

ENCOURAGE GROWTH

SHORT TERM GROUPS MODULE #2

COMPETENCY: Discern and encourage next steps in the faith journey of group members. No matter where we are in our journey with Jesus we can all grow more in our relationship with Him and the people around us. At RLCM we encourage growth in 3 primary ways:

- Relationship with God.
- Discovering individual purpose.
- Connecting in community.

Opening Question: Name the superhero you wanted to be when you were growing up and why?

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Read, *Matthew 13:31-32*, and answer question.

Assignment 2: Read, *Five Things Growing Christians Experience*, and answer discussion questions

Assignment 3: Pick one of the Five Faith Catalysts that you feel like you need to lean into more. Watch the corresponding video from the Anthology Study website, take notes, and develop a personal growth plan for that area:

<https://www.anthology.study/Studies/Five-Things-God-Uses>

Assignment 1

Matthew 13:31-32 (NIV)

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

How did your relationship with God get started (how was the seed planted)? How has it grown since then?

Assignment 2

Five Things Growing Christians Experience

<https://crossshapedstuff.wordpress.com/2013/05/24/five-faith-catalysts-that-work/>

In my particular vocation, our team often finds ourselves asking the same kinds of essential, theological, ground-breaking, earth-shaking, Christian-making questions over and over.

Questions like: What golf course has free cart fees on Mondays? Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts? What place are the Reds in? Whose mustache is bushier? Boxers or briefs? No... okay. I know. Sorry. But seriously though, time and time again we constantly find ourselves honing in on one question and one question in particular (although it comes in a variety of forms) – What fuels the development of faith? What are the ingredients that result in greater confidence in the person God? What cultivates trust in the promises of God? What types of things draw people closer to God? What is it that actually deepens someone's relationship with Jesus?

Andy Stanley (of who I am a huge fan) has identified Five Faith Catalysts that I think are as good of a place to start as any. And the best part about them is, following purely preacher protocol, they form a pppppppppperfect polished potent alliteration.

(1) Practical Teaching: This is teaching for change. And when it's done right, it can be extremely powerful. This is why many people (particularly those who grow up in traditions where the homily is not the focus of the worship service) can remember the first time they heard a teacher in church expound the Bible in a practical, life-ready, has-legs-on-it way. The definition of a good sermon isn't good feedback after service standing at the door shaking hands and kissing babies, it's changed lives. A good preacher is forgotten in retrospect of their message. And that only happens when the preacher teaches for change rather than information download. To be honest, it's just simply the case that most people are more concerned with what works over what is true anyways (not to say that what is true isn't important). The definition of a spiritually mature person is not someone who simply knows stuff, it is someone who does something about the stuff they know.

(2) Private Disciplines: These practices (prayer, Bible study, fasting, solitude, service, etc.) introduce intimacy, discipline, and accountability to our relationship with God. Private disciplines are, by nature, symbols of submission and dependence. Even if you get very little out of your morning read through Zephaniah, the simple fact that you carved valuable time out of your day to hear from God shows that your heart is in a good place. Spiritual disciplines create consistent opportunities for relational deposits with God, and any growing relationship requires time. For quality time to happen in any relationship, there must be a large quantity of time devoted to it. And private disciplines tune your heart to the heart of God. If you can make these life-habits, you will always be growing.

(3) Personal Ministry: Service is the ultimate way to advance God's kingdom. It is as close to the heart of Jesus as anything else we do. This is why self-sacrificial service is, perhaps, the most self-gratifying thing we can do. Not to mention that when we serve others, we engage in the ultimate form of flattery, imitation. And it just always seems to be the case that when we serve, especially in those cases where we feel less than qualified or unprepared, God's power is made evident in our weaknesses.

(4) Providential Relationships: These are the people placed in our lives through whom we hear God and see God best. It could be a small group leader, pastor, parent, coach, close friend, really anyone. Sometimes these people come along for short seasons, other times we benefit from their mentorship for decades. Nonetheless, whoever they are or whenever they show up, they are absolutely invaluable for faith maturation. Especially for those type A, extroverted, relational, people people who feed off interaction with others. If you struggle to concentrate on a book, or sit still, or be quiet for more than two pages or ten minutes (whichever comes first), seek out these relationships.

(5) Pivotal Circumstances: These are the critical moments in life that, depending on how we interpret them, can either jumpstart our faith or destroy it. These come in a variety of forms. They can be periods of transition (going to college), tragedy (a sudden death in the family), or temptation (no explanation needed). Our worldviews and the people who we are doing life with usually determine how we interpret these events.

Discussion Questions

1. What stood out to you the most? Did any of these Five Faith Catalysts surprise you?
2. Which of these Five Faith Catalysts have personally contributed the most to your relationship with God? Share an experience from your life where one of these Five Faith Catalysts contributed greatly to your spiritual growth.
3. What are some practical ways we could encourage someone to engage in each of these Five areas?

Assignment 3

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