



Centennial Covenant Church Character Growth Plan Template

Please note: There are two versions of this template. You may choose to use the one with the instructions or you can use the version without instructions found in appendix B. If you will share this with a mentor, you may want to use the template with instructions so that this mentor better understands the plan.

Please complete the sections in red.

Introduction to a Growth Plan

What you are holding is a tool. It is a tool designed with one purpose: growth. We know that God designed us and desires us to grow. CCC is a place where we pursue that growth intentionally and together. We offer this tool to you with the simple hope that, while it may not be a “magic bullet” it just may be something useful as you continue on a journey of growth and transformation in your life.

The Centennial Covenant Church (CCC) growth plan is based off of Malcolm Knowles self-directed adult learning theory. In order to grow we must be learners. Because we each learn differently, this plan allows each of us to choose goals and practices that honor our preferences. A growth plan is a flexible tool that allows each learner to self-identify their growth goal and practices in a way that the Holy Spirit leads. For those participating in the 16-week CCC Growth Challenge, you will be assigned a CCC growth plan coach and placed in a growth group. This growth plan is a common tool being used in community. Therefore, the members of the community will have shared language and thus be able to communicate more effectively with one another and hopefully better understand what each other is pursuing with God.

Step 1: Discern A Character Growth Goal

A growth goal is a particular character quality intentionally pursued in collaboration with the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. It is not a practice (prayer, sabbath, fasting) for these are meant to support or nurture the goal. It is easier to measure practices accomplished. It is harder to measure a character quality. The character quality God gives us is what needs to be celebrated. Too often we focus instead on the accomplished discipline, making it a “checked box” experience. Another thing to keep in mind is that the measurement of a character quality is near impossible, but one can measure the advancement of the learning skills that frame this growth plan; the skills to discern, develop, manage and reflect on the aim of and practices in your growth plan.

Ask yourself: “What would I like to be more true of me by the end of a certain time frame? If you are drawn to a practice like sabbath, to get to the true need (goal) ask: “Why does sabbath elude me?” As you consider your goal, work hard to be succinct and specific. State your goal in one word or one sentence. It’s often wise to state

it in the positive. For example, rather than saying, “I want to be less sinfully angry,” perhaps you might state, “I wish to be able to express my lament/grief with an attitude of joy/hope.” Or perhaps, “I wish to be a more gracious and patient person when I experience injustice.”

Type one word or a short phrase here that captures your character growth goal. This would be an excellent point to invite a trusted friend, mentor, or spouse into conversation about what your formation goal should be.

Step 2: Develop Practices

As you discern your practices, keep in mind that they are not the need or goal. Instead, they are a means to the goal (all empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit). In all reality, the goal is God. Thus, if your above stated character growth goal is patience and you experience one degree of change in patience, you are experiencing a more realized “with God” life!

There are a number of different types of practices you might engage to pursue your growth goal. It is important here to be honest with yourself about how much time you will be able to commit to this growth journey. There is a temptation to create a plan that looks great on paper, but in reality, you will simply not follow through on. Take time to carefully evaluate the types of practices, the amount of time – possibly even the specific times of day – you will try to commit to each practice, and the manner in which you will hold yourself accountable to this growth plan. Here are the kinds of practices to consider:

Relational Practices: Choose a Mentor if Needed

Mentoring is a relational practice in which there is intentional pursuit towards growth and transformation. Mentoring is an umbrella term for all the various forms: spiritual director, counselor, companion in Christ, trusted friend, coach, apprentice, small group, etc.

For those involved in the CCC Growth Challenge, two forms of mentoring are incorporated in the 16-week experience: (1) a growth plan coach and, (2) a growth group. There is also an option to choose another form of mentoring whether that be meeting one-on-one with a spiritual director, counselor, trusted friend, etc. Reflection is an important part of learning and this can often happen well in one-on-one dialogue. If you wish to include a self-selected mentor as part of your growth plan, be sure to choose someone who you will be intentional with as you reflect on what you are learning. In most cases, identifying a self-selected mentor will make for a richer growth plan experience.

1. Will you meet with a self-selected mentor? ___yes ___no, that is not needed at this time.
2. If you wish to share the form of mentoring that you will engage, do so here. Read again the definition above. Remember that mentoring is an umbrella term for the various forms. While the list is not exhaustive, various forms include: (1) Spiritual Director, (2) Counselor, (3) Companion/Friendship in Christ (4) Apprenticeship, (5) Coach or, (7) Other. Type potential answer here.
3. If you wish to share the name of a mentor, do so here. Type potential answer here.

Experiential Practices: Choose Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines help us “train” in the growth goal. Engaging in them is NOT a matter of trying harder. Instead, they are a response to God’s desire to form us. As you discern which spiritual disciplines to engage, work hard to avoid the natural tendency towards the sacred/secular divide. In other words, remember that

ordinary activities CAN BE spiritual disciplines if done with a mind towards Christ. As you choose your spiritual disciplines the question is not “what is spiritual and what is not.” The question is, “to whose spirit am I surrendered as I engage in this discipline?”

Keep in mind that the disciplines won’t always be easy or positively experienced. In fact, sometimes they might feel disconnected, haphazard, pointless, too hard, dumb or even trivial! This requires trust in the slow work of God. As you choose your disciplines consider both internal and external ones. For example, if your growth goal is being a more grateful person, an internal practice might be a certain type of prayer and an external practice might be writing notes of gratitude to certain family members or engaging in secret acts of service to someone who is hard to love.

List **at least 3-4** spiritual disciplines you will engage to support growth in this growth goal.

- Ideally, at least one of these would be a regular/weekly practice, if possible.
- Choose spiritual disciplines that are related to your goal
- Name what your actual activity (discipline) will look like. In some cases, it might be wise to identify how many times, for how long and in what context you will practice it (knowing this is an estimate).
- Consider the whole life wheel (see appendix A). Can you choose disciplines that fall into a variety of the dimensions: physical, relational, occupational, etc?
- For help, refer to Adele Calhoun’s book *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*. This is a book worthy to be purchased.

Discipline #1

Discipline #2

Discipline #3

And if needed, Discipline #4

Cognitive Practices: Choose A Resource

Do we always cognitively understand our growth goal or disciplines that we engage? Probably not. This is why most growth plans are richer if the learner engages the mind not only through mentoring and experiential practices but also through scripture, books, articles, podcasts, seminars or videos. The goal in this part of your plan is to engage critical thinking skills. We highly encourage the meditation and study of scripture. And if scripture is used, it is often good to identify one other cognitive resource as a way to test the assumptions we bring to the reading.

If you choose to engage this type of learning, list at least one cognitive resource by choosing something that connects either to your overall character growth goal or to one of the practices. For example: If your growth goal is to be a more joyful person, you might choose to read Surprised by Joy by C.S. Lewis. Or if growth goal is joy and you need to inform your spiritual discipline of gratitude, perhaps you would read Choosing Gratitude by Nancy Demoss.

Depending on your learning preference, you can spend as little or as much in this practice. On average, a typical learner will spend 4-5 hours over the course of 3 months in cognitive practices. Remember, less is often more. It might be wise to read 3 chapters 5 times rather than reading all 15 chapters of a book. Reflection is important.

Type in here the name of the cognitive resource(s) you will engage. How much time do you want to spend utilizing this resource?

Step 3: Manage A Growth Plan

It is often wise to set aside a time span in which you will intentionally pursue this goal. Often, a 3 month period is a good amount of time. If you and others are writing growth plans together, choose a common time frame so that you can together reflect back on what was learned. You may have a group leader who has set the time frame. If you are participating in the CCC Growth Challenge, the time frame is approximately 2 ½ months.

Keep in mind that it is VERY COMMON to experience having taken “two-steps backwards”. If this occurs in your “time frame” this is GREAT LEARNING. You have acquired increased self-awareness. It may also be an invitation to continue with the same growth plan (or a slightly adjusted growth plan) for a newly discerned time frame.

Indicate here the expected time frame for this growth plan. Consider if there is anything you need to change in your life so that you are sure to engage it. For example: You may decide to keep a calendar, to engage this journey along with a group, or to limit your time to social media for the next three months in order to better manage your chosen growth plan.

Step 4: Reflect on a Growth Plan

Reflection is necessary for formative learning to occur. Your growth plan may involve engagement with a mentor. Or one of your experiential practices may be highly reflective in nature. If so, you will simply re- state these here as you answer. Before you finalize your growth plan, identify how will you externally reflect on it as you engage it. External reflection is more than just “sitting there and thinking about it.” Externalizing your reflection forces you to learn more deeply. Consider the following reflective exercises: journaling, dialoguing with your mentor, sharing bullet points of learning with a friend or spouse, painting a picture or writing a song that depicts your reflections, writing reflections or questions in the margins of the book, etc.

Name your way/s of reflection here. Because you are engaging several modes of learning, feel free to identify various ways of reflection or simply list one overall way. Be kind to yourself and choose YOUR way. If you aren't a journal type person, don't name journaling. Don't make this more than it should be. Keep it simple.

Final Words From Pastor Karl

Welcome to a journey of transformation:

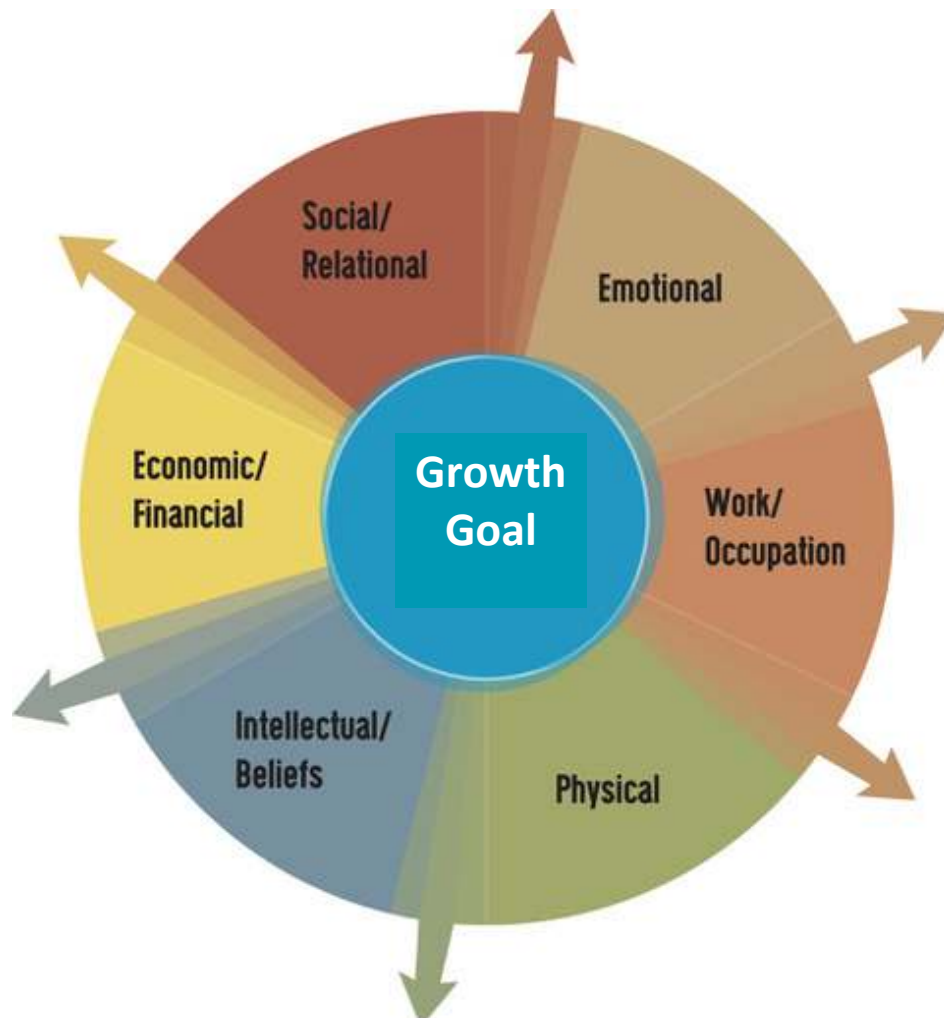
By completing your first draft of this growth plan, you have just decided to take your formation seriously. You are not doing this alone. Christ walks with you every moment of every day. You are not doing this alone. The mentors you may choose to engage with and the community of CCC journey with you. Sometimes, taking the first step has the biggest impact.

If this particular growth plan is a part of the CCC Growth Challenge, you will be assigned a growth plan coach. This coach will be either Laura Flanders or one of our CCC coaches she has trained. Laura is a leadership coach from Taproot Innovation, LLC. She has decades of experience using this type of tool for learning and formation. You will soon hear from your assigned coach in order to set up a meeting to go over your first rough draft. All work with the CCC growth plan coaches remain confidential as reasonable by law and as described in a confidentiality agreement you and the coach will sign.

Appendix A Choosing Spiritual Disciplines

As you work to choose spiritual disciplines that will help nurture your growth goal, consider the image below. It is intended to communicate that all of life is to be lived WITH God (See Skye Jethani's book *With*). The question is not what is spiritual and what is not, the question is, "to whose spirit are you surrendered in any given dimension of your life?" Thus, you may want to write a growth plan that include different disciplines touching on different domains. This may help round out your experience. For example: a growth plan with a goal to grow in patience might have a practice in which grace is given more to a person in our family who tends to make ongoing mistakes in the way they act towards another family member. This touches on the social/relational dimension. And then perhaps a second practice would touch on the emotional domain by practicing patience towards self by not "talking down to self" when a mistake is made. And then lastly, perhaps the discipline of spending less will help you learn to better wait (patience) while touching on the economic dimension of your life.

In short, keep in mind that the blue inner circle is the overall aim of spiritual formation. Our life with God infects every domain and the blue is bleeding out into the whole of life. This is intended to imply that as you are formed in Christ, the dimensions of your life will increasingly be surrendered to him. This is a life-long process and journey. Note how the dimensions (intellectual, physical, etc) bleed into each other. Keep in mind that no one dimension is distinct from the other, though they are definable.



Centennial Covenant Church

Character Growth Plan Template (shortened version)

Please complete the sections in red.

For more information, see the version of the template that has instructions.

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Type one word or a short phrase here that captures your character growth goal.

Step 2: Develop Practices

Relational Practices: Choose a Mentor if Needed

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Discipline #1

Discipline #2

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And if needed, Discipline #4

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Type in here the name of the cognitive resource you will engage. How much time do you want to spend utilizing this resource?

Step 3: Manage A Growth Plan

Indicate here the expected time frame for this growth plan. Indicate what needs to change in your life so that you are sure to engage it.

Step 4: Reflect on a Growth Plan

Name your way/s of reflection here.