



# Mentor Training Workshop

*“If one falls down his friend can help him up.  
But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up”  
Ecclesiastes 4:10*

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## OVERVIEW

**ATLAS** (Attaining Truth, Love And Self-Control) is a non-profit organization that provides a bridge for Christians to connect with non-Christians (or Christians with other Christians!) in an informal, Christ-centered mentoring relationship. We are focused on building up and sending out missionary-minded people to touch lives for Christ right here in Sioux Falls, SD. In a recent survey it was discovered that nearly 75% of the population in Sioux Falls is not a part of a church family. The Church of Sioux Falls will have spent millions of dollars collectively to fund missionaries all over the world while 75% of our ‘neighbors’ remain outside the fellowship of the body of Christ...this is not ok and we need to change this statistic! The compelling vision that will move us towards this change is not anything new, rather it’s returning to the practices that brought about unprecedented conversion and spiritual growth in the second book of Acts where Christians were: *“devoting themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

### **ATLAS Core Values:**

- Centered on Christ. “The beginning and end of true ministry is all about Jesus Christ.”
- Filled and led by the Holy Spirit
- Driven by prayer
- Based in the concept of mentoring
- Governed and financially supported from within the community
- Inter-denominational

### **ATLAS Mission, Vision, and Goals:**

- **Mission:** Helping people Attain Truth, Love And Self-control
- **Vision:** Every believer equipped and engaged in spiritually fathering or mothering another
- **Goals:** 1) Seeking and saving the lost  
2) Producing disciples that are attaining truth, love and self-control  
3) Assisting in the growth and development of the local church

## Statement of Faith

We are called by God to partner with everyone He brings to us so that we might bring the very presence of Jesus Christ to the hurting and lost. Understanding this, we are devoted to work side by side with all people who are committed to helping others attain truth, love and self-control. We believe that people will attain truth, love and self-control through the power and love of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we want everyone we work with to understand our core beliefs.

- We believe in one eternal God who has revealed Himself in the persons of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. (Deut. 6:4; Mt. 28:19)
- We believe the Bible is the true and inspired Word of God, and that it is without error in all that it affirms. We believe God's Word is our one authority for the practice of life and death. (Is. 55:11; 2 Tim. 3:16)
- We believe that the historical Jesus of Nazareth is the Lord and Savior of all humanity and that he is fully God and fully man. We believe Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary and that He lived a perfect and sinless life. We believe He died, was buried, and rose again from the dead to pay for our sins and give us eternal life and that he now sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. (Mt. 1:18; John 1:1, 14; Heb. 9:11-15)
- We believe there is only one name given under heaven and earth by which people might be saved, and that Jesus Christ is the one way to have a relationship with the God of eternity. (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)
- We believe God has called us to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with all people. We believe every person must understand the following truths: eternal life is a free gift of grace, all people are sinners in need of grace, God is loving but he is also just and will punish sin, therefore, God sent Jesus Christ into creation to take upon himself the punishment for our sin, and that all who believe in Jesus Christ with their whole heart and mind and confess their faith in Him will be saved. (Mt. 28:19-20; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 John 4:8; Ex. 34:7; John 6:47)
- We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to change lives. The Holy Spirit comes to guide, sanctify, convict, and grow each believer in Christ's likeness and to lead the lost into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. (Jn 15:26-27; 16:8-11)
- We believe in the power of prayer. We believe God has called us in prayer to intercede for our communities, our churches, our leaders, and our world. (Gen. 18:16-33; 1 Thess. 5:17; James 5:16)
- We believe Jesus Christ established the church so that through it He might proclaim the love of God to all peoples of the earth. We exist to serve the Church in her mission to share the love of God. We believe that all Christians are called by God to be active participants in a local church by sharing in the mission of Jesus Christ in that church and participating in the fellowship of believers. (Gen. 12:1-3; Eph. 4:11-16)
- We believe God has called us to equip believers in Jesus Christ to disciple all people and that we have a responsibility to work for justice and reconciliation in all aspects of our community. (Mt. 25:31-46)
- We believe the return of Jesus Christ is imminent, and therefore, every Christian should resolutely determine to be about the work of the Kingdom of God. (Mt. 24:22-24)

## The Commands of Jesus Christ

1. Repent - Mt 4:17
2. Follow me - Mt 4:19
3. Rejoice – Mt 5:11-12
4. **Let your light shine before men** - Mt 5:16
5. Honor God's Law - Mt 5:17-18
6. **Be Reconciled** - Mt 5:24-25
7. Do Not Commit Adultery - Mt 5:29-30
8. Keep Your Word - Mt 5:37
9. **Go the Second Mile** - Mt 5:39-41
10. **Love Your Enemies** - Mt 5:44
11. Be Perfect - Mt 5:46-48
12. Practice Secret Disciplines - Mt 6:1-18
13. Lay Up Treasures - Mt 6:19-21
14. Seek First Gods Kingdom - Mt 6:35
15. **Judge Not** - Mt 7:1-2
16. Do Not Cast Pearls - Mt 7:6
17. Ask, Seek, Knock - Mt 7:7-8
18. **Do Unto Others** - Mt 7:12
19. Choose the Narrow Way - Mt 7:13-14
20. Beware of False Prophets - Mt 7:15
21. **Pray for Laborers** - Mt 9:37-38
22. Be Wise as Serpents - Mt 10:16
23. Fear Not - Mt 10:28
24. Hear Gods Voice - Mt 11:15
25. Take My Yoke - Mt 11:29
26. Honor Your Parents - Mt 15:4
27. Beware of Leaven - Mt 16:6
28. **Deny Yourself** - Lk 9:23
29. Despise Not Little Ones - Mt 18:10
30. **Go to Offenders** - Mt 18:15
31. Beware of Covetousness - Lk 12:15
32. **Forgive Offenders** - Mt 18:21-22
33. Honor Marriage - Mt 19:6
34. **Be a Servant** - Mt 20:26-27
35. Be a House of Prayer - Mt 21:13
36. Ask in Faith - Mt 21:21-22
37. **Bring in the Poor** - Lk 14:12-14
38. Render to Caesar - Mt 22:19-21
39. Love the Lord - Mt 27:37
40. **Love Your Neighbor** - Mt 22:39
41. Await My Return - Mt 24:42-44
42. Take, Eat And Drink - Mt 26:26-27
43. Be Born Again - John 3:7
44. Keep My Commandments - John 14:15
45. **Watch and Pray** - Mt 26:41
46. **Feed My Sheep** - John 221:15-16
47. **Baptize My Disciples** - Mt 28:19
48. Receive Power - Lk 24:49
49. **Make Disciples of all nations** - Mt 28:20
50. Demonstrate God's Power - Mk 6:17

## **Self-Evaluation for Perspective Disciple makers**

If most of these describe you, you are probably on your way to discipling another:

- You have a living relationship with Jesus Christ and are assured of His presence in your life.
- You have a working knowledge of the Bible and are hungry to learn more.
- You usually allow others to share their stories before you do.
- You have been told that you are a good listener. In fact, you enjoy listening to others and people frequently open up to you.
- You try to be flexible.
- You allow others to have their own preferences/opinions.
- You are a positive person.
- You desire to love others unconditionally.
- You are patient with the failings of others
- You are able to confront people when necessary.

If one or more of these describe you, you may want to seek out someone to disciple you:

- You are very new in your Christian faith.
- You feel you need help studying your Bible.
- You still need to tell your story every chance you get.
- You have trouble listening for long periods of time.
- You like to be right and go to great lengths to prove your point.
- Others might call you inflexible.
- You have trouble being positive.
- You often feel the urge to “fix” people.
- You frequently get impatient with others.
- You avoid confrontation at all costs preferring to keep things running smoothly.

## Qualities of a disciple maker

*The key is not in the technique but in the heart.*

- 1) **A walk of Faith:** Standing on the promises of God...Attaining **Truth!!**
  - a. Exodus 3:12, "I will be with you." God did not want Moses to rely on His ability or training but to rest in His presence.
  - b. What God says is more real than what our eyes see. We are assured of God's presence.
  - c. People who take God at His word and trust Him make excellent disciple makers, knowing that only God can change lives they become people of prayer.
  - d. "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it." 1 Thess. 5:24
- 2) **A Heart for People:** to build people up in Christ...Attaining **Love!!**
  - a. Love expresses itself in action.
  - b. "Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." 1 John 3:18
  - c. Discipling is not getting people through programs and methods but rather serving them to help them become more mature in Christ. It's about the relationship, not the program.
  - d. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." 1 John 3:16
  - e. Love gives us the capacity to serve others even when our burdens are heavy.
- 3) **A life patterned after Jesus:** Attaining **Self-control!!**
  - a. Matthew 6:33 "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you as well.
  - b. The centrality of Jesus Christ. We must be focused on Jesus and not give ourselves to activities, classes, and programs.
  - c. Constantly putting yourself in the position of learner rather than the one with all the answers.

### **Important things to remember:**

- 1) The Lord wants us to make disciples: He commissioned us to do it in Matthew 28:19
- 2) Plenty of people need to be discipled. "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few." Matt 9:37
- 3) Any of us can disciple if we believe God, love people, and follow Christ with the intent of becoming like Him.
- 4) Don't wait until you feel capable. The heart of the disciple maker is your character, not your skills. Step out in faith, invest your life in someone else, and pick up the skills as you go along.

## What is discipleship and/or mentoring?

- It's being open and giving God the elbow room in your schedule to bring someone your way that He wants to use you to minister to.
- It's becoming a "student of life" so you have something to share with someone else when God brings them your way. As you become aware of all the "learning opportunities" around you, God can use you to share these "tailor-made just for them" nuggets of truth with them.
- It's proceeding in life prayerfully so your eyes are tuned in, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, to all the ministry opportunities and learning opportunities He brings your way.
- It's believing in others and infusing hope into others when they can't believe themselves. As 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, love "*always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*"
- It's following the principle of Hebrews 10:24 where it says, "*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*"
- Sometimes it's just quietly crying with, and standing with, and holding up a friend without saying much at all — knowing that sometimes friends need a strong, quiet friend to be with them more than someone who speaks more than they should in that circumstance. (Job, from the Bible, had friends who were good examples of friends who didn't know when to shut up and just BE WITH their friend instead of chattering.)
- It's being spiritually in tune to those you're with to know when you're to speak love, show love, or both.
- It's being a friend who loves unconditionally and sees beyond your faults.
- It's being "Christ with skin on" — being His colleague in loving this friend as Christ would.

### Pitfalls to avoid:

- Messiah Complex – "I'm here to rescue you."
- Problem Solver – "I'm here to provide answers for you or fix you."
- Wisdom Dispenser – "I'm here to share my great wisdom."

# Life-cycle of a Mentoring Relationship

## Getting Acquainted

- Pray for your mentoree, even before you meet them.
- Meet with mentoring coordinator and your mentoree the first time.
- Go out for coffee or meet for a meal.
- Get to know them.
- Ask some non-threatening, open-ended questions: “What do you like to do in your spare time?” “Tell me a little about your family.”
- Do an activity together (take a walk, go fishing, go to a basketball game, cook a meal together, work on photo albums etc...)
- Listen to their story. Keep it confidential! (The story may be told all at once or in small segments. Let it happen.)

## Going Deeper

- Ask the deeper questions:
  - In what area(s) would you like to grow?
  - How can I help?
- Enter into their “soul battle” – their relationship with God.
- Pray with them. (Ask them to pray when they are ready.)
- Invite them to go to church with you if they are not regularly attending.
- Talk about Sunday’s sermon or the Bible study they attend.
- Do a Bible study together.
- Read a book and talk about it when you meet. (Choose a topic relevant to their life: marriage, parenting, money management, spiritual growth.)
- Teach them how to keep a journal so they can record prayers, answers to prayers, important Bible verses, and ideas from books and sermons.
- Talk about ways that your mentoree can serve someone else. Perhaps you could do this together.
- Other questions you could use during a mentoring session to guide the conversation:
  - What was the best moment of your week?
  - What was the worst moment of your week?
  - What are you afraid of?
  - What topics would you like to discuss today?
  - Are you at peace?
  - Describe an important person in your life. Describe a favorite place in your life.
  - Does God have a place in your life? Explain.
  - When did God really get your attention?

## Are discipleship and mentoring the same?

The terms discipleship and mentoring are being used with increasing frequency in ministry circles these days and with varying definitions. In our Mentor workshops and materials, we have tried to help you create a distinction between discipling and mentoring rather than viewing them as synonymous. Discipleship is broader and more basic. It is focused on getting believers grounded in their faith, living a God-honoring life, and equipped for general ministry. Mentoring is advanced discipleship. It is focused on preparing faithful, fervent and gifted emerging leaders for mature, capable and fruitful leadership.

<b>Discipleship</b>	<b>Mentoring</b>
"Discipling others is the process by which a Christian with a life worth emulating commits himself for an extended period of time to a few individuals who have been won to Christ to aid and guide their growth to maturity and equip them to reproduce themselves in a third spiritual generation." <i>Allen Hadidian</i>	Mentoring is the process by which a church leader with a life and philosophy of ministry worth emulating commits himself for an extended period of time to a few faithful, fervent and gifted emerging church leaders to aid and guide their growth to leadership ministry and equip them to reproduce themselves in a third generation of church leaders.
Target Group: Newer Believers	Target Group: Emerging Leaders
Trigger: Faith in Christ	Trigger: Faithful and fervent service, evidence of leadership giftedness
Healthy disciples reproduce disciples	Healthy leaders reproduce leaders
Discipler has the role of a spiritual parent and teacher	Mentor has the role of a player-coach (training others while in the game himself)
Focus is on the Christian disciplines, basic Bible knowledge and personal ministry skills	Focus is on spiritual maturity, advanced Bible and theology and leadership ministry skills
Primary emphasis is on character development	Primary emphasis is on skills development
Key Verse - Matthew 28:19-20	Key Verse - 2 Timothy 2:2
"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them ... [and] teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ..." (NKJV)	"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (NKJV)
Jesus' Group: Thousands of disciples	Jesus' Group: The 70, the Twelve and the Three
Paul's Group: The churches	Paul's Group: Fellow laborers, and Sons in the faith

## **Listening: One of the Most Important Skills**

Let us not underestimate how hard it is to listen and to become compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely and broken. ...Our spontaneous response...is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it. ...And so we ignore our greatest gift, which is our ability to be there, to listen and to enter into solidarity with those who suffer.

**Henri Nouwen**

### **1) Prepare**

- Pray for your mentoree.
- Pray for yourself.
- Pray for your mentoring meeting.

### **2) Physical attention**

- Show attentiveness in your own posture.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Pay attention to the body language of your mentoree.

### **3) Probe**

- Ask questions gently; don't interrogate.
- Use open-ended questions (not questions that can be answered "yes" or "no") :
  1. How did you feel?
  2. What was that like for you?
  3. What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Seek to understand, not manipulate or persuade.
- Don't be a "sentence finisher."
- Don't be afraid of silence.

### **4) Provide feedback**

- Clarify as you go. ("If I hear you correctly, I think you mean\_\_\_\_\_. Is that right?" "What you're saying is \_\_\_\_\_?")
- Don't judge.
- Encourage and affirm where possible.

### **5) Provide illustrations**

- Share parts of your story that may be significant and helpful.
- Talk about lessons God has taught you where they apply.
- Share your life sparingly, especially at the beginning.

## How Good Are Your Boundaries?

Answer these questions as honestly as you can, but do not spend too much time on each one. There are no right or wrong answers. Take each question as it comes and answer it as you usually feel. Please mark T (true) or F (false) beside each question.

- \_\_\_ 1. I take some time each week for myself.
- \_\_\_ 2. When I am in a relationship that becomes too confusing and complicated, I know how to get out of it.
- \_\_\_ 3. I hold back my feelings much of the time because I don't want to hurt other people or have them think less of me.
- \_\_\_ 4. When a friend asks for my help, I usually say "yes" even if it puts great stress on my own family.
- \_\_\_ 5. I do not find it difficult to ask for what I need in a relationship.
- \_\_\_ 6. I often have so many things going on at once that I feel I'm not doing justice to any of them.
- \_\_\_ 7. Sometimes I feel that everything would fall apart if it weren't for me.
- \_\_\_ 8. I have learned that sometimes I have to say "no" when asked to do volunteer work/
- \_\_\_ 9. I do not blame family members for my own anger.
- \_\_\_ 10. People often take advantage of me, and that makes me feel disrespected.

Based on the Friel Co-dependency Assessment Inventory

# Setting Healthy Boundaries: Preventing Burnout

## What is a boundary?

A boundary is an invisible protective fence around our personal space (physical, mental, and emotional). Boundaries keep people from abusing us and controlling us or getting us to do things before we have a chance to think or say “no.” Our boundaries also keep us aware of others’ boundaries so that we do not break into their space to control or abuse them.

## The understanding of boundary setting is important for two reasons:

1. We need to set boundaries for ourselves as mentors so that our mentorees will not take advantage of us. This is not good for them or us.
2. We need to understand how the lack of setting boundaries is affecting those we are trying to guide in the mentoring relationship.

## A person with weak boundaries behaves in one or more of these ways:

- Can’t say “no”
- Develops a victim mentality. “Everyone is against me.”
- Becomes extremely dependent on you.
- Makes unreasonable demands on you - especially time.
- Causes you anxiety and fear when you think of them.
- Gets upset if you do certain things.
- Never listens to your perspective.
- Blames you for their feelings.
- Puts feeling over responsibility.

## A person with good boundaries exhibits these attitudes:

- “I care about you but I can’t take away your problems.”
- “I need time to be alone.”
- “We are all persons of worth, created in God’s image.”
- “I can own and identify my own emotions and take responsibility for them.”

## Creating healthy boundaries:

- Respect the boundaries of others.
- Refuse to be a victim.
- Stop blaming other people for your negative emotions.
- Keep a mental list of your boundaries - Know your limits.
- Develop the art of saying “no” when appropriate.
- Be kind but firm.
- Communicate with the person who is crossing your boundaries and alert them to your new way of relating.
- Don’t use boundaries to hurt people

## Letting Go

Letting go does not mean to stop caring;  
It means I can't do it for someone else.

Letting go is not to cut myself off;  
It's the realization I can't control another.

Letting go is not to enable;  
But to allow learning from natural consequences

Letting go is to admit powerlessness;  
Which means the outcome is not in my hands.

Letting go is not to try to change or blame another;  
It's to make the most of myself.

Letting go is not to care for; but to care about.

Letting go is not to fix; but to be supportive.

It's not to judge but to allow another to be a human being.

Letting go is not to be in the middle arranging the outcome;  
But to allow others to affect their own destinies.

Letting go is not to be protective;  
It's to permit another to face reality.

Letting go is not to deny; but to accept.

Letting go is not to nag, scold or argue;  
But instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.

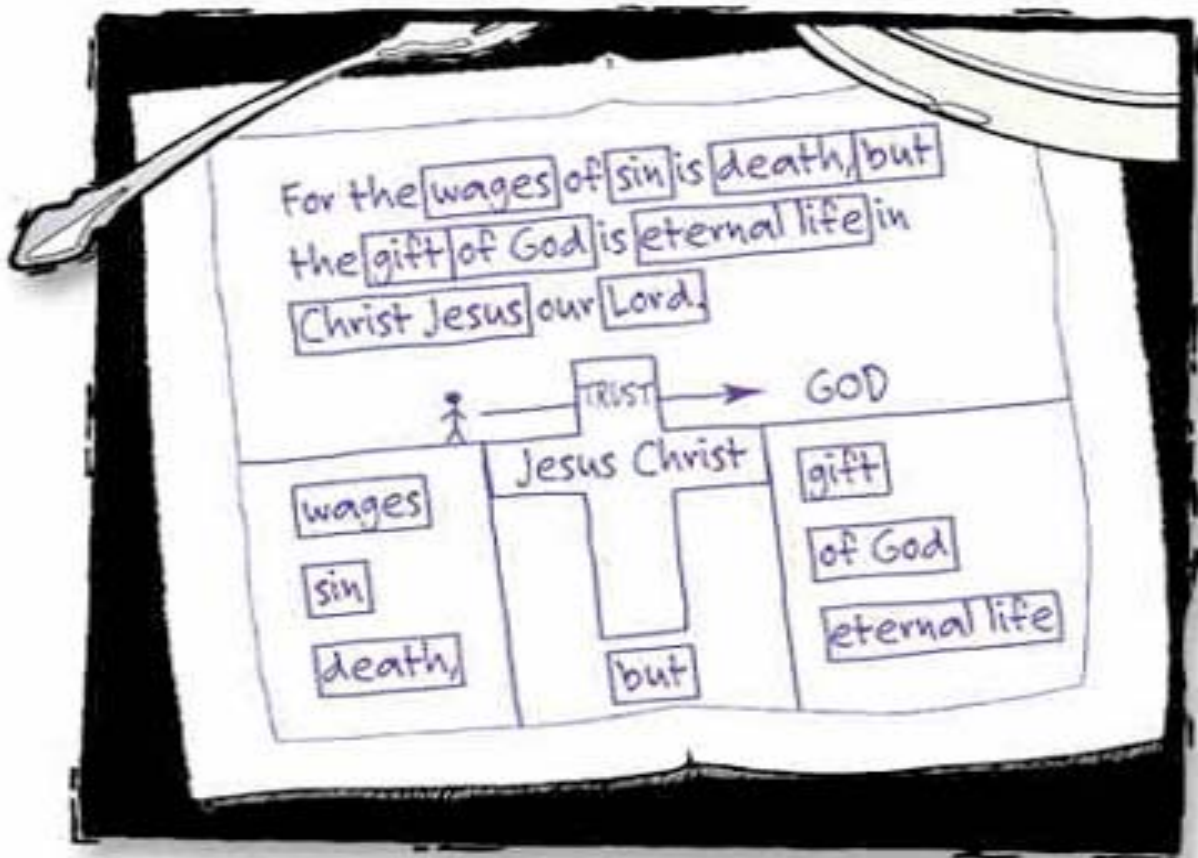
Letting go is not to adjust everything to my own desires;  
But to take each day as it comes and cherish myself in it.

Letting go is not to regret the past;  
But to grow and live for the future.

Letting go is to fear less and live more.

## Additional resources:

### Presenting the Gospel



Many people feel that to be effective in evangelism they must memorize a complex illustration and a multitude of verses. ***But the Gospel is most powerful when shared with love, clarity, and simplicity.*** Here's a brief look at how it works. Let's say God's leading you to share the Gospel with your neighbor, Jeff. Write out Romans 6:23 on a piece of paper or a napkin: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (NIV). Then put your Bible away. Ask Jeff if he would like to see a simple picture based on this verse that will explain God's relationship with people.

wages

Circle this word and ask, "How would you feel if your boss refused to pay you the wages that were due to you?" Deep down, we all know that it is only right that we get what we deserve. Similarly, we earn wages from God for how we have lived our lives.

sin

Draw a circle around "sin," asking your friend what he thinks when he hears this word. You might explain that sin is more an attitude than an action. It can be either actively

fighting God or merely excluding Him from our lives. You can ask, "Has God ever seemed far away?" If he says "Yes," add that that's one of the things sin does-it makes God seem far away. Now draw two opposing cliffs with a gap in between.

death,

Circle this word and ask what thoughts come to mind. Explain that death in the Bible always means some kind of separation.

but

While circling this word, mention that it is important because it means that a sharp contrast in thought is coming. What we have just looked at is bad news; what follows is good news.

gift

Draw a circle around this word. Ask, "If wages are what a person earns, then what is a gift?" Remind your friend that someone must purchase every gift.

of God

Circle this and explain that the gift you are talking about is free. It is from God Himself. It's so special that no one else can give it. Ask, "How do you feel when someone gives you a special gift?"

eternal life

Circle these two words next, and then ask, "How would you define these words?" Contrast one side of the cliff, death, with the other side, eternal life. Ask, "What is the opposite of separation from God?"

Christ Jesus

Draw these words so they create a bridge between the two cliffs. Help your friend to consider that every gift has a giver, and only Jesus Christ can give the gift of eternal life.

TRUST

Write this word over the bridge you just drew. Explain that friends trust each other, and tell your friend that Jesus wants a trusting friendship with him. All he has to do is admit that he is responsible for the "sin" of either fighting or excluding God from his life. That is what trust means-trusting that Jesus wants to forgive us for rejecting Him from our lives. At this point, you can ask him if he wants to start a relationship with God that will last forever. If he says "Yes," invite him to pray a short prayer in his own words, asking Jesus to forgive him.

If we are Christians simply by believing that Jesus died for our sins, then that is all it takes to have sins forgiven and go to heaven when we die. Why, then, do some people keep insisting that something more than this is desirable? Lordship, discipleship, spiritual formation, and the like? What more could one want than to be sure of their eternal destiny and enjoy life among others who profess the same faith as they do. Of course everyone wants to be a good person. But that does not require that you actually do what Jesus himself said and did. Haven't you heard? "Christians aren't perfect. Just forgiven." Now those who honestly find themselves concerned about such matters might find it helpful to consider four simple points: First, there is absolutely nothing in what Jesus himself or his early followers taught that suggests you can decide just to enjoy forgiveness at Jesus' expense and have nothing more to do with him. Some years ago A. W. Tozer expressed his "feeling that a notable heresy has come into being throughout evangelical Christian circles--the widely-accepted concept that we humans can choose to accept Christ only because we need him as Savior and that we have the right to postpone our obedience to him as Lord as long as we want to!" (I Call It Heresy, Harrisburg, PA.: Christian Publications, 1974, p. 5f) He then goes on to state "that salvation apart from obedience is unknown in the sacred scriptures." This 'heresy' has created the impression that it is quite reasonable to be a "vampire Christian." One in effect says to Jesus: "I'd like a little of your blood, please. But I don't care to be your student or have your character. In fact, won't you just excuse me while I get on with my life, and I'll see you in heaven." But can we really imagine that this is an approach that Jesus finds acceptable? And when you stop to think of it, how could one actually trust him for forgiveness of sins while not trusting him for much more than that. You can't trust him without believing that he was right about everything, and that he alone has the key to every aspect of our lives here on earth. But if you believe that, you will naturally want to stay just as close to him as you can, in every aspect of your life. Secondly, if we do not become his apprentices in kingdom living we remain locked in defeat so far as our moral intentions are concerned. This is where most professing Christians find themselves today. Statistical studies prove it. People, generally, choose to sin. And they are filled with explanations as to why, everything considered, it is understandable to do so. But, even so, no one chooses to be a sinner. It is amusing that people will admit to lying, for example, but stoutly deny that they are liars. We want to be good, but we are prepared, ready, to do evil--should circumstances require it. And of course they do 'require' it, with deadening regularity. As Jesus himself indicated, those who practice sin actually are slaves of it. (John 8:34) Ordinary life confirms it. How consistently do you find people able to do good and avoid evil as they intend. By contrast, practicing Jesus' word as his apprentices enables us to understand our lives and to see how we can interact with God's redemptive resources, ever at hand. This in turn gives us an increasing freedom from failed intentions, as we learn from him how, simply, do what we know to be right. By a practiced abiding in his words we come to know the truth and the truth does, sure enough, make us free. (John 8:36) Thirdly, only avid discipleship to Christ through the spirit brings the inward transformation of thought, feeling and character that "cleans the inside of the cup" (Matt. 23:25) and "makes the tree good" (Matt. 12:33). As we study with Jesus we increasingly become on the inside--with "the Father who is in secret" (Matt 6:6)--exactly what we are on the outside, where actions and moods and attitudes visibly play over our body alive in its social context. An amazing simplicity will take over our lives--a simplicity that is really just

transparency. This requires a long and careful learning from Jesus to remove the duplicity that has become second nature to us--as is perhaps inevitable in a world where, to 'manage' our relations to those about us, we must hide what we really think, feel and would like to do if only we could avoid observation. Thus, a part of Jesus' teaching was to "avoid the leaven, or permeating spirit, of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (Luke 12:1) The Pharisees were in many respects the very best people of Jesus' day. But they located goodness in behavior and tried to secure themselves by careful management at the behavioral level. However, that simply cannot be done. Behavior is driven by the hidden or secret dimension of human personality, from the depths of the soul and body, and what is present there will escape. Hence they always failed at some point to do what is right, and had to redefine, redescribe or explain it away--or simply hide it. By contrast the fruit of the spirit, as described by Jesus and Paul, does not consist in actions, but in attitudes or settled personality traits that make up the substance of the "hidden" self, the "inner man." "Love" captures this fruit in one word, but in such a concentrated form that it needs to be spelled out. Thus, "the fruit (singular) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Gla 5:22) Other such passages easily come to mind, such as II Peter 1:4-11, I Cor. 13, and Romans 5:1-5. "Spiritual formation" in the Christian tradition is a process of increasingly being possessed and permeated by such character traits as we walk in the easy yoke of discipleship with Jesus our teacher. From the inward character the deeds of love then naturally--but supernaturally--and transparently flow. Of course there will always be room for improvement, so we need not worry that we will become perfect--at least for a few weeks or months. Our aim is to be pervasively possessed by Jesus through constant companionship with him. Like our brother Paul: "This one thing I do! ...I press toward the mark! ...That I may know him!" (Phil. 3) Finally, for the one who makes sure to walk as close to Jesus as possible there comes the reliable exercise of a power that is beyond them in dealing with the problems and evils that afflict earthly existence. Jesus is actually looking for people he can trust with his power. He knows that otherwise we remain largely helpless in the face of the organized and disorganized evils around us and unable to promote his will for good in this world with adequate power. He is the one who said, "I have been given say over all things in heaven and earth. So you go...." (Matt. 28:18) Of him it was said that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." (Acts 10:38) We are called to do his work by his power. However we may understand the details there can be no doubt, on the biblical picture of human life, ***that we were meant to be inhabited by God and live by a power beyond ourselves. Human problems cannot be solved by human means.*** Human life can never flourish unless it pulses with "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." (Eph. 1:19) But only constant students of Jesus will be given adequate power to fulfill their calling to be God's person for their time and their place in this world. But, someone will say, can I not be saved--get into heaven when I die--without any of this? Perhaps you can. God's goodness is so great, I am sure, that He will let you in if He can find any basis at all to do so. But you might wish to think about what your life amounts to before you die, about what kind of person you are becoming, and whether you really would be comfortable for eternity in the presence of one whose company you have not found especially desirable for the few hours and days of earthly existence.

## **The Quest for Significance**

Where does the Christian find his or her identity and sense of worth? From a career... relationships... a ministry? This is too often the case. However, Jesus pointed us away from the realms of outward accomplishments and the honor of man to the inward encounter with the burning affections of God's heart as a means of discovering our true identity and sense of significance.

### **The Free and Eternal Gift of Greatness**

God has given us something amazingly powerful in the fact that He desires and pursues us. He has given us the free gift of greatness. Everyone that is born again by the blood of Jesus, in receiving eternal life, the gift of righteousness, and the indwelling Spirit, has received the free and eternal gift of greatness and success automatically at the new birth. When we said yes to the grace of God, Hebrews 2:7-9 says that God crowned us with glory and honor. In that hour we became great beyond exaggeration, and the Lord ordained that the fact of this new identity would profoundly change the way we view ourselves. What the Scripture says about those that have been crowned with glory and honor is profound. The least believer is high above the highest angel in privilege. Beloved, we are the bride of Christ, and will rule and reign with Him forever in resurrected bodies. We are the sons of the most high God forever. The angels don't have any of these dimensions as a part of their experience. Imagine how the thief on the cross felt when he stepped over the line of death into Paradise. I can imagine he said something like this, "If I had known I was a king, I would never have been a thief!" I don't believe the angels have gotten over it yet, that human beings made of clay, some of whom were fraternizing with demons, or living in rebellion, disobedience, or perversion, can be so set free, so cleaned up, so crowned with glory, and that they alone would be invited into intimate partnership and intimate fellowship with God Himself. I think they are still looking at us, and at each other, and saying something like, "How do you figure this?!"

### **The Divine Romance of Discovery**

One of the great challenges of our growth in the grace of God is to progressively discover the greatness and beauty that we possess in the new birth. Paul states that our lives are hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3), and this is the essence of the challenge. The greatness and beauty that we received as a gift is veiled, hidden from our eyes and the eyes of those before whom we live. God sees our greatness, of course, as do the angels, but the full dignity of our lives is significantly hidden from us, and we cannot know it fully until the Lord is revealed to us in fullness, and we see Him face to face. It is a magnificent adventure, a romance beyond imagination, to go on the journey of a lifetime spent discovering the significance God has placed upon us. The unfolding of this romance is meant to empower us to live a life of extravagant obedience to Him. I believe this tremendous experience of the divine romance, understanding and discovering His beauty and our beauty, His passion awakening our passion, is the highest motivational strategy the Holy Spirit has ordained for the end time church. It is this discovery that empowers us to love our lives not even unto death. We will stand in the face of martyrdom by the grace of God with a lovesick heart motivated by passion and pleasure, a heart steadfast, a heart on fire, supernaturally empowered by these truths, and by the Holy Spirit.

## **Living Beyond Our Performance**

This is what Jesus came to establish for us at the Cross in the atonement. If we can understand this issue of greatness related to salvation, it would also settle a lot of our anxiety to achieve a greatness outside the grace of God, even in the midst of ministry. It is the most natural thing for us to strive to achieve our sense of worth or success based on external recognition. However, this type of outcome-based living will never replenish and sustain our hearts. In the end, it leaves us broken and hurting, because we cannot control the outcome of every situation which affects this kind of identity. So how do we re-orient our hearts from this performance- or outcome-based identity to a true biblical sense of worth? Jesus admonished the Pharisees that they needed to experience the love of God, and thus discover the honor that comes from Him alone.

## **Living Understanding Issuing From Encounter**

In John 5:38-44, Jesus sets forth stunning principles as to how He carried his heart in the realm of man because He had experienced the love of God, and knew who He was in God's eyes. In verse 38, He tells the Pharisees plainly that His Word is not abiding in them. This seems a shocking statement, as the Pharisees were, to others, men mighty in the Word. However, they had biblical information, not living understanding. They had searched the Scriptures, Jesus said, but they were not willing to come to Him that they might have life. In other words, Jesus is saying they have studied the Bible with the presupposition that Bible information in itself gives an encounter with eternal life. Of course, we know this is false. Eternal life is a person, the Godhead. Then, in verse 42, he says something very powerful - that they do not have the love of God in them. He says this in the context of speaking about receiving honor from men. Why did Jesus connect an experience of the love of God with receiving honor? Very simply put, there is only one place we can discover our worth, and know the true honor that has been bestowed upon us, and this place is the realm of encounter with the love of God. In Ephesians 3:18, Paul talks about the height, width, depth, and length of the love of God. He says it is incomprehensible; no one can fully comprehend it in this age. The main problem with the Pharisees is that they did not have living experience with this ultimate reality, the vast ocean of the burning desires of God's heart. They had no chance of living right. They were disconnected from the only place of discovery of who they were. They had no choice but to seek the honor of men. We cannot repent of seeking honor, it is part of who God made us to be. But true honor that satisfies the soul can only be found in knowing who we are before God.

## **The Son's Honor and Glory**

In 2 Peter 1:17, Peter is talking about the mount of transfiguration of Matthew 17. It is many years later, and Peter says that on the mount Jesus received from the Father honor and glory. When did Jesus receive from the Father honor and glory? When the voice came to Him, saying, basically, I love you, I love you, I love you! This honor prepared Jesus in His humanity for the crucifixion. The way that God chose to prepare Jesus, in His human weakness, for the crucifixion was by giving Him the revelation of His honor and His glory. This is the same way the Father feeds our hearts, and sustains us in times of trial and tribulation - by telling us what we look like to Him. When God wants to get someone free from an addiction, He tells them how awesome they are! Encounter in the secret place of your life with the God of love, where He will reveal His burning heart of pleasure over you, and show you your destiny as the partner

of Jesus Christ forever is the only method God has chosen to establish your sense of worth. My personal ministry could disappear in the next few months, or I could reach hundreds of millions, and it would not affect the essential greatness of who I am before God when I stand before Him. God is not going to look at how big the crowds are, or how many people listened or did not listen. He will look at whether I said yes to His love, and became a lover of God. When I stand before God, He is not going to ask me how big the conferences were. He will not ask me how well I preached, or wrote books. He is going to ask us about the realm of love. He will say, 'I loved you. Did you receive it? Did you respond back to Me in love?' Love will be the only currency we take with us to the eternal city. We are loved and we are lovers, therefore we are profoundly successful.

### **What Are You First: A Worker or a Lover? - Avoiding Burnout**

Many Christians who reach out to others burn out quickly because they launch out into ministry before they establish in themselves the foundation of being lovers of God. Discouragement, despair, boredom and frustration will inevitably occur if we do not recognize that we are first called to be lovers. Yes, it is true that God has called us to be workers. Yes, we are called to be servants. We are called to bear the inconveniences of being caregivers to other people. But we must remember that such works of service are a part of the second commandment; they are an overflow of the first commandment. (See Matthew 22:37) What happens when we want to first be workers or fighters for the truths of our particular religious system? What happens if we first want to be students or to disciple others? What happens when our first priority is to fulfill the Great Commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? (See Mark 6:15.) Devastating things can happen when we place ministry to others and the Great Commission first in our lives. The first thing to go wrong is burnout. When we are lovers first, when the first commandment is first, our sacrifice and labor are rewarded. This reward is twofold: (1) The Holy Spirit communicates to us that God loves us. (2) We become a vessel through which the Father's love for Jesus flows back to Him. This twofold reward keeps us invigorated, and therefore we avoid much of the burnout so common today. God fashioned us to receive love and to be vessels through which His affection flows back to Him. It just feels right when we experience His love in our moments of weakness and distress. At such times we can have the Father's affection and enjoyment for Jesus pulsating through our hearts back to God. The reward of our labors is that we get to enjoy being a lover as the primary preoccupation of our lives. It's a pleasure beyond compare. But we suffer greatly when we are workers first. When workers are mistreated, when the anointing of God does not show up as we want or when circumstances disappoint us, we have nothing to fall back on - except waiting for heaven. The result of such pressure is usually burnout. But the outcome is far different for lovers. As a lover first, now when I experience attacks from other people, when I am undermined, when things don't work out, or when disappointment comes while I am laboring for the gospel, I can always run back to the secret place. I still have a secret place of pleasure where I am immersed in the knowledge that God loves me. This is where God imparts back to me a little bit of the Father's love for His Son. This is true spiritual pleasure!

### **Pleasures in God Reduce Burnout**

God has ordained many pleasures for believers. There are physical, emotional, and intellectual pleasures, all of which are ordained by God. But no pleasure is more intense than the pleasure

that comes when God communicates Himself to the human spirit. In the little moments when God communicates His passion for me, I experience what life is all about. It is life at its very best. Such tender moments with God cause life and spiritual vitality to be replenished deep within. Of course, we do not experience an unbroken sense of God's love in this life. Such dramatic touches of God's presence tend to wane. Only in heaven will we enjoy the continual ecstasy of His presence. But during my tender moments with God in this life, I say to myself and to God, "Oh yes, I like life. Life is good!" As God pours His love into me, that same love flows through me back to Him. As I am loving Him back, greater revelation of His affection and beauty comes to me, and the cycle just gets richer and richer. Just like anyone else, I am a regular person, saved and kept by grace. I experience seasons of spiritual pleasure, and then I go through times of dryness and dullness, wherein I get mad, glad, sad, and feel all of the other human emotions. But burnout occurs when we do not experience the pleasure of the Christian life found in a love relationship with God. I try to be careful not to exaggerate the intensity of such encounters with the Holy Spirit, for I don't want to encourage you to reach for a particular experience instead of seeking after God Himself and letting Him reveal Himself to you as an individual. This is important because getting focused on unrealistic spiritual expectations can actually lead to feeling condemned and discouraged, and leave you doubting whether God loves you or not. However, feeling loved - a little bit - and feeling love for God - a little bit - has a dramatically powerful impact upon the human spirit. I don't cry out this message because I want to be a noble soldier for God. I'm committed to sharing this message, to crying out the necessity of putting the first commandment first, because I've experienced a reality that the body of Christ has within its reach. But we must refocus our souls; we must put first things first to realize the awesome spiritual pleasures of walking in a love relationship with Christ.

### **Living by Love**

His embraces have staying power in our lives. Even the remembrance of His past embraces holds me steady when I go for weeks or months at a time without a fresh encounter of His love. In dry times, when the heavens feel like brass, I remember the seasons when I have felt His embrace. The memory of the splendor and pleasure of past intimacy with Jesus keeps me going. Admittedly, I do not like dry seasons, and I resist them. But after awhile, I realize that my dry seasons can help me grow. I recognize that dryness is used by God to strengthen me for the future. In His love and tender mercy, God has shown me that along with needing His embrace, I also need times of dryness. I need both of these to mature properly. Living by love and finding strength in God's embrace will revolutionize your Christian life, for people who are in love quit a lot less than people who are not in love. When a person is in love, he simply does not give up nearly as easily. Being in love will prop us up and strengthen us when we're tempted to let go. Are you a lover first, or a worker? The way in which you order your life relative to these two commandments makes all the difference in the world.

### **Being a Lover Reduces Temptation**

Being a lover of God not only reduces burnout, it also reduces temptation. This is because satisfied people sin less. Much of the sin in the body of Christ is a wrong response to pain, fear, and the need for comfort. Sin is a false comfort that people use as a prop to get them through seasons of pain. Many people get into sin because they feel beaten up and abandoned by God and men. Even though they are not truly abandoned, they feel as if they are. So they reach out

for immediate comfort in status, financial gain, or wrong expressions of sexuality. Although they are not sinless, spiritually satisfied people do sin less.

### **Being a Lover Reduces Strife**

Happy people also fight less. I get beaten up by rejection and criticism just as everybody else does. I even get beaten up by believers who say false and evil things about me. These attacks come from people close to me and also from people whom I have never even met. I do not always respond positively to such attacks, even when I am in a season in which I am sensing the communion of the Holy Spirit. But when I have that little bit of happiness that comes from feeling the embrace of God I fight people a whole lot less! It reminds me of how I felt when I first met my wife. I was so lovesick with infatuation that if some guy had stolen my car, I would have said, "You can have my car. And here, do you want my wallet, too?" Satisfied people just fight less. The body of Christ simply will not function properly until the first commandment is where it is supposed to be, in first place. This is absolutely imperative to the health of the body of Christ. I appreciate people whose number one drive is the Great Commission and relationships. But I also know that until being a lover of God becomes their first priority, they will burn out, be tempted, and become entangled in strife.

### **Driven by Love**

The apostle Paul said, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14). The word constrain means "to grip tightly." Paul was motivated by Christ's love working in him and through him. God's love became a driving force in all he did. It is the very power of living in godliness. I encourage people to focus on enjoying God more, not trying harder to overcome sin. Many people are driven by fear instead of by affection for God. In fact, I often recognize fear in many of my friends. I even see it in my own heart at times. When fear comes, we must respond by throwing ourselves into the first commandment. I become far more stable in the second commandment and the Great Commission when the first commandment is first in my life. The wonder, freedom, power, and pleasure of this is within the reach of every Christian, because it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit.

## WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST

### **I am accepted...**

John 1:12 I am God's child.

John 15:15 As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 I have been justified.

1 Corinthians 6:17 I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 I have been bought with a price and I belong to God.

1 Corinthians 12:27 I am a member of Christ's body.

Ephesians 1:3-8 I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child.

Colossians 1:13-14 I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.

Colossians 2:9-10 I am complete in Christ.

Hebrews 4:14-16 I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ.

### **I am secure...**

Romans 8:1-2 I am free from condemnation.

Romans 8:28 I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances.

Romans 8:31-39 I am free from any condemnation brought against me and I cannot be separated from the love of God.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.

Colossians 3:1-4 I am hidden with Christ in God.

Philippians 1:6 I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me.

Philippians 3:20 I am a citizen of heaven.

2 Timothy 1:7 I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.

1 John 5:18 I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

### **I am significant...**

John 15:5 I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life.

John 15:16 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.

1 Corinthians 3:16 I am God's temple.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 I am a minister of reconciliation for God.

Ephesians 2:6 I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm.

Ephesians 2:10 I am God's workmanship.

Ephesians 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.