



## *Practices for Becoming Mature Disciples*

### SIGN #8 - YOU DEVELOP YOUR PERSONAL MINISTRY

#### Introducing *The Nine Signs of Spiritual Maturity*

We have identified nine characteristics that define a transformed and mature follower of Christ. We hope to use these characteristics, or signs, as mile markers to help us pay attention to the path we're on. It is important to note that these are all broad simplifications. They're not meant to be a pass/fail test, but a gauge we check regularly and to know when and where to adjust as we go. Each week we will explore one of these nine signs in depth using a variety of exercises and spiritual disciplines designed to help you evaluate where you're at and how you can continue growing towards maturity in Christ.

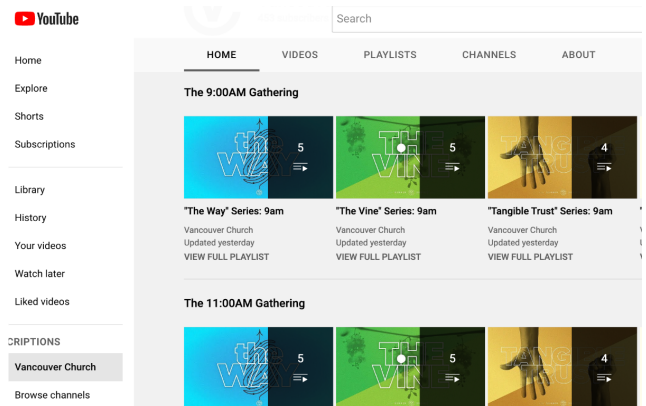
#### **This Week's Focus:** A Mature Disciple Develops Their Personal Ministry

In this series we've already discussed several important aspects of being "on mission" as a believer, such as serving the most vulnerable and helping others grow. These are broad directives applied to everyone who wants to follow Christ. But beyond our shared callings as Christians, we are each given a unique set of directives known as our purpose. Our purpose is given to us by God and shaped by our specific combination of gifts, talents, attitudes, challenges, and passions. Our personal ministry is how we live out our purpose based on the people around us and the resources available to us.

We believe that a mature disciple understands their purpose and continuously develops their personal ministry. They see themselves as a vital part of the body of Christ and therefore engage the world around them as such. For us, this looks like intentionally exploring our natural and spiritual gifts in order to find a place of meaningful service within the life and mission of the local church. Or in other words, wherever we serve, we do so knowing our value and what we uniquely bring to the table.

#### **Quick Tip:** Catch Up on Any Sundays You Missed

We know life gets busy sometimes, but that doesn't mean you have to miss out! All of our sermon series are on YouTube for you to catch up any time you'd like. Head to our [Vancouver Church YouTube channel](#) or simply search "Vancouver Church" in the YouTube App.



# TIME ALONE

## PRAY: Surrendering Your Personal Ministry

Whether you already know the personal ministry God has called you to, or you are newly discovering it this week, we all need to surrender our purposes to the Lord every single day. Otherwise we risk letting our purpose become a “to-do” list and base our value on how many boxes we check. While we are uniquely and intentionally designed for our personal ministries, we are not designed to do it alone. Our purpose is best fulfilled in the presence of our God. So to practice that surrender this week, use the sample daily prayer below to submit your ministry to God and ask him to guide you each day.

*Dear Heavenly Father,*

*I come before you humbly and give my personal ministry to you. I hold my personal ministry and my life with open hands to you. You are the one who knit me together, you set the path before, you know me better than anyone else in the world. I recognize that you have given me an identity, purpose and calling. You have given me gifts that are meant to be shared with the world for your glory.*

*Help me to see and surrender to you the gifts and calling you placed within me. Help me to stay focused on the assignment you have for me today and not get distracted. Help me to be grateful for the ways you want to use my life and align my ways with your ways.*

*My greatest desire is to know you and make you known. Give me the wisdom and guidance needed to be able to serve the world around me with a pure heart, being the hands and feet of you so that others may feel the tangible love of Christ.*

*Thank you for choosing to allow me to be a part of your story at work in the world today. Lead me today.*

*In Jesus Name I pray, Amen*

If you have a personal ministry, a place where you serve, spend time praying specifically for that. The people in the ministry, vision, direction, etc.

If you are unsure of where God has your personal ministry right now, ask God to begin to reveal to you where he wants you.

## READ: Matthew 3:16-17, 4:1-4

Read through this passage each day. It can be helpful to read in different translations, such as NIV, ESV, or The Message.

## WORSHIP: This Week's New Songs

We now have a playlist made up of worship songs that are meaningful to our community; including our Sunday setlists and even a few originals! Each week, we'll add new songs. Find the playlist using the links below. Here's what we added this week:

- Spirit Lead Me by Influence Music



# TIME ALONE

## ACTION: Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts

### **What are Spiritual Gifts?**

Spiritual gifts are a set of specific God-given talents, skills, and abilities that equip us to be an active part of bringing His Kingdom of Heaven to earth. All of our talents, skills, and giftings come from God. Both our natural and spiritual gifts are a reflection of the Creator and evidence that we are made in His image. And often, our spiritual gifts will be similar to our natural talents and passions. But while we are born with natural gifting, our Spiritual Gifts are given to us when we embrace a new life in Christ and begin to live as our new self. They are a gift from Christ and enabled by the Holy Spirit to do the work that God has uniquely designed for you. While the gifts can vary based on different sections of scripture or different interpretations, generally the list includes:

Administration	Giving	Mercy
Being an apostle	Healing	Prophecy
Discernment	Helps	Serving
Evangelism	Hospitality	Speaking in tongues
Exhortation	Knowledge	Teaching/Shepherding
Faith	Leadership	Wisdom

### **Why Have Different Gifts?**

Only God has the capacity to carry all of these gifts to their fullest potential. So in His grace, He blesses us with a few and calls us to work with others who have different gifts, so together we can manifest the fullness of His Spirit even within our limits as humans.

In Romans 12 we learn that we are all members of the same body. Just like a human body would not benefit by having all of one body part and none of another, the body of Christ (the church) requires a diversity of members to run smoothly, serve well, and spread the Good News. Another analogy would be to think of an orchestra. An orchestra wouldn't work well if everyone showed up with the same instrument. It would cease to be an orchestra. Similarly, if all of the instruments of the orchestra played the same note, it would lose the beauty of the harmonizing music.

It's important to note that these gifts are not intended for personal gain, prestige, or indulgence. They are meant to benefit our community, and create something pleasing to God Himself. Additionally, no one gift is worth more or less than any other, especially when it comes to the impact they have in God's Kingdom. It is a great joy to live in alignment with how we were created, no matter what that looks like!

*“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” – Ephesians 4:11-12*

### **How Do I Know What My Spiritual Gifts Are?**

The bible talks about spiritual gifts in many different sections. You can start in 1 Corinthians 12-14 to get an overview of Paul's teaching about gifts. There are also many assessments online to help point you towards your giftings. We recommend [www.giftstest.com](http://www.giftstest.com), but you can take any that look meaningful to you. And as always, it is helpful to talk with fellow believers who know you well, as they may see things in you that you haven't seen yet, or confirm things you're unsure about.

Wherever you end up exploring, remember that it is God who gave these gifts. So be praying as you discover things; ask God to confirm what you're learning about yourself and continue to guide you towards His Truth in your life.

# TIME TOGETHER

## Welcome:

- Icebreaker: Share a hidden talent or your proudest accomplishment as a kid.
- Share what you know about your personal ministry.  
Is it something you know well or not at all? Does it involve your career or other groups you're a part of? Does it come from challenges you've faced in your own life? How does it align with your passions?

## Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-14

Have someone read the passage out loud in any translation. Others can take notes below.

*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

## Discussion: *The Bible*

- Share any words, phrases, or pictures that stood out to you while reading.
- If this passage is familiar to you, how has your life been impacted by it? How do you see yourself living your life to align with this passage?
- What do you think "unity in the faith" looks like?
- What do you think the "fullness of Christ" looks like?

# TIME TOGETHER

## **Discussion: *The Practices***

- Discuss your experience of taking time alone with God  
How hard/easy was it to find time? How did you feel before you started versus after? Do you have a go-to place or spot in the house? What adjustments can you make to help you make time?
- Share insights, questions, and challenges from the “Time Alone” Practices  
What has been encouraging to you this week? What questions do you have from your Time Alone? Where do you see God challenging you? What are 2-3 steps that you can take now to grow in loving your church?
- **Share what you discovered about your Spiritual Gifts**
  - What are some of your top spiritual gifts? Were you surprised by any of them?
  - Have you taken any assessments before? If so, did your results change at all?
  - Do you feel like you use your spiritual gifts in your day-to-day life? If so, share an example. If not, what’s one way you could practice using them?

*Going deeper: As a group, discuss how your gifts interact and where you could lean on one another as the ‘body’ of Christ. For example, your group may benefit from someone with the gift of administration’s ability to keep the group in good communication, or someone with the gift of hospitality’s ability to make everyone feel like they belong, or someone with the gift of faith’s ability to inspire the group to trust God and each other. Celebrate those gifts and discuss ways to intentionally incorporate them into your regular times together.*

## **Discussion: *The Journey***

Growing in your relationship with Jesus is a life-long journey. Each of us has highs and lows along the way, and each of us is still growing.

- How have you been encouraged in your relationship with Jesus lately? (the “Wins”)
- What challenges have you experienced that seem to pull you away from trusting God (distractions, defeats, doubts)
- During the next season of focusing on our relationship with Jesus, in what ways are you especially hoping to grow?
- How can the group encourage you and pray for you as we each walk together?

## **Prayer:**

In addition to prayer requests and anything else the group wants to pray about, ask God to give you opportunities to live out your personal ministries. Also ask that you would see each other as He sees you so that you can encourage one another in your giftings.

# FAMILY TIME

Teaching our families to live on mission is a beautiful challenge we face as parents. This means we need to carve out time, energy and resources to actively live as the hands and feet of Jesus. This week, we'll start by helping them practice using their gifts and talents to impact others and show the love of Jesus.

**STEP 1:** Affirm that who we are (our identity) is defined by God. We are first and foremost children of God, created out of love to bring glory to Him. Then, help your child understand that they are created for a unique purpose. And that our purpose is intentional to this time in history and this place in the world - or in other words, "for such a time as this." Ephesians 2 says it this way:

*Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing. (Ephesians 2:7-10, MSG)*

**STEP 2:** Make a list together identifying as many of their specific talents and gifts you can think of. Maybe they are highly creative or musical. Maybe they are strategic, athletic, a good communicator, or empathetic. Take your time making this list, and feel free to swap stories along the way! You may even want to let the whole family join in and make their lists together.

**STEP 3:** Have them pick one or two of those gifts that they want to use for Jesus. Then brainstorm together ways they can use it to impact others and show the love of Jesus.

**STEP 4:** Make a plan for them to practice one of the ideas you brainstormed. Do your best to be specific with a time, a place, and/or a person and discuss what your child wants to do in that situation. Let them know you'll check in after the agreed time to talk about it.

**STEP 5:** Pray together that God will help them with the plan you discussed. Let your child pray for whatever is on their heart and repeat that prayer yourself.

**STEP 6:** At the agreed time, discuss with them how it went, how they felt, what they need help with or what they would want to do differently next time. Don't forget to celebrate their effort and successes with them! Then encourage them to keep practicing using their gifts for the glory of God, while you continue to celebrate the effort and the wins.