

What does a healthy disciple look like?

Signs of healthy living

By Dave Batty

When David Wilkerson started his ministry in New York City, he experienced success in getting drug addicts to pray to receive Christ into their life. However, many of these young people were back to using drugs in the next two or three weeks. When asked why, they responded, “We don’t know how to live for Jesus.”

The staff at Teen Challenge realized that they would have to add discipleship training to their evangelism outreaches to see long term success in the lives of these new believers.

Another reality soon became clear. Salvation does not automatically or instantly turn you in a healthy Christian disciple. When a dysfunctional sinner becomes a Christian what you may have is a dysfunctional Christian. Even though they have experienced salvation, they have not yet learned how to live a successful (healthy) Christian life. So how does one become a healthy Christian? The answer: Christian discipleship!

How do you reach the full potential in life that God desires for you?

What does the Bible say?

Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

What are the plans that God has for you specifically?

Jesus from the Parable of the Sower explained what a healthy disciple looks like.

Matthew 13:23 NIV

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

What would your life look like if you were producing a “hundred times” what was sown?

What does God look for to determine if a person is a healthy disciple?

What does the Bible say?

Psalm 1:1-3 NIV

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

² But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

So how do you measure the progress of a new Christian's growth?

How do you know if this person is on a path to healthy spiritual growth?

In this workshop we will look at some of the practical ways you can measure a new believer's growth. We are not looking at mastering theological beliefs. What we want to assess is how healthy is their practical daily interactions with others.

The tool we will use in this workshop comes from the book: [The Life Model: Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You: The Essentials of Christian Living](#) by James Friesen, E. James Wilder, Anne M. Bierling, Rick Koepcke, and Maribeth Poole. This book is available in Russian and in Spanish, and soon in Portuguese.

This tool describes these as "Stages to maturity". With each stage to maturity, you will see what the person needs to master to achieve maturity at that stage in life. With each stage, the rest of the family members and community need to be helping this person along. If the family and community do not provide the right kind of help, then it will be much harder for that person to achieve maturity. Failing to master each step to maturity creates problems.

In this workshop we are going to look at these stages of growth and connect them to the new believers you are training. Below are all the stages covered in the book *The Life Model*. In this workshop, we will only be looking at the first 2 stages of life. We strongly recommend you purchase this book and study the remaining stages of life.

Stages of life / Stages to Maturity

- | | | |
|----|------------------|---|
| 1. | The Infant Stage | Birth to 3 |
| 2. | The Child Stage | Age 4 - 12 |
| 3. | The Adult Stage | Age 13 – to birth of 1 st child |
| 4. | The Parent Stage | Birth of 1 st child until youngest child has become an adult |
| 5. | The Elder Stage | Beginning when youngest child has become an adult |

At the top of the next page you will see a brief overall description of what a person needs to master at this stage of life to be mature. The good news is that even if you did not master these skills as a child, you can learn them now.

Column one lists the tasks that you need to master.

Column two describes the ways that family members and friends can assist you in mastering each of these tasks. The guidelines given in column two also identify the most helpful things you can do as a staff member to help your students develop the life skill listed in column one. These describe how you can create a positive environment for God to work in their life.

Column three identifies the problems that are common when one fails to master the skill listed in column one. If you see the problem in column 3, then look at column 1 for a solution.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
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If you want to achieve life to the full potential that God has for you, then each “Personal Task” is one practical step that can take you on this path to real maturity. These “Personal Tasks” are not a self-help path to health and maturity. We need to ask these questions:

- How do I master these personal tasks as a healthy disciple of God?
- How do I “follow Jesus” in each of these areas of my life?
- What is God’s path for me to master each of these areas in my life?

As you seek to help the students in your Teen Challenge center, you need to first take a close look at how you are doing in your own life. Then you can begin to help your students assess their areas of strengths and weaknesses and begin to make needed changes.

In doing a self assessment, you can first rate yourself on how well you are applying each personal task in column one. You may also want to rate yourself on the problems identified in column three and ask yourself, “How significant are these problems in my life?”

As you begin to apply each life skill (column one) in your own life, then you will be better equipped to help others who need to grow in their lives.

With each of the tasks in column one, you can identify specific scriptures that speak to the development of that area of your life. You can do the same for all the problems in column 3. What scriptures speak to God’s perspective on this problem, and God’s way out of this problem?

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

The Infant Stage: Birth through Age 3

(Newborns and toddlers are included here, up to the age where they can effectively say what their needs are.)

Primary Task to be completed during this stage. Learning to Receive

Primary Resulting Problem in adult life when this task is not completed: weak or stormy relationships.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Lives in joy. Expands capacity for joy, learns that joy is one's normal state, and builds joy strength.	Parents delight in the infant's wonderful and unique existence.	Weak identity; fear and coldness dominate bonds with others.
2. Develops trust.	Parents build strong, loving, bonds with the infant – bonds of unconditional love.	Has difficulty bonding – which often leads to manipulative, self-centered, isolated, or discontented personality.
3. Learns how to receive.	Gives care that matches the infant's needs, without the infant asking.	Is withdrawn, disengaged, self-stimulating, and unresponsive.
4. Begins to organize self into a person through relationships.	Discovers the true characteristics of the infant's unique identity, through attention to the child's behavior and character.	Has an inability to regulate emotions.
5. Learns how to return to joy from every unpleasant emotion.	Provides enough safety and companionship during difficulties, so the infant can return to joy from any other emotion.	Has uncontrollable emotional outbursts, excessive worry and depression. Avoids, escapes or gets stuck in certain emotions.

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Personal Assessment

1. Go through each of the 5 personal tasks in column 1 and assess yourself. How effectively are you living out each of these tasks today?

2. Reflecting back on your childhood, how effective were you at living out each of these tasks as a child? As a teen?

3. Look at the community and family tasks in column 2. Rate your family on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is no help to 10 is excellent help provided by your parents and others close to you during your childhood years.

4. Look at the problems listed in column 3 and do a personal self-assessment. Which of these problems do you struggle with today?

5.
 - A. Which of all the problems listed in column 3 is your greatest challenge today?

 - B. Look at the corresponding personal task in column 1. Do you see the connection between your problem and the personal task not mastered in your life? What steps can you take to master that personal task in your life today? Remember that those close to you have a key part in helping you master that task—column 2.

A closer look at Stage 1: The Infant Stage

Each person needs to take the time to do a personal self assessment of each “Personal Task”. The Personal Assessment questions on the previous page can be used for this.

Now let’s take a closer look at each personal task and brainstorm some possible ways we can master this in our life. As we stated earlier, even though a person has the potential to master each of these Personal Tasks by age 3, many adults have not yet done so. Today is a great day to get started!

Personal Task #1	Bible Verses	Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lives in joy. ➤ Expands capacity for joy. ➤ Learns that joy is one’s normal state. ➤ Builds joy strength. 	1 Thessalonians 5:16 Nehemiah 8:10 Psalm 118:24 Luke 10:20 John 15:11 John 16:24 Romans 15:13 2 Corinthians 7:4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wake up in the morning and quote Psalm 118:24 to myself. ➤ Look for things today that I can be thankful for and rejoice in them. ➤ Choose to be joyful as I do the work that I must do today.
Personal Task #2	Bible Verses	Action Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develops trust 	Proverbs 3:5-6 Psalm 143:8 Psalm 40:4 Proverbs 11:28 1 Corinthians 13:7 Proverbs 28:26 Matthew 25:21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How can I trust in the Lord with all my heart today? ➤ How does my love for this person relate to my ability to trust this person? ➤ What has this person done to cause me to not trust them?

Personal Task #5	Bible Verses	Action Steps
Learns how to return to joy from every unpleasant emotion.	1 Thessalonians 5:16 Nehemiah 8:10 Psalm 118:24 2 Corinthians 12:7-11 James 1:2-5 2 Kings 18:5 John 16:21-22 Psalm 103:19 Romans 8:28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How can I apply each of these verses in my life today? ➤ James 1:2 says I need to face the problems in my life. What problem do I need to face today instead of ignoring it or running from it? ➤ How will I return to joy from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Anger ➤ Depression ➤ Fear

Go back to page 5 and look at Column 3 and the problems related to each of the Personal Tasks. Each of these problems also provide specific issues that we can look at in putting out of our life. It is not enough to just stop doing the things listed in column 3. When we build the corresponding “Personal Task” in column 1, related to that problem, that is one of the best ways to overcome that problem. The more we work on mastering the positive Personal Task, the less likely we are to have the corresponding problem in column 3.

When you master each of the personal tasks at Stage One, that is the best foundation to then move on to the Personal Tasks in Stage Two (see next page).

Give special attention to Personal Task #2, “Learns what brings personal satisfaction.” Take a close look at what problems a person has (column 3) when they fail to master this personal task.

The Life Model: MATURITY INDICATORS

The Child Stage: Age 4 through 12

(Age 12 is the earliest age this stage can be completed.)

Primary Task to be completed during this stage. **Taking care of self**

Primary Resulting Problem in adult life when this task is not completed: Not taking responsibility for self.

PERSONAL TASKS	COMMUNITY AND FAMILY TASKS	WHEN THE TASKS FAIL
1. Asks for what is needed – can say what one thinks and feels	Teaches and allows child to appropriately articulate needs.	Experiences continual frustration and disappointment because needs are not met; is often passive-aggressive.
2. Learns what brings personal satisfaction.	Helps child to evaluate the consequences of own behaviors, and to identify what satisfies him or her.	Is obsessed with or addicted to food, drugs, sex, money, or power, in a desperate chase to find satisfaction.
3. Develops enough persistence to do hard things.	Challenges and encourages child to do difficult tasks the child does not feel like doing.	Experiences failure, remains stuck and undependable, is consumed with comfort and fantasy life.
4. Develops personal resources and talents.	Provides opportunities to develop the child’s unique talents and interests	Fills life with unproductive activities despite God-given abilities.
5. Knows self and takes responsibility to make self understandable to others.	Guides in discovering the unique characteristics of the child’s heart	Fails to develop true identity, conforms to outside influences that misshape identity.
6. Understands how he or she fits into history as well as the “big picture” of what life is about.	Educates the child about the family history as well as the history of the family of God.	Feels disconnected from history and unable to protect self from family lies or dysfunctions that are passed on.

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Personal Assessment

1. Go through each of the 6 personal tasks in column 1 and assess yourself. How effectively are you living out each of these tasks today?

2. Reflecting back on your childhood, how effective were you at living out each of these tasks as a child? As a teen?

3. Look at the community and family tasks in column 2. Rate your family on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is no help to 10 is excellent help provided by your parents and others close to you during your childhood years.

4. Look at the problems listed in column 3 and do a personal self-assessment. Which of these problems do you struggle with today?

5.
 - A. Which of all the problems listed in column 3 is your greatest challenge today?

 - B. Look at the corresponding personal task in column 1. Do you see the connection between your problem and the personal task not mastered in your life? What steps can you take to master that personal task in your life today? Remember that those close to you have a key part in helping you master that task—column 2.

A closer look at Stage 2: The Child Stage

We are going to take a closer look at Personal Task #2, listed below.

Notice what are the resulting problems (Column 3) when a person fails to master this personal task: **They are obsessed with or addicted to food, drugs, sex, money, or power, in a desperate chase to find satisfaction.**

Fill in your ideas in the chart below for columns 2 and 3.

Personal Task #2	Bible Verses	Action Steps
<p>➤ Learns what brings personal satisfaction.</p>		