



Summer Growth Plan

Instructions:

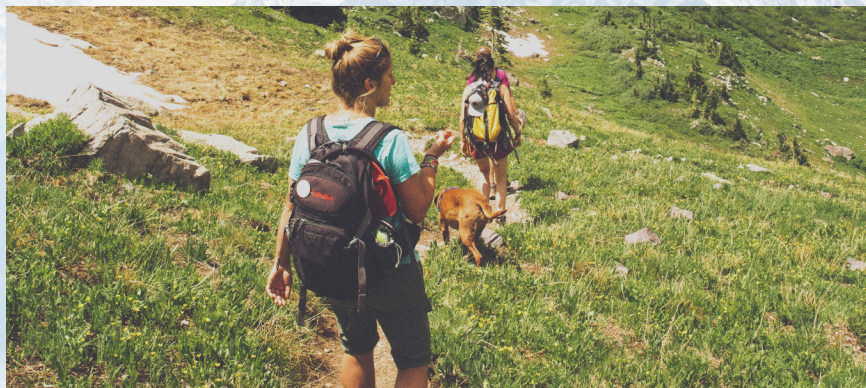
Welcome to **Take a Hike With God**, our summer growth plan that acts as a resource to help us connect with God while using our five senses.

In this plan are five different sessions you can take part in throughout the summer. It is designed to be done at your own pace as we know the summer time can be chaotic and inconsistent. Each session should take at least a week to do, but feel free to utilize a session for a longer period of time if it resonates with you.

The sessions contain activities or promptings that you will do on your own with God during the week. You will also go on a walk or hike, utilizing your unique senses.

There are instructions on what to do during each walk or hike that will help you connect with God during that time as well.

You have the freedom to do the hikes or walks with others or on your own. Maybe do them with your small group, with a family member, maybe a friend from church.



We have set up a Facebook group as well that will allow you to connect with others as they go on their walks or hikes throughout the summer. Post pictures from your hikes on this page, share what God has revealed to you, encourage one another, and ask people to come with you! The Facebook group is called “Take a hike, with God”. Be sure to like the group and follow along with it so you can connect with other church members during the summer!

Enjoy the season and give yourself grace as you try new ways of connecting with the Lord. Some sessions may resonate with you and some may not. That’s completely okay! This is about showing up and being available to the Lord. You may hear clearly from Him or you may just simply enjoy time outdoors in the presence of God. Either way is great.

Let go of any expectations and allow yourself to be open to God in this time. He is with you.

Session 1: Sight

Sight is one of the first senses mentioned in the bible. This lesson invites us to visually look inside of things, asking ourselves questions such as, “What do I see? Are there scars? What about burn marks? Can I see the joy?”

The land produced vegetation - all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:12

While you walk, notice the trees around you. As you examine a single tree, what do you see? Sure, it's green and it's tall, but look even closer! Can you see the grooves in the bark? What about all the colors of the surface, or the insects or vegetation that live there?

If we were to cut that tree open, what would the inside look like? You can look at the rings of a tree and estimate some of the things it may have experienced in its life: its age, when it experienced a drought, which years it had ample nourishment, whether it has scars, if it ever burned.

FIRST YEAR GROWTH

RAINY SEASON

DRY SEASON

SCAR FROM FOREST FIRE

*SPRING/EARLY
SUMMER GROWTH*

*LATE SUMMER/FALL
GROWTH*



Now look at yourself the same way. What color is your hair? How tall are you? Does your skin have wrinkles or scars? Now look inside at your heart. Does it look worn in places? Does it have scars, some which have never healed completely? Can you see areas where you experienced ample nourishment, or experienced drought? Are there any burn marks?

Questions to discuss/ponder on your walks:

How can the bible help us heal our scars? What are ways we can seek out God, so we have more nourishment? Note down anything the Lord says to you or that stands out to you. Pray about what is revealed. Take a moment to ask the Lord in supplication to bring you the physical healing you need.

To do on your own with God:

To heal spiritually, start by looking at others around you. It might be on your walks, when you're grocery shopping, or maybe at work. Look inside the people around you and visualize their hearts and what they might look like.

Say a prayer (silent or out-loud) for that person to heal any scars or droughts they might be going through. Allow the Lord to give you empathy and compassion for those around you.

At the end of today, reflect with God about what you saw. Ask Him if there's anything else He'd like to show you, and then simply wait and pay attention to His Spirit. Pray for anyone else who comes to mind.

I urge you, first, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them: intercede on their behalf and give thanks for them.

1 Tim 2:1

After your prayer for that person, thank The Lord for your blessings and ability to see and pray for others.

Session 2: Smell

The sense of smell can trigger good feelings and horrible ones. The smell of flowers or of cookies baking can bring us delight. Our smell can be a portal to experiencing fullness and joy in unique ways.

It can also be one of the senses that causes us great disgust, like walking by garbage that's been sitting out for weeks, or the pungent smell of dirty laundry.

Even as we read these sentences, there are memories attached to these smells that pop into our heads. Lilacs remind me of my grandmother; rubbing alcohol reminds me—and now, maybe all of us—of the pandemic.



Smells might remind us of healing, like the antiseptic scent of a hospital. It's not a pleasant smell, yet we relate it to a sense of getting better. On the other hand, lilacs smell wonderful but have no physical healing attributes to them at all.

Our sense of smell helps direct our memories and influences our thoughts. Over the next two weeks, pay attention to your sense of smell and the thoughts they inspire in you.

The goal is to focus your thoughts and emotions towards God, allowing Him to re-associate them towards healing and hope. Just like the example of rubbing alcohol which can bring about negative emotions, but can be re-associated with something good such as a hospital or hand sanitizer which brings healing.

Grab a notepad and answer some questions. What are some recurring thoughts that come to mind that are pleasant but not helpful? Conversely, what are some recurring thoughts that are negative but can become helpful? Pray to God and talk to Him about how to take your thoughts and put them into action in a way that's helpful. Ask Him how they may be redeemed for good.

To do on your next hike or walk:

In scripture, smell is used as a metaphor to describe how we as followers of Jesus Christ are to live in this world, and it paints a beautiful picture of who and how God considers us:

Thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

2 Cor 2:14-15

When we smell something, it gives us evidence of that thing before we even see it. The smell of smoke in the air usually indicates a fire is nearby. The smell of pizza can make us immediately look for the source to see if we can ask for a slice. 2 Corinthians is telling us that His followers are the smell, the aroma of Christ which indicates that He is nearby.

As you go on your hike, take time to take your surroundings in through your nose. Close your eyes and breathe in deeply. What does your smell indicate about what is around you?

Talk to God about what it means for you to be the aroma of Christ. For you to be someone that shows others that God is near, simply by being around you. Write down any thoughts you have below.

Session 3: Sound

Did you know that there are **64** verses in the Bible about singing?

Sometimes we listen to music to uplift us. Other times, we use it to comfort us when we feel depressed. It can keep us from feeling alone, or that we can relate the person who wrote the lyrics and how they must have felt.

In this session, we will be using sound and music to exercise our sense and connect with God. Grab a notepad and write down the following:

- What's one of your favorite songs?
- What do you feel when you listen to it?
- Is there a word or phrase in the song that particularly strikes you? If so, what is it?
- Why does it stand out to you?
- Find a word that describes that feeling or encapsulates that phrase.

Over the course of this session (at least a week), study passages in the bible that discuss the word or phrase that stands out to you. Find the one that speaks most to you and write it down. Then study it, repeat it, and memorize it.

To do on your next hike:

In scripture, the sense of hearing is described as being incredibly important for our faith. Hearing is the way we often receive the good news. It's the sense that allows us to listen to God through people, messages, songs, and in prayer.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17

Let me ask you this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Galatians 3:2

Hearing is an entry door to following God, but we know that simply hearing good news isn't what brings us life.

As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

Luke 8:15

But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Luke 11:28

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 1:22

On this hike, you are simply going to spend time listening to and hearing from God. You may not audibly hear Him, but He is always speaking. Spend time in companionable silence on your walk so you can really listen.

Ask the Lord to speak to you and to silence everything else in your head that isn't Him. When you feel your mind has slowed down a little, ask God to speak so you can be a hearer of His words. Pay attention to your thoughts, is there anything God is bringing up in your mind? How may He be inviting you to be a doer of His words?

Pay attention to the sounds around you. Maybe God is speaking through those as well.

Whether you hear something or not, just simply practice being available to Him. If you hear something, great! If not, just enjoy being with Him, even if He has nothing to say in this specific moment. As we practice listening, we can be more in tune with His voice.

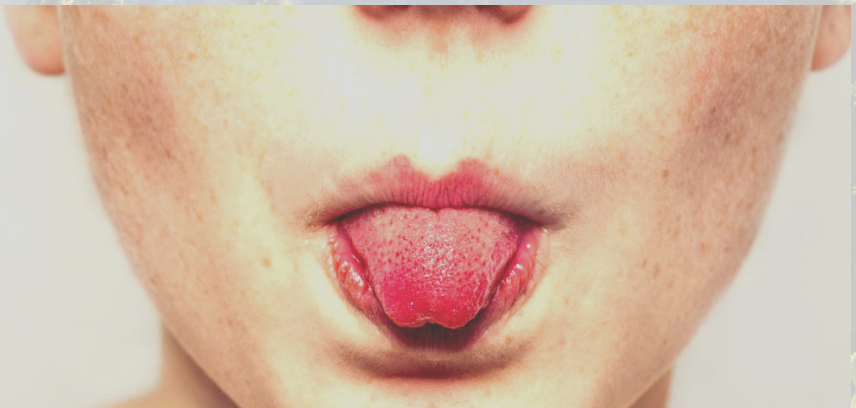
After your hike, write down anything you heard, whether from God or in nature.

Session 4: Taste

It's very easy to become distracted in our day-to-day lives. There are errands to run, tasks to accomplish, friends to keep up with, chores to do, and on and on. Eventually, it's easy to become overwhelmed.

In order to help alleviate our stress, we can often end up striving to do more. We try to earn more money, status, or success. We go shopping for more possessions, sacrifice resources to try and experience more of what life has to offer. One day, we tell ourselves, we won't have all this busyness and stress hanging over our heads.

This is where our sense of taste comes in.



In scripture, the sense of taste is described as a way for us to enjoy life and the blessings of God.

***Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man
who takes refuge in Him!***

Psalm 34:8

***Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by
it you may grow up into salvation- if indeed you have tasted
that the Lord is good.***

1 Peter 2:2-3

***How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey
to my mouth!***

Psalm 119:103

We cannot enjoy the blessings God has already given if we're too busy trying to attain goodness through our own efforts. We don't need to strive to earn God, to earn goodness, to earn the peace we all long for. Instead, we are invited to simply taste and see that the Lord is good. In doing this we can find that the blessings of God Himself are already enough for us.

Through experiencing His goodness, we can trust Him. All we need to do is direct our attention to Him and show up before Him. We can't experience the goodness of food or drink if all we do is notice it exists. We must taste and see that it is good.

During this session, spend daily time with God to give you ample opportunity to taste and see His goodness. In this time, focus on what you're thankful for and tell Him what comes to your mind. In addition, ask God to show you His goodness, to show you how He has been good to you. Write down anything He reveals to you.

Ask yourself the following questions:

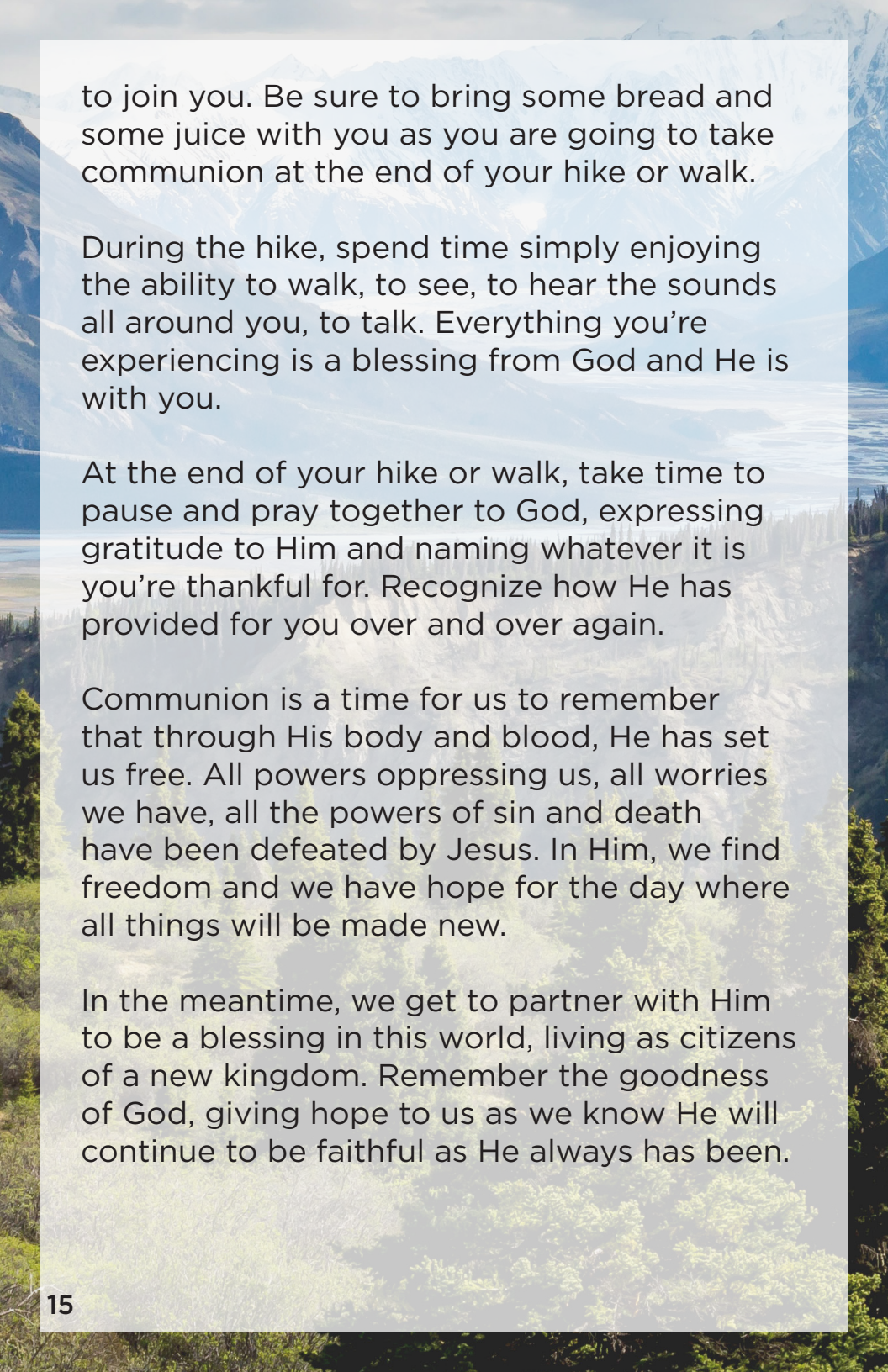
- What are you not trusting God with?
- How can you taste and see that He is good, giving you freedom to trust and surrender?

That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

Matthew 6:25-27

To do on your next hike or walk:

Try to do this next hike with others. Maybe people from your small group, a friend from church, a family member. Alternatively, post on our Facebook group, letting others know when and where you will be, inviting people



to join you. Be sure to bring some bread and some juice with you as you are going to take communion at the end of your hike or walk.

During the hike, spend time simply enjoying the ability to walk, to see, to hear the sounds all around you, to talk. Everything you're experiencing is a blessing from God and He is with you.

At the end of your hike or walk, take time to pause and pray together to God, expressing gratitude to Him and naming whatever it is you're thankful for. Recognize how He has provided for you over and over again.

Communion is a time for us to remember that through His body and blood, He has set us free. All powers oppressing us, all worries we have, all the powers of sin and death have been defeated by Jesus. In Him, we find freedom and we have hope for the day where all things will be made new.

In the meantime, we get to partner with Him to be a blessing in this world, living as citizens of a new kingdom. Remember the goodness of God, giving hope to us as we know He will continue to be faithful as He always has been.



For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Enjoy communion with one another.

Session 5: Touch

In scripture we see that when people touch something, they are immediately affected by the thing they touch. In Leviticus 7, people are instructed to not touch anything “unclean” or else they will be cut off from other people. In other places in scripture, we see that when we touch that which is of God, everything can change.

Whatever touches the altar shall become holy.

Exodus 29:37

And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

Isaiah 6:7

Most obviously, we see this to be true with Jesus. When Jesus touched people, they were healed.

Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

Mark 1:41-42

When Jesus touched the eyes of the blind, they were healed. People from everywhere tried to touch Jesus in order to receive some of His power, so that they may be healed.

And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

Luke 6:19

When we touch God, we access Him; His power, His healing, and His love. That is why for this session, we will practice being intentional with our touch in order to connect with God.

Take a moment to go outside and find a stone which is either flat or round, and small enough to fit in your pocket.

(If you wish to go the extra mile, feel free to paint your rock or decorate it, perhaps with a symbol, word, or verse about guidance for a change we feel we need in our life.)

Every time you reach into your pocket and touch your rock, let it remind you to focus on the Lord in that moment, and what He wants to do in your heart. Doing so opens you to His will.

To do on your next hike or walk:

On your hike or walk, bring your rock with you and let your fingers run along its surface as you go, reminding you of God's presence. Where are you feeling the need for direction in life? Is there something in you that needs healing? Focus on the Lord and dwell in His presence, allowing Him to be with you as you use your sense of touch to connect with Him.

After your walk, grab a notebook and write anything God taught you or revealed to you.

Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, "This is the way you should go," whether to the right or to the left.

Isaiah 30:21

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Then he touched their eyes and said, "Because of your faith it will happen." Then their eyes were opened, and they could see!

Matthew 9:29-30

Conclusion:

This marks the end of this spiritual growth packet. My hope and prayer is that you have been able to set aside intentional time to pursue the Lord in a profound and meaningful way.

As was stated in the introduction, if you feel discouraged that you don't see the results you thought you would, remember that the point was not to fulfill expectations but instead to be open to God and to dedicate time walking with Him. If you did that, you succeeded in this growth exercise!

Purposefully creating margin to walk with God every day, giving Him the time and space to speak to us through our senses and consciously being aware and open to what he says, is a sacrifice of ourselves—one which God has promised to bless.

Continue to walk in the light and love of God for all the days of your life. He is with you.

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10



A high-angle photograph of a lush green mountain valley. The foreground is dominated by dense, vibrant green foliage and trees. In the middle ground, a winding asphalt road curves through the valley. To the left, a parking lot with several white vehicles is visible. The background features steep, forested mountains under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is bright and natural, with a focus on the beauty of the landscape.

Engage Your Senses

in this summer growth plan
as you walk spiritually and
physically with the Lord to
discover new and remarkable
things about Him and yourself!