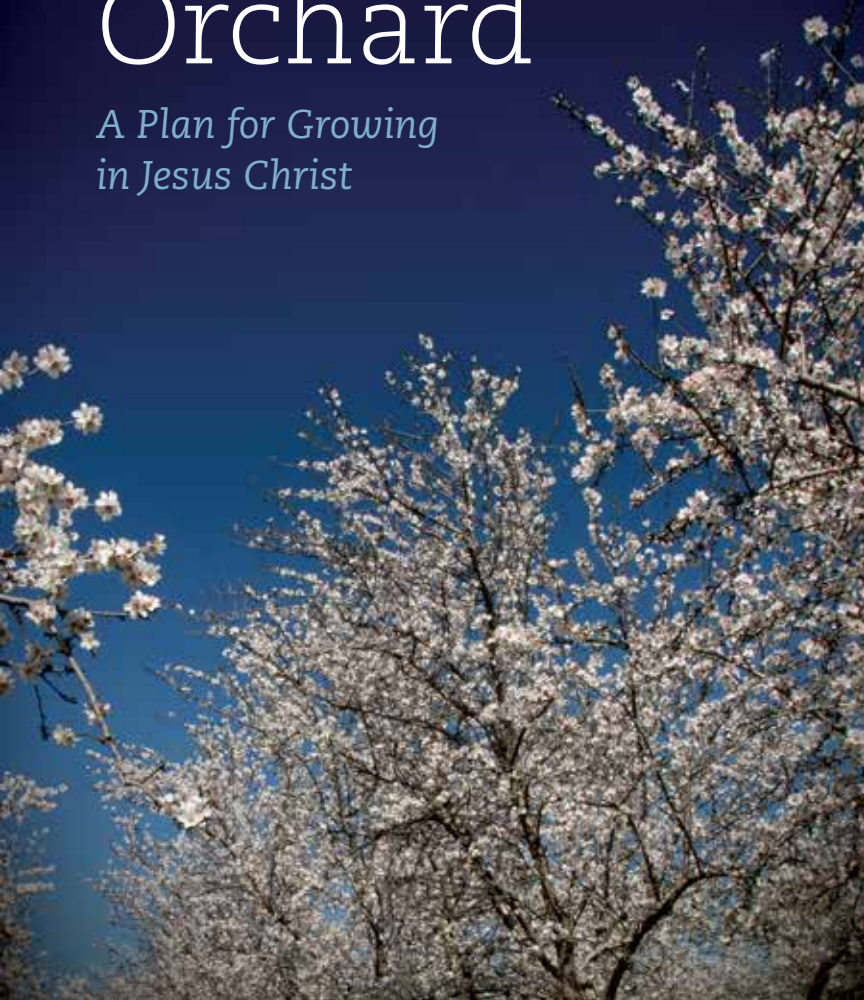


Emmanuel's Orchard

*A Plan for Growing
in Jesus Christ*



Growing in Jesus Christ

If you are a Christian, something supernatural has happened to you. The Lord has planted his own life in you and has made you part of his “orchard.” This means at least three things:

1. you can expect to grow spiritually
2. you can expect to bear fruit that will benefit other people
3. you should plan to grow in the context of God’s community (this is why the local church is so important)

The leadership at Emmanuel Presbyterian Church (EPC) wants to help you grow. For this reason we have developed “Emmanuel’s Orchard,” a plan designed to provide you with ample sun and water so that your roots will sink deep and the Lord’s life will begin to flourish in and through you. The plan has five growth-stages, each of which (more or less) builds upon the one before it, and identifies for each stage (1) what you need to know, (2) what you need to know how to do, and (3) what you need to experience. We provide as well several resources to help you along with each stage.

Five Growth Stages

Growth Stage I

Planted in Jesus — Beginning Your New Life

Growth Stage II

Nourished in Jesus — Sinking Your Roots Deep

Growth Stage III

Part of God’s Orchard — Thriving in the Church

Growth Stage IV

Producing Fruit and Giving Shelter — Bringing Life to the World

Growth Stage V

Continuing to Grow — Pressing on at EPC and Beyond

We hope that you stay planted in our particular acre of the Lord’s orchard for a long time, helping to develop an ever deepening culture of love and service. But we realize that your stay here may be brief (many of our people come to New York for school or for the early stages in their career development). For this reason we have designed the curriculum to be gotten through in a three-year time period.

How to Use This Booklet

Use the Orchard plan as a diagnostic tool

Take thirty minutes to thumb through the following pages putting a check (✓) opposite each area of knowledge or experience where you have made satisfying progress. Then, noting what you have not checked, make a three-year plan to fill in the gaps using the resources that we (or someone else) supplies.

We recommend that your plan unfold in sequence with the five stages, but we do not require this. You may find, for example, that you are ready for stage two already — which is perfectly fine with us. You may also find that it is impossible to proceed in perfect sequence, since a seminar related to the workplace (stage four), for example, may be scheduled prior to the first Intro to EPC Class (stage one) that you are able to attend. The idea is to move as sequentially as possible with the aim of getting through all that we offer over a two to three year period.

We also recommend that you develop your plan with a friend, each of you helping the other put his or hers together. This will help you both not only with identifying priorities (sometimes friends see what we need better than we do) but also with following through.

Two final thoughts

1. *Don't let this plan overwhelm you.* If you find that you can take aim at only one or two growth areas over the next 2–3 years, that is a good deal better than having taken aim at nothing. You will not grow by feeling guilty about the gaps or obsessing about checking off boxes.

2. *Enjoy the Lord.* When Jesus said, “Abide in Me,” he did not mean, “Follow a plan.” He meant, “Stay close to Me, enjoy Me, discover Me; for I bring you home to the Father, the source of all that is good, true, and beautiful.” Orchards blossom and yield lovely things not by “working hard,” but by drinking in the sun and the rain. May it be the same for you.

Growth Stage I: Planted in Jesus — Beginning Your New Life

Note: Here and in each subsequent section check the boxes where you feel you have made sufficient progress. The unchecked boxes will represent ‘gap’ areas for you.

What you need to know

- The gospel message
- The meaning of biblical love
- The basic outline of the biblical story
- The basic story of the church

What you need to know how to do

- To articulate what you believe
- To identify where biblical love is missing or weak in your relationships and to begin to love more fully those who are close to you: family, friends, co-workers, those you date

What you need to experience

- Faith in Jesus Christ and membership in his church
- Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Sharing your faith with a friend

Resources EPC provides

- Public worship, where the gospel is preached and the sacraments are celebrated regularly
- Free sermons on our website
- The Intro to EPC Class — where we go over basics about the Bible, the church, and Christian belief
- Personal stories in public worship — where you get to hear others articulate their faith, and where you may well have the opportunity to articulate your own
- Classes on basic Bible, church history, and sharing your faith (*e.g. Bible Survey Class, Leadership Training Classes*)
- Events and ministries that are “inquirer friendly”

Growth Stage II: Nourished in Jesus — Sinking Your Roots Deep

What you need to know

- Basic content of the biblical books
- What the “means of grace” are: Fellowship, the Word, Prayer, the Sacraments, and a Missional Life (FWPSM).
- Why God puts us through trials

What you need to know how to do

- To interpret the Bible
- To pray, benefit from the Lord’s Supper, and have Christian friendships that help you grow spiritually
- To preach the gospel to yourself
- Benefit from trials

What you need to experience

- A devotional life in which you are spending time in

the Bible and in prayer every day, or nearly every day, and in which the gospel is continually refreshing you

- Regular intentional Christian fellowship whose aim is to help you and those you meet with grow as disciples of Jesus
- Regular thoughtful participation in the Lord’s Supper
- Participation in church-wide prayer events where you learn how to pray not simply for your own needs but for the kingdom of God to come to the world

Resources EPC provides

- Accountability Relationships: One-on-one mentoring with a friend using a booklet we have prepared for your use. Booklets are available on our website.
- Home Fellowship Groups, where friendships grow around prayer, a study of the Bible and service to the church and community
- Regular preaching on the “means of grace”
- Regular church-wide prayer events (*e.g. Morning of Prayer, Sunday morning prayer, monthly Missions prayer meetings*)

Growth Stage III: Part of God’s Orchard — Thriving in the Church

What you need to know

- Why the church is so important to Jesus and to us
- The particulars about EPC: What we believe, how we fit into the broader church, what we are aiming to do, and how we function
- That the Lord gives spiritual gifts to each of us for the benefit of the others

What you need to know how to do

- To discern your spiritual gifts
- To discern the marks of a healthy church, and identify when and why a church's (or a Christian ministry's) message or ministry is off-center
- To love the “poor:” people with fewer choices than you have, people who cannot or will not pay you back, people who are not like you

What you need to experience

- Regular giving of your time, talents, and money to the church's ministry
- Involvement in some service to people in need.
- The joy and challenge of bringing an unbelieving friend to Christ — or at least to church

Resources EPC provides

- The Leadership Training Class (required for officer candidates — open to anyone — taught once a year)
- Training for church ministries (*e.g. teaching in Sunday School, serving with Sunday Ops, serving in Mercy ministry*)
- Life skills seminars and teaching (*e.g. parenting, dating/engagement/marriage, etc.*)
- Ministries to the local community coordinated by our Mercy Team (*e.g. Roots in the Heights events, All Angels soup kitchen*)

Growth Stage IV: Producing Fruit and Giving Shelter — Bringing Life to the World

What you need to know

- That the church exists to make disciples worldwide through establishing gospel-centered and loving congregations
- That the Lord Jesus challenges every institution, worldview, and line of work that you encounter
- That you have a calling

What you need to know how to do

- To help a new believer with the basics: Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and sharing the faith
- To bring the lordship of Jesus to everything you think and do
- To begin to answer today's challenges to Christian faith
- To discern your calling

What you need to experience

- Thoughtful interaction with others who are seeking to follow Jesus in your season of life and/or chosen career
- Change in your work place, home, attitudes, and thought-life that arises because you have been seeking to make Jesus Lord there
- A missions trip or committed involvement in a mercy ministry

Resources EPC provides

- Forums and focus groups in which people share what it means to follow Jesus in particular professions
- Season of Life seminars
- Teaching that addresses anti-Christian arguments
- Short-term missions opportunities

Orchard Sundays

Eight times a year we gather for “family meals” (on us) following Sunday worship. We dedicate some of them to special learning. The teaching on those occasions focuses on a topic of general interest (often relevant to believers and unbelievers alike) and may involve a presentation and discussion in small groups. During the learning time we provide childcare.

Partnering Ministries

Emmanuel partners with the following organizations, all of which provide rich learning and service opportunities. You will find links to them on our website.

- [Reformed University Ministries](#)
- [Christian Union](#)
- [Bridges International](#)
- [Global Inter Varsity](#)
- [Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship](#)
- [Young Life Harlem](#)
- [Hope for New York](#)
- [Redeemer Presbyterian Church](#)

Growth Stage V: Continuing to Grow — Pressing on at EPC and Beyond

“Higher up and farther in.” That’s how C. S. Lewis describes the Christian life.

Whether you stay on at EPC or leave the city and join a new church somewhere else, there are unlimited joys, discoveries, and opportunities to love ahead of you. You have only just begun.

We hope that Jesus will become more fully the center of your life: that his cross will become more fully the reason for your hope, that his Spirit will become more consciously the source of your strength, that his company and the company of his Father will become your deepest joy, that his church will become the community you love more deeply than any other, and that the advancement of his kingdom will increasingly become your deepest agenda.

We hope that, as a result of all these developments, you will be better able to help your Christian friends along the way, that you will be more able and willing to assume Christian leadership, and that you will be more able and willing to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is Lord of all to the glory of God the Father.

Emmanuel — the name we have given to our church — means “God with us.” May God be with you through the grace and cross of our Lord Jesus whatever unfolds in the years to come.

Resources

Below you will find a list of resources that we recommend. They are arranged according to the various growth-stages that they relate to most closely.

Growth Stage I

Basic Christianity, John Stott. A classic that lays out the basic message simply and clearly.

I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed, Alister McGrath.

The Christian Life, Sinclair Ferguson. Will help you understand how to make real in your experience what Jesus has done for you.

Eerdman's Handbook of the Bible. A clear and wonderfully informative book on the Bible. It includes outlines and summaries of all the books, timelines, maps, and enlightening discussions on a wide range of philosophical and historical issues that bear on the Bible.

The Story of God, Tom Nelson. A brief overview of the "Story" and main themes of the Bible.

Dust to Glory, R.C. Sproul. Audio or Video series covering the story of the Bible.

Growth Stage II

Knowing God, J. I. Packer. A classic and profound discovery of God's character and ways.

Experiencing God, Henry Blackaby.

Not The Way It's Supposed to Be, Cornelius Plantinga. If you want to understand, in accessible terms, what sin is and how it works its way into our lives, this is a very helpful read.

When People Are Big and God Is Small, Ed Welch. We tend to think that idolatry is a problem from ancient times that we have somehow gotten past. Welch shows how up-to-date and constant the struggle with idolatry is for all of us.

What is the Lord's Supper? Richard D. Phillips. Many of us have no idea what sacraments are and why they are so important to Jesus. This booklet will help.

Why Do We Baptize Infants? Bryan Chapell. Many people wonder why many evangelical churches baptize children. This booklet gives clear and helpful answers.

The Ancient Love Song: Finding Christ in the Old Testament, Charles Drew. Will help you to read the Bible in such a way that it doesn't beat you up.

Holiness, J. C. Ryle. Will help you understand the foundations for Christian growth through the examination of key ideas like sanctification and justification.

The Lord and His Prayer, N. T. Wright. A thought provoking and helpful book on the Lord's Prayer.

Life Together, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A classic and challenging discussion of fellowship.

The Reformation Study Bible, R.C. Sproul, General Editor. Filled with sound and practical notes and commentary. (English Standard Version is the same one we use in services.)

Foundations of the Christian Faith, James Montgomery Boice. A basic systematic theology.

Foundations, R.C. Sproul. Audio/video introduction to systematic theology.

Growth Stage III

The Living Church, John Stott. Someone said that the church is the one organization that lives for the benefit of its non-members. Stott keeps Jesus close by helping you stay outwardly focused.

Church: Why Bother? Philip Yancey. An inspirational, honest and entertaining account of what the church is like and why it is important.

The Peacemaker, Ken Sande. A great book on conflict resolution. Written by a lawyer with a good grasp of the Bible.

Ministries of Mercy, Tim Keller. Jesus tells us that we need to be involved with him in caring for the poor. Tim's book inspires us to do so, and shows us how. Practical and moving.

The Westminster Confession of Faith: An Authentic Modern Version, Douglas Kelly (Editor).

Truth in All Its Glory, William Edgar. An up-to-date and winsome presentation of the transforming truths about God and us that powered the protestant reformation.

Growth Stage IV

The Reason for God, Tim Keller. Will help you grapple ably with the arguments against belief that you bump into every day.

Simply Christian, N. T. Wright. An up-to-date argument for Christianity's truth.

When God Weeps, Joni Tada and Steve Estes. A practical and readable book about suffering. Joni, a quadriplegic since her teens, has a lot to say on the subject.

A Journey Worth Taking: Finding Your Purpose in this World, Charles Drew. A practical and theological guide aimed at helping you figure out what God wants you to do with your life.

Body Broken: Can Republicans and Democrats Sit in the Same Pew? Charles Drew. A practical and pastoral guide to being engaged socially and politically without dividing the church.

The Resurrection of the Son of God, N. T. Wright. If you want to become convinced that Jesus' resurrection really happened, read this book.

Surprised by Hope, N. T. Wright. A simpler version of his larger resurrection book.

Walking With the Poor, Bryant Myers. A great deal of helpful thinking about how to address poverty and work with poor communities in ways that bring transformation.

The Baker Pocket Guide to World Religions, Gerald McDermott. A brief summary and comparison of world religions, accounting for Christianity's uniqueness.

Season of Life Issues

Song of Solomon, Tommy Nelson. A very helpful book on dating.

Boundaries in Dating, Townsend and Cloud.

Revelations of a Single Woman: Loving the Life I Didn't Expect, Connally Gilliam. Honest and practical treatment of the subject.

Singles at the Cross-Roads, Albert Y. Hsu. An upbeat and visionary approach to living out the single life.

Loneliness, Elisabeth Eliot.

True Love in a World of False Hope, Robbie Castleman.

Washed and Waiting, Wesley Hill. An honest, moving and helpful account of a homosexual Christian seeking to be faithful.

Before You Say "I Do" H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts.

Real Sex, Lauren Winner. Honest and accessible treatment of the subject.

Marriage, Tim Keller. Excellent audio series — vivid, honest, helpful, life changing. Available at gospelinlife.com.

The Marriage Builder, Larry Crabb. Practical help on how the gospel can bring us through marital difficulty.

Honey for a Child's Heart, Gladys Hunt. An inspiring book about building Christian imagination through reading literature to children. Includes a marvelous age-specific bibliography.

Shepherding a Child's Heart, Tedd Tripp. A gospel-centered approach to raising children.

Mars Hill Audio Journal Fascinating and insightful interviews and commentary on the relationship between the Christian faith and a full range of issues in contemporary life and culture. Available at marshillaudio.org.

Growth Stage V

The Cross of Christ, John Stott. A deep, informed, and pastoral analysis of the single most important event of Christian theology and of history.

Culture-Making: Recovering our Creative Calling, Andy Crouch. A very fine book on how Christians can integrate their faith with their work.



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