others, once per month is a reasonable goal. In either case, make it a priority to connect on a personal level with other people in your life.

Growth Suggestion C: Hospitality is a natural inclination — a gift — for some people. For others, it comes with great difficulty and stress. Don't fall into the trap of believing that hospitality means inviting company over to your immaculate home for an elaborate meal. Hospitality means the friendly or **generous welcoming** of another person. It indicates warmth and kindness. This can be as simple as toast and tea with a great conversation. Generally, people will remember the atmosphere and ethos of your home and welcome, rather than the food you served or the décor on your walls. Sharing life doesn't have a price tag and your hospitality isn't measured by how much you spend on entertaining; it's measured by your welcome and warmth in opening your home and life to others. Challenge yourself to welcome people into your life and home on unplanned occasions as well - it's not about what your home looks like or what you are providing, it is about sharing life together!

Suggested Growth Resources: Come on in: Taking the Hassle Out of Hospitality (Lisa Bogart)
Table Grace: The Role of Hospitality in the Christian Life (Douglas D. Webster)

Healthy Relationships Personalized Growth Plan:

Action Step 1:

Action Step 2:

Action Step 3:

4. Vocational Clarity

VC Outcome 1: Know the Dignity of Our Labour

Growth Suggestion A: God’s Word tells us, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Col. 3:23-24). Work, regardless of profession, contains both exciting elements and menial tasks. This is the nature of work. Whether you are performing your most preferred aspect of your role or the most mundane, remember that you are ultimately working for the Lord and no one else. It doesn’t matter where your paycheck comes from (or if you even receive one), every thing you do is for the glory of God. From washing dishes to preaching sermons, from mowing grass to planning budgets, your attitudes and actions **reflect your heart** as you work. Take a few moments and **write a list** of things you do that are related to your work — both at home and in the workplace. Separate the list into two categories — the things you enjoy doing and the things that you dislike. Now that you’ve discovered the elements of your work that you dislike, you will find it easier to keep your attitude in check while you are performing these tasks.

Growth Suggestion B: Some people don’t feel a natural tug towards wanting to work. They do it because they have to, but they are easily distracted, aren’t always productive, and lean towards laziness. In an **honest assessment** of yourself and your work, does this sound like you? We need to realize that humans are designed to work. Genesis 1-2, which was prior to the fall of humanity, tells us that God created humans to work and rule over the earth, animals, and plants. Our laziness, unproductivity, lack of motivation, and disinterest are a result of sin. When we have an imbalance in our spiritual lives, we want to play, not work. When our spiritual lives aren’t in proper alignment with the Spirit, we lean towards laziness and not labour. This isn’t God’s design for us (Pro. 24:33-34). Do you often feel unmotivated about your work? Do you often have a sense of disinterest about your responsibilities? You need to recognize that this is not just a personal problem — at its deepest root it’s the result of sin. You need to ask God’s forgiveness for your sluggish work ethic and pray for God’s strength as you go about your work.

Growth Suggestion C: Far too many people go about their careers, approaching it as routine and mundane. Once people settle into a career or ministry, they tend not to think about the Lord’s direction in their work after that. However, how much more impact could Christians have in their

particular fields of work if they dedicated every single day of their labour to God? Regardless of how you spend your days — whether it is preparing sermons, caring for children, conducting business, or performing physical labour, God can be glorified through your work and you should **seek the guidance of the Spirit** as you labour. Have you neglected to pray for the Lord’s guidance as you go about your work? Have you relied too much on yourself, your routines, and your own gifts in your role(s)? Your work is important and your reliance upon the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance in your work will move you farther than you could ever go in your own strength.

Suggested Growth Resources: Flourishing Churches and Communities: A Pentecostal Primer on Faith, Work, and Economics for Spirit-Empowered Discipleship (Charlie Self)
Every Good Endeavour: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work (Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf)
Your Call to Work and Mission (Steve Lim)

Notes:

VC Outcome 2: Sense of Calling

Growth Suggestion A: An important part of following your calling is knowing the difference between your passion(s) and your calling. Too many people believe that what they are passionate about is what they should do for a living. This isn’t necessarily true. As an example, some people feel passionate about music. However, being passionate about music and even excelling in that area doesn’t necessarily mean that this is one’s calling. You should, without a doubt, spend time exploring the things you’re passionate about — music, cooking, sports, history — but these things may not be what God wants you to dedicate your whole life and vocation to. Many young people make the mistake of following their passion because they are unsure of their calling. When Samuel heard the voice of God, he didn’t recognize it — he needed Eli to tell him who was speaking (1 Sam. 3:1-10). When trying to discern the voice of God, you must first listen. You must also under-

stand that it's okay to get it wrong the first few times (Samuel did). You won't **learn how to hear God's voice** if you don't practice. Also, in learning to listen, it's a wise practice to find an Eli who can help you discern God's voice. Try to find a trusted friend, pastor, parent, or mentor in your life who has heard God's voice in their own life and who can help you hear as well.

Growth Suggestion B: Prayer is essential in hearing and following the voice of God and being true to your calling. Perhaps you are confident in your calling and what God has asked you to do, but has this been a matter of prayer lately? What is God asking you to do today? While your calling may remain the same, generally speaking, is God leading you to a place of greater fulfillment of your calling? It's easy to settle for 'normal' while continuing to feel as though you're living out your calling. Perhaps God wants to bring you into a new phase of your calling. It is possible that God is drawing you into a new phase of growth, ministry, or discovery. **Be open** to hearing God's voice. He has called you but will continue to refine that call as you continue to serve him faithfully. Even if you've been in leadership for years, begin to **pray fervently** for God to show you a clearer and more fully developed sense of calling for your life and ministry today.

Growth Suggestion C: Calling is something that many people feel is very personal. Many people never really share their calling with another person, outside of very generic terms. Yet, God paints in our mind a clear picture of what our calling is. God leads us to things bigger than ourselves. For some, perhaps not sharing their calling in anything more than very nonspecific terms is a safety net, because no one will ever know if they miss the mark or never reach their God-given goals. Be challenged to **share your sense of calling** in very specific terms to a close friend in leadership. God may further develop the image as you progress, but sharing the journey with a friend will both keep you accountable and will encourage you to continually strive towards that vision.

Suggested Growth Resources: Your Blueprint For Life: How to Align Your Passion, Gifts, and Calling With Eternity in Mind (Michael Kendrick)

Notes:

VC Outcome 3: Insights Into Gifts and Talents

Growth Suggestion A: Do you find yourself floundering, somewhat unsure of how you ‘fit’ in the work of the church and the body of Christ? If you haven’t yet been able to determine your areas of strength, then you may need to invest more time **discovering** those gifts. Talk with your pastor, presbyter, spouse, or a trusted friend to help you identify your gift(s). This may take some **vulnerability**, but being aware of your gifts and talents will leave you better equipped to serve the body of Christ.

Growth Suggestion B: Both natural abilities (i.e. musical aptitude) and spiritual gifts (i.e. gift of knowledge) are intended to benefit the local church. Take an objective look at yourself and how your gifts and talents are being used. Are they primarily benefitting you personally? Or are they being used to build up and **edify the body of Christ**? If you are using your gifts and talents to primarily benefit yourself, then there is an imbalance in your spiritual life. Look for one new way to use your gifts to serve your church and community.

Growth Suggestion C: Some believers are quite aware of their gifts and talents. This is typically a very good sign of growth, however, some people have fallen into the trap of only using their gifts and talents when it earns them public recognition. This is a sign of spiritual immaturity. While some natural abilities will naturally be used in a public setting, you shouldn’t base your worth on opportunities to demonstrate your giftedness. If this begins to happen, you will find yourself on a slippery slope of finding validation as a result of ability rather than your identity in Christ. To avoid developing a dependence on public demonstration of talent and human validation, begin using your gifts to **edify another** person or small group of people. Use your gifts even when there’s no ‘glory’ in it for you. After all, God has given you gifts and talents for His glory, not yours.

Suggested Growth Resources: <http://www.spiritualgiftstest.com/test/adult>

Notes:

VC Outcome 4: Mission With Spouse

Growth Suggestion A: When you get married, you have to learn to work together. You have a unique calling and passion and so does your spouse. Too often in marriage, particularly when both individuals are in leadership, one spouse feels as if their calling must be laid aside so that their spouse can pursue theirs. While marriage does involve sacrifice and there may be seasons of waiting for one spouse, God doesn't intend for people to lose their passion and identity in marriage. Have both spousal partners maintained their identity and personal mission? **Discuss** this with your spouse to be sure that you both feel that you are following the Lord's leading in personal mission.

Growth Suggestion B: Are you somewhat, perhaps even subconsciously, annoyed or even jealous of your spouse's mission? Perhaps he or she finds more fulfillment in their various roles than you do in yours. Or perhaps they are able to do something you've always wanted to do, but have never been given the opportunity. You must not allow your individual dissatisfaction cloud your ability to **celebrate and support** your spouse. Strive to let go of jealousy in favour of celebration. One of the joys of married life is that of helping one another become the best version of themselves that they can be.

Growth Suggestion C: In a marriage, both husband and wife have brought to the relationship a unique calling. The passion and ministry of each spouse should never be in conflict with one another. In fact, they should compliment one another. Do you and your spouse support each other's mission? Are you each other's biggest encourager? You should celebrate each other's mission and ministry. Furthermore, while you both have different roles to play, strive to find areas in which you can **serve together**. If your careers don't allow for this, look for something completely outside of what you would normally do to work together in a cooperative mission. Both spouses function in their individual mission; yet the couple should also have a shared mission. **What is your mission as a couple?** Take some time to talk about this together. Share your heart for mission and ministry. Write down your shared goals and dream about how these goals can become reality.

Suggested Growth Resources:

You & Me Forever (Francis & Lisa Chan) – Free PDF download available

Notes:

VC Outcome 5: Teamwork

Growth Suggestion A: Perhaps one of the greatest failures in leadership is the failure to utilize other people. We fail at this for a number of reasons, including these: 1) The need to control our circumstances, 2) Perfectionism, 3) Lack of confidence, and 4) Poor ability to motivate others. Whatever the reason for not including others in ministries, leadership, or service, we are failing ourselves and failing the Lord when we fall into this rut. God wants the church to function as a team.

The body of Christ is designed so that each body part can serve its function. When you get in the way of this, you are damaging the body. Whether you are poor at motivating others to serve or just feel you can 'do it better yourself', you are ultimately hindering and not helping. Take a few moments to **evaluate yourself** in light of **teamwork**. Do you tend to function as a lone wolf? Or do you work to include others, even when their skills aren't as refined as your own? Do you need to make changes in how you function in this area?

Growth Suggestion B: If you work with other staff, board members, or leaders, how deep and authentic are these relationships? Do you simply do what needs to be done and fulfill your duties? That's enough, right? No, it's not. Shallow relationships will never change people. Think of your own journey. Can you think of five sermons that changed you? Probably not. Can you think of five people who helped shape you? Quite probably! The biggest way you can impact the leaders you serve with is through sharing life together and developing **mutually-transformative relationships**.

The team(s) you work with may function well, but with authenticity and transparency they will go to a whole new level of meaning and purpose in the lives of all who participate in them. This can be very difficult for some people — particularly those who have not had these kinds of relationships in the past, or for those who are highly introverted. However, the reward is worth the initial discomfort. Consider the relationships you have with the leaders you work with. Can you intentionally be more authentic? Are you able to share life in a more genuine way? If so, start moving in that direction.

Growth Suggestion C: Is your participation in the team effort more about the team or about you personally? When you participate in teamwork, you should strive to work towards the team's goals,

not simply satisfying your personal agenda. Are you celebrating the successes of other team members? Are you working hard to help achieve the goals of the team? Check your attitude to be sure that your teamwork is **not self-serving**, but genuinely interested in supporting the team’s mission. Ask a trusted friend and teammate if they feel you are serving the group well. An outside opinion may help you discover ways that you can grow and become a better team player.

Suggested Growth Resources: How To Be A Team Player and Enjoy It: A Study in Staff Relationships (Matt Williams)
 Sticky Teams (Larry Osborne)
 Becoming A Healthy Team: Five Traits of Healthy Leadership (Stephen Macchia)

Notes:

VC Outcome 6: Biblical Integration

Growth Suggestion A: It’s one thing to have a decent knowledge of the Word of God, but how does this knowledge impact your day-to-day life? It’s so easy to preach from our soapboxes about ethical issues or social justice, but are we actually doing anything about the issues we claim are so important? Pause for a moment and **consider the issues** you feel passionate about in society — perhaps you are concerned about environmental concerns, sexuality and gender, abortion, assisted suicide, bullying, hunger, poverty, and so on. Now, what are you doing to influence these issues personally or publically? If you aren’t doing anything about it then your ability to integrate biblical principles into your daily life needs to grow.

Growth Suggestion B: Christians tend to compartmentalize their lives. It’s as if we think we can divide our lives — Sunday is for worship; the rest of the week is reserved for our normal, everyday lives. However, this divide is not only unnecessary, it’s unhealthy. Whether you are in church or at work, on the soccer field or in the soup kitchen, every part of your life is an act of worship to God. Make a practice of **fighting against injustice** outside of church work. Christians know what the

Lord requires of them as they integrate his Word into their daily lives: “to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). When you fight against human trafficking, you are doing justice. When you serve the poor and destitute in your community, you are showing your love for mercy. Your biblical knowledge must be more than just knowledge; it must impact the way you live.

Growth Suggestion C: If you’ve made conscious efforts in your own life to be active in areas of social justice and other important matters, you likely find it very frustrating when you see such inactivity on the part of other believers and churches. Try to find ways to engage other Christians and your local church in rallying around an important matter. Are there many single mothers in your area? Perhaps you can arrange a clothing drive or a food hamper donation for these women. Are there many seniors who need care? Organizing a visitation team would be a great idea. Are there people in your community struggling with addictions? Maybe your church can host a recovery program. The needs are endless, but so are the possibilities. Your biblical knowledge shouldn’t go to waste. You know what needs to be done so **encourage others to get involved** and start a movement! This is true biblical integration.

Suggested Growth Resources: Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church (Michael Lawrence)

Notes:

VC Outcome 7: Seek the Common Good

Growth Suggestion A: In the life and ministry of Jesus, we clearly see how he went about “doing good” (Acts 10:38). In every community he visited he looked for ways to bless the people. Evaluate yourself. Do you look for ways to **bless your community?** Are you known for “doing good” everywhere you go? How do other people in your church and community perceive you? Are you known as a person who just does your own thing and who does not pay much attention to others? Or are

you known as a person who is always concerned about other people, going out of your way to help them? As a disciple of Jesus, how other people perceive you on a broad scale is important.

Growth Suggestion B: Jesus healed people who didn't even bother to come back and thank him (Lk. 17:11-19). Do you measure whether or not your efforts to do good are worth continuing based on how much thanks or recognition you earn as a result? For example, if your church organized a community clean up, as a service to the town, but didn't receive any official or public recognition for the service, would some suggest (perhaps even you?) that it's not worth doing again since the efforts weren't appreciated? Or maybe you delivered muffins to an elderly person in your church who complained that they weren't the kind they like. In either case, you should never measure whether or not you should continue doing good based on the recognition you receive from your acts of service. Jesus apparently didn't measure His success on such things; neither should Christians. Do you tend to subconsciously wonder if you should do something or not based on whether your efforts will be noticed or appreciated? If so, your motives are wrong. **Be cautious of your motivation** for doing good to ensure that your efforts are intended solely to seek the common good and not just for your own benefit.

Growth Suggestion C: Seeking the common good is ultimately about what Jesus would do in any given situation or context. People can often feel limited by factors outside of their control. However, as a follower of Jesus living in the power of the Holy Spirit, you should **dream big** for ways to impact those around you by doing good. What would Jesus have you do, plan, implement, organize, or administer in your context? Ultimately, Jesus wants you to shine His light and He will lead you. Pray for guidance as you look for any and every opportunity to go about "doing good."

Suggested Growth Resources:

Doing Good — DVD Series (Chip Ingram)

Doing Good Without Giving Up: Sustaining Social Action in a World That's Hard to Change (Ben Lowe and Ajith Fernando)

Small Things With Great Love: Adventures in Loving Your Neighbour (Margot Starbuck)

Notes:

VC Outcome 8: Mentoring Others

Growth Suggestion A: Mentoring isn't something we give enough thought to. Some feel that it has become just another 'buzz word.' But it goes much deeper than that. Timothy followed Paul and learned from his example. Timothy was shaped, in many ways, through the ministry of Paul. There was no formal agreement, but Timothy learned and grew by being with and observing Paul. Spend some time asking yourself these questions: While you may not have even realized it at the time, consider who your mentors were in your most formative years? Why were these people so important? What did they teach you? Who are your mentors now? How is it different and what are you learning from them? **Recognizing** the important mentors in your own life will leave you in a better place to mentor others.

Growth Suggestion B: Some people carry on with their leadership roles, feeling that their administrative, leadership, or public efforts are enough to feed the flock and help them grow. This couldn't be further from the truth. Paul and Timothy are a great example of biblical mentoring. Paul taught Timothy and helped shape his character. Further, Jesus gathered a group of 12 disciples and poured his life into them. Are you **intentionally mentoring** others into stronger faith, deeper spirituality, and more Christ-like character? If you are, keep going! If you aren't, you need to be. **Disciples make disciples** and mentoring is one of the best ways that you can disciple other people. Look around you and find someone you can mentor - a younger leader and/or a new believer, and start the process of investing in him or her! Start small (a conversation or coffee) and let the relationship grow both organically and intentionally.

Growth Suggestion C: When thinking about mentoring, you may envision an older, more seasoned individual passing their knowledge and deep spirituality down to a younger, less experienced or less developed person. However, have you ever wondered if that practice can be reversed? It can! This can be highly effective for the more mature believer. Often, mature believers subconsciously arrive at a place where they plateau and stop growing. Along with this mentality is a subtle sense of "knowing better" than younger Christians and not needing to learn from them. First of all, if you reach a point where you don't feel further growth is necessary then this is a sign of spiritual immaturity and a lack of spiritual vitality. Second, believers should learn from each other, regardless of how long we've been serving the Lord.

Simply because you've been on the road longer than another person doesn't guarantee that your growth is superior to theirs in every area. It's highly likely that you can learn from them! Give it a try. Start by genuinely listening to younger Christians to hear what they think and why they have come to certain conclusions. Maybe you could learn something. As you do this, start to spend more intentional time with younger leaders and believers - and watch this process of **reverse mentoring** at work!

Suggested Growth Resources: Mentor Like Jesus (Regi Campbell and Richard Chancy)
Transforming Together: Authentic Spiritual Mentoring
(Ele Parrott)
Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking & Giving
Direction (Keith Anderson and Randy Reese)
Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform
the Church and Why We Should Let Them (Earl Creps)

Notes:

Vocational Clarity Personalized Growth Plan:

Action Step 1:

Action Step 2:

Action Step 3:

5. Economics and Work

EW Outcome 1: Workplace Ethics

Growth Suggestion A: Have you ever been put in a position at work where you had opportunity to take something that wasn't yours? This could be as simple as eating a cookie that no one would even notice missing or as serious as making personal purchases disguised as business purchases on the company credit card. Younger employees who are still in the building phase of their lives and careers should take to heart the parable of the shrewd manager in Luke 16. Pay particular attention to verses 10-12. If you are **trustworthy** in the little things, your reliability will be noticed and you will likely earn greater responsibility.

Your character as a person isn't developed once you earn success and important roles; your character is developed in the menial jobs, the grunt work, and the lower level positions. People don't generally find themselves at the top unless they've proved themselves worthy of such roles. If you find yourself at the bottom rung of the ladder, do your absolute best to prove yourself to be trustworthy, reliable, and honest in your workplace. Your employer or board of directors will take note of your dependability. Older employees who have gained some freedom from oversight or have attained a certain degree of trust should never take advantage of their positions. Doing so brings reproach to yourself, your organization, and your employer.

Young employees should **examine themselves** to be sure that they are being faithful in the little things and showing the highest level of integrity even in the most minor details. Older employees should honestly examine themselves to ensure that they haven't let their standards slip and aren't using their freedom to take advantage of their employer or organization.

Growth Suggestion B: Do you ever feel tempted to bend the rules in your workplace? Expectations can be high and you may be under so much pressure that you look for little ways to cut corners or bend the rules a bit, hoping no one will notice. Perhaps you find a way to complete one of your required tasks with far less effort but you know that the way you're going about this task is less than ethical. For pastors, this could come in the form of downloading sermon content; for church leaders it could be not adequately fulfilling their obligations. If this is the case, you need to evaluate whether or not you actually want to live as a person of integrity. Sure, cutting corners and bending the rules may save time or make things easier for you, but is it the right thing to do? Even if no

one ever discovers what you were doing, God sees deep inside your heart. Not only so, but those whom you lead will follow your lethargic example. This isn't the legacy you want to leave behind. Be sure you are giving an **honest effort** in every aspect of your work.

Growth Suggestion C: If you happen to be in the position wherein you've earned some freedom or flexibility, or if you've landed in a role that provides very little accountability when it comes to your time, do you find yourself taking advantage of your freedom at the expense of your responsibilities? Maybe you've convinced yourself that you deserve those extra few days tacked onto the end of your holidays. Your family doesn't visit often, so you're entitled to spend a few days visiting. No one will notice if you spend another day fishing, right? Or, every workday involves a coffee meeting and you just happen to love coffee.

Let's be honest, some of these situations are quite justifiable. But, on the other hand, it's very easy to find yourself in a place where you are taking full advantage of your freedom. When your five-day workweek turns into a three-day workweek on a consistent basis, you have a problem. You are taking advantage of your employer and organization, stealing a salary you haven't earned, and being selfish. If you have concerns with your work ethic, your employer will appreciate you voicing your concerns with repentance while you ask for an **accountability system** to be put in place to safeguard everyone's best interests.

Suggested Growth Resources: High Performance Ethics: 10 Timeless Principles for Next-Generation Leadership (Wes Cantrel and James Lucas)
Good Work: Christian Ethics in the Workplace (Esther D. Reed)

Notes:

VC Outcome 2: Mission at Work

Growth Suggestion A: Do you sense a calling to your workplace, specifically? Do you find fulfillment in what you do on a daily basis? Pause and think for a few moments on your calling to your specific area of work. Is there a sense of mission? Find ways to **connect** what you do on a daily basis with the mission of God.

Growth Suggestion B: Are you an **agent of peace** in your workplace? In your interactions with people through the course of a typical workday, whether it be in person, over the phone, or through e-mail, are you known as a peaceful person who is easy to get along with and pleasant to interact with? **Consider** how you speak and communicate with other people in your work environment. Are you frequently rude, impatient, demanding, or dismissive? Or are you calm, polite, and patient? Strive to be the latter, bringing peace to your environment as a part of your mission at work.

Growth Suggestion C: If you feel that you have a strong grasp of your mission and how it relates to your workplace, you should **begin to mentor** other people in your workplace as they strive to find their place in God's work. You have the ability to influence other people to do better, be more, and best live out the mission of God in your workplace. Imagine the result if every believer was passionate about the mission at work and, in turn, mentored another person about the mission as well. Our workplaces would be revolutionized!

Suggested Growth Resources: About My Father's Business: Taking Your Faith to Work
(Regi Campbell)

Notes:

VC Outcome 3: Understanding Your Contribution to the Economy

Growth Suggestion A: As leaders, you need to have a good grasp on your local economy and how it impacts your home, your work, and your community. If you are a pastor, your industry is the church. Is this industry functioning well? Is it contributing to the local community? Industries are designed to impact society and not exist in a bubble, only interacting with itself. The church is poised to be a powerful force in the local economy. Reflect on how this is true in your context.

Growth Suggestion B: On a personal level, do you give much thought to your local economy? Christians are often very silent on such matters, tending to reason that “this world is not my home” and I don’t need to be heavily invested here. While we may be only temporary residents and our citizenship is indeed heavenly, God has given humans dominion over all the earth and if Christians aren’t involved in their local communities, businesses, and economy, we shouldn’t be surprised nor upset when non-Christian values are the norm. Take steps to **get involved** in your community. Attend public gatherings and meetings that may not be directly related to your work but are important in your community (such as council meetings). Be sure to vote whenever possible. Become a part of community organizations. Volunteer for events. Be present! Your involvement gives you a voice and contributes to your community and economy.

Growth Suggestion C: If you’re a leader in your local church, you’ll have a fairly clear understanding of how well your local church is impacting the community. Often outward-focused efforts are done with the mindset that others may come to faith as a result of these efforts. This is a part of what churches do in evangelistic ministry, and rightfully so. However, has your church ever taken on a major project for the sole reason of benefitting the local economy? We frequently hear of missionary efforts to build wells or schools in foreign countries and praise such accomplishments. But it’s interesting that churches in our context don’t often talk of efforts to help support our local economy. Perhaps this is a **conversation** your church leadership team should have.

Are there ways that your church could have a greater impact on your local economy? Can your church as a healthy, functioning organization become a more visible contributing force in your community? Is this a valuable endeavor? Begin the conversation. God’s church doesn’t exist to be passive and silent. Begin to process what your contribution to the local economy, both personally and corporately, should be.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Fling Open the Doors: Giving the Church Away to Community (Paul Nixon)
The New Parish: How Neighbourhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community (Paul Sparkes, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen)

Notes:

VC Outcome 4: Creativity and Innovation

Growth Suggestion A: Our God is a creative God. He imagined the world and spoke it into being. He created the earth in all its fullness and created humanity in His image. People also have the capacity for creativity! God’s Spirit resides in His people. If God is the origin of creativity, then every believer should have a natural inclination toward creative thought. Too often we limit the idea of ‘creativity’ to people who are skilled in the area of art. This is an unfortunate limitation.

Creativity can come in many different forms. Think of a pastor who is skilled in the art of words, weaving together beautiful sentences, creating an image in the mind of the hearer; a business person who envisions better systems and strategies to maximize efficiency; a lay person who crafts programs in completely new formats, designed to reach people in unique ways; a carpenter who skillfully designs, measures, cuts, and builds according to an original pattern. Creativity should never be limited to one particular field, but should be desired in every field.

Are you creative in your work? Whether you care for children, lead a congregation, run a business, or work with your hands, **aim for creativity and innovation** in every area of your vocation. When you live and work creativity, you display the image of God to the world.

Growth Suggestion B: When most people consider their work, they generally think about a set list of tasks that they are responsible to complete. There are certain obligations or responsibilities that the employee must fulfill. Do you simply ensure that your duties are complete and nothing more? Have you ever considered if there are better or more effective ways to complete your tasks?

If there were a more time-effective way to go about certain elements of your work or if there were better systems in place to economize time and resources, you would be able to expand your impact and efficiency.

The Holy Spirit is able to inspire you into deeper knowledge and excellence as it relates to your work (Phil. 1: 9-10). Pray for the **guidance** of the Holy Spirit in your work, that you would not simply perform routine tasks, but that you would operate with creativity and innovation, maximizing your efforts in your workplace.

Growth Suggestion C: Creativity is a part of the nature of God. As such, Christ-followers and the churches they belong to should demonstrate creativity as well. God didn't establish the church on earth so that Christians would establish cookie-cutter establishments in different locations. Your church should be unique to your community. As someone who is involved in local church leadership, think carefully about your church. Does it exist as a creative enterprise, uniquely fitting the needs of your specific location? Or does it exist as a carbon copy of other churches in other locations? This is not God's intention for your church. **Dream with your leadership team** for how your church can be innovative, uniquely serving your community and reaching it's full potential in God's creative enterprise.

Suggested Growth Resources:

7 Creative Models for Community Ministry (Joy Skjegstad)

Can We Do That? 24 Innovative Practices That Will Change the Way You Do Church (Andy Stanley and Ed Young)

Living in the Spirit (George O. Wood)

Innovation in Mission: Insights into Practical Innovations Creating Kingdom Impact (James W. Reapsome and Jon Hirst)

Notes:

VC Outcome 5: Asset to My Employer

Growth Suggestion A: The way you interact with those you work with directly impacts your employer. Are you the type of person who is easy to get along with and compliant with your employer's desires? If you are in vocational ministry, your 'employer' exists in the form of a church board. As a disciple of Christ, you should stand out in your workplace as someone who is willing to **serve wholeheartedly** and bring joy to your employer or board. If this has not been your practice, now is the time to start!

Growth Suggestion B: No workplace is perfect. There are problems in every single facet of human life and your workplace is no exception. It can be hard to believe, but even the church is an imperfect workplace. While it's natural to think on how problems in your area of employment upset you, consider how they affect others. Most employers or boards are under a great deal of strain as they manage people and the affairs of the business, organization, or church. Commit to **pray for your employer**, coworkers, and/or church board on a regular and consistent basis. You will be an asset in your consistent prayerful support and godly attitude.

Growth Suggestion C: As an employee, it's typical to think of yourself, what you earn, and how you benefit from your role. Your employer is attempting to manage something far greater than these concerns, yet how you approach your role affects your employer/organization. Pastors and other church leaders are no exception. You have a responsibility to your church board. You should dedicate yourself to the **continual improvement** of your skill set. This will benefit you as a person, but it is also a great asset to your employer or board. Commit to continually improving yourself both for your own benefit and for the benefit of those around you.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Do Over: Rescue Monday, Reinvent Your Work, and Never Get Stuck (Jon Acuff)

The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs (Sebastian Traeger and Greg D. Gilbert)

Notes:

VC Outcome 6: Managing the Organization's Resources Well

Growth Suggestion A: Jesus told his followers that how they care for their employer's assets matters to God. Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27 both refer to the responsibility of labourers taking care of the assets of their employer. Perhaps one of the most prevalent and pervasive problems in North American culture is the **sense of entitlement**. Some believe that this is a problem limited to the youngest generations, and though it may be most noticeable in younger people, the problem certainly isn't limited to that group of people. We see it in young employees who feel that they deserve the same benefits as those who've been in the field for many years. Yet, we also see it in older leaders, who feel they deserve to be given titles and 'perks' simply because of their age or a certain number of years served.

In spite of the multi-generational problem of entitlement, the fact remains that your employer's assets belong to your organization, not you. You must come to an understanding that you earn what you get and you deserve nothing outside of what your employer has agreed to give you and you have worked to receive. While this isn't to say you should sacrifice yourself on your employer's altar, you should be satisfied to earn what you've agreed to work for and not expect more. Anything outside of that is a gift.

Further, complicating the issue is that not all organizations are created equal! Some people find themselves in a position that provides many comfortable benefits. Others find themselves in a place whereby their basic needs are met and nothing more. Whatever your lot you must learn to be content with what you have (Phil. 4:11-13). If you've agreed to work for a certain salary package, then you have no right to complain about it. It matters not if a colleague in another location is given more, has lovely perks in his or her role, or has a larger salary. If you've been hired, you've agreed to what you earn and you must maintain a healthy attitude about it. Anything less doesn't bring glory to God and clearly shows your lack of spiritual depth.

Rather than complaining about what you don't have, **be grateful** for what you do have. Surely you're doing better than many people in our world. Furthermore, work to channel those negative emotions into a stronger work ethic and a better attitude. God will be pleased with such efforts.

Growth Suggestion B: Scripture informs us that ultimately we are employees of the Lord (Col. 3:23-24). If you sincerely took this to heart, your place of employment would be very different. If

every task, regardless of its seeming insignificance or obvious importance, were completed with this attitude, you would be more accomplished, your workplace would be more productive, and your attitude about your work would be healthier.

Make an effort to spend an entire workday in this **attitude of service** to God. If necessary, print the Scripture and place it somewhere visible. This will change the way you function as an employee. Once you've succeeded to work with this mindset for a full day, attempt to revolutionize your work-week. All good work is God's work. Whether you're preaching to thousands or cleaning up after the service, your healthy attitude about work brings glory to God. Most importantly, your reward is not earthly, but eternal!

Growth Suggestion C: For those who value a strong work ethic, productivity, and performance, seeing others who seem to disregard these values is troublesome. Generally, for those who think and work this way, the first response is one of frustration and annoyance. This isn't the response God would like you to emulate. First, you should **evaluate yourself** before criticizing others (Mt. 7:1-5). Second, if you address your brother or sister's need for growth in the area of their work, you must do so from a place of love and concern, not of judgment and criticism. Your brother or sister will be more receptive to your admonition if you demonstrate **genuine concern** for their spiritual development.

Encouraging others to work for God and not simply to fulfill the demands of an employer must also be evidenced through your own life and work. Your brothers and sisters in the faith should be able to clearly see how you work with that mindset. As such, you will be able to say with confidence, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). If you need to further develop this area of your life, first ensure that your work ethic is above reproach. Second, be sure to encourage others out of love and concern for growth and not criticism. Your passion in this area has potential to help others in their discipleship journey.

Suggested Growth Resources: Theology of Work Project (Hendrickson Publishers)

Notes:

VC Outcome 7: Stewards of the Environment

Growth Suggestion A: Many Christians tend to pay very little attention to environmental issues, feeling as though it's an insignificant matter. However, believers can argue that taking care of one's physical body is important because your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). By the same token, we should be quick to remember that, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Ps. 42:1). Of course we believe this to be true, but the way we so casually dismiss environmental concerns speaks volumes. In reality, Christians should be the **best advocates** for environmental stewardship in society! This earth belongs to the Lord. He created it and gave humans the task of caring for it (Gen. 1). Spend some time reading chapter one of Genesis. Try reading it in several different translations. What does it mean that God gave humans dominion over the earth? Does this change the way you view creation care?

Growth Suggestion B: Sometimes the most basic changes to our lifestyles can make the biggest impact on the environment. Have you made any changes to your lifestyle or that of your family to help with environmental concerns? Even simple changes like recycling, composting, using reusable containers instead of disposable ones, or conserving energy can make a difference. Evaluate your habits at home to see if there are any changes you can make to help contribute to a healthier earth.

Growth Suggestion C: Perhaps the most difficult place to change in order to effectively care for the environment is at the workplace. Typically, decisions around the functioning of an office, building, business, or workplace are primarily concerned with cost and efficiency. Try to identify some areas of your workplace that could be improved to be more in line with God's concern for the environment and the role of people in caring for it. Do you see areas whereby small changes can be made that will help your workplace be more environmentally friendly? For example, does your workplace waste a lot of paper? Make some helpful suggestions to reduce the amount of wasted paper and suggest a recycling program for used paper. Many workplaces use a great deal of paper and this is a relatively easy change that will be very helpful in the long run. Look for other ways to help your workplace become a place that cares for the environment.

Suggested Growth Resources:

Manage: Caring For All God Entrusted To Us (Micah Carter and Fred Luter)

For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for
Creation Care (Steven Bouma-Prediger)

Notes:

Economics & Work Personalized Growth Plan:

Action Step 1:

Action Step 2:

Action Step 3: