**The Pursuit of Spiritual Renewal**

The following elements are intended to assist you and me as Georgia Baptists in our pursuit of spiritual renewal, in both our relationship with God and with others. Spiritual renewal requires a commitment of our total being as Jesus reminds us in (Luke 10:27); “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and ‘your neighbor as yourself.” Like all pursuits in life, they begin with a first step and in this case it is the step of personal spiritual examination.

**Spiritual Examination:**

* “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me And lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

One of the best ways to examine our spiritual health is to find a quiet place to pray and look into God’s Word; another tool to assist you and I in this pursuit is to work through a tool called, **Spiritual Renewal Inventory (SRI).**

I have included an example in this E-book for your use. As you work through the (SRI), be honest in your answers and allow the Holy Spirit sufficient time to search your heart and mind. Once you have finished the inventory, confess and repent of anything that God may have revealed during this time with Him. Remember, sin in our lives will limit God’s presence and power in our lives and our usefulness to His kingdom.

**Spiritual Renewal Inventory (SRI)**

As you complete the assessment below, spend as much time as needed, please be honest in your responses. Once you have competed the (SRI) total up each section, if any of the disciplines noticeably lower than the others, this would be a good area to begin your pursuit of spiritual renewal and maturity.

Use this scale to respond to each statement:

(1) Rarely or Never – (2) Some of the Time – (3) Most of the Time – (4) Almost Always

Walking With Christ (John 15:5)

* I practice a regular devotional time (quiet time) and look forward to my time with Christ.
* I experience God’s presence when I worship and I recognize changes needed in my life as a result.
* I seek Christ’s guidance first in my life, and when He makes me aware of His will, I follow His leading.
* My relationship with Christ is the most important value in my life. Knowing and pleasing Him is my greatest joy.

Total:

**Delighting in God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16)**

* I read the Bible each day.
* I evaluate the ideas and lifestyles in my culture to see if they are consistent with the Bible.
* I use the Bible as the guide for the way I think and act.
* I join together with others regularly to study the Bible.

Total:

Praying In Faith (Hebrews 4:16)

* My praying includes thanksgiving, praise, confession, and requests.
* I desire to grow in my prayer life and look for ways to improve my intimacy with God.
* I am moved to pray because I am aware of my complete dependence on God for everything in my life.
* I have a time of prayer each day.

Total:

Christian Community (Acts 2:46-47)

* I seek forgiveness when I hurt someone and I seek to forgive others when they hurt me.
* I allow other Christians to hold me accountable in how I live for and serve Christ.
* I show patience and kindness in my relationships with family and friends.
* I am forming meaningful relationships with other believers.

Total:

Sharing the Gospel (Acts 1:8)

* I share my faith with non-believers.
* I make my faith known to my neighbors, fellow employees, and others I meet on a regular basis.
* I intentionally maintain relationships with non-believers, desiring to be a witness to them, and pray for their salvation.
* I am prepared to share my testimony or talk about spiritual matters at any time.

Total:

Faith Development (Philippians 1:6)

* I understand what my spiritual gifts are and use them to serve others.
* I tithe or faithfully give a significant percent of my income to support my church and to help others.
* Meeting the needs of others is an important value in my life.
* I serve regularly in a ministry at my church.

Total:

**Confession and Repentance:**

* “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” I John 1:9

The pursuit of spiritual renewal requires both confession and repentance. Confession must come from the heart, but is given definition by our spoken words and outward actions. Repentance always follows genuine confession. It is the God granted attitude of having godly sorrow for personal sin and the turning away from sins towards a renewed life with God, just like the actions of the Prodigal Son in (Luke 15:11-32).

Here are a few characteristics of genuine confession and repentance in the life of a believer:

* *Accepts full responsibility for his/her actions*
* *Does not continue in the behavior or anything associated with it*
* *Does not have a defensive attitude about being in the wrong*
* *Makes restitution wherever necessary*
* *Accountability with other spiritually mature believers*

**Biblical Obedience:**

* “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16

The personal daily study and meditation upon God’s Word is essential in deepening and sustaining the difficult work of spiritual renewal. In fact, I believe it to be the greatest of all spiritual disciplines for believers today.

The late E M Bounds said, “The Word of God is the fulcrum upon which the lever of prayer is placed, and by which things are mightily moved.”

The word “fulcrum or pivot” is defined as somebody or something that is essential to the success or effectiveness of an activity or event. The sincere study and meditation of God’s Word will equip you and me for every good work, especially the hard work of spiritual renewal.

The two most significant factors concerning God’s Word is to “understand” the Word of God and to “obey” the Word of God. I have listed below five ways you and I receive the Word of God into our life. Each of these steps deepens our understanding of God’s Word and prepares us for greater biblical obedience that leads to both spiritual maturity and spiritual renewal.

* Hear with our ears/Romans 10:17 “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.”
* Read/Revelation 1:3 “The one who reads this is blessed, and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it are blessed, because the time is near.”
* Study with our mind/2 Timothy 2:15”Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the Word of truth.”**Cross references:**
* [2 Timothy 2:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20tim%202:15&version=HCSB#en-HCSB-29841) : [Eph 1:13; Col 1:5; Jms 1:18](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Eph1:13;Col1:5;Jms1:18&version=HCSB)
* Memorize in our heart/Psalm 119:11 “I have treasured Your Word in my heart so that I may not sin against You.”
* Meditate in our soul/Psalm 1:2 “Instead, his delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.”

Also, the late A W Tozer brings the elements of Biblical Obedience altogether in this classic quote: “The Word of God well understood and religiously obeyed is the shortest route to spiritual maturity. And we must not select a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian.”

**Prayer and Fasting:**

* “Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time.” Hebrews 4:16

Once God’s Word has been given adequate time to examine our hearts and the Holy Spirit has brought us to a place of confession and repentance. You and I are ready to deepen our journey toward spiritual renewal through a time of prayer and fasting. The discipline of prayer and fasting is one of the most “neglected” spiritual disciplines in the body of Christ today, primarily due to a lack of biblical understanding and training in the area of prayer and fasting.

Again E M Bounds teaches us that; “The goal of prayer is the ear of God, a goal that can only be reached by patient and continued and continuous waiting upon Him, pouring out our heart to Him and permitting Him to speak to us. Only by so doing can we expect to know Him, and as we come to know Him better we shall spend more time in His presence and find that presence a constant and ever increasing delight.”

Let me recommend another great spiritual renewal tool to mature your understanding of prayer to utilize in our journey toward spiritual renewal. <http://www.sbc.net/inallthingspray/resources/AWAKEN21-DayPrayerGuideandJournal.pdf> it’s a prayer guide currently being use throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, please read the following comments from its author, Claude V. King:

“…Awaken 2012 is a twenty one day prayer guide and invitation for you to fast and pray over the course of three weeks, seeking a revival of God’s presence and work in your own life, church and state convention… Spiritual awakening is what we need in our nation, but revival of God’s people is a spiritual prerequisite…”

* “When I heard these words, I sat down and wept. I mourned for a number of days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” Nehemiah 1:4

For a brief overview of this discipline, I have included a link <http://web.kybaptist.org/web/doc/Guide-to-Prayer-and-Fasting.pdf> **A Guide to Prayer & Fasting by J R Harris** from First Baptist Church, Orlando. He has developed a very practical guide to assist you in your journey toward spiritual renewal through fasting.

I once read that, “Fasting is not so much about food as it is about focus. Neither is it so much about saying no to the body as it is about saying yes to the Spirit.” Prayerfully, these words have helped to inform, encouraged and opened your mind to participate in the discipline of fasting along with our commitment to pray for spiritual renewal.

**Worship:**

* “Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1-2

In college I heard a definition of spiritual worship that I liked very much. It said, “Spiritual Worship is inhaling God’s Word and exhaling the confession of our heart through praise.” Read how David Hunt has described the need for balance in the discipline of worship;

“Worship is not a repetitious exercise of rituals and formulas. These create a veil that actually prevents us from enjoying the presence of the Lord. Worship is the heart poured out in gratitude and awe, expressing our appreciation of who He is and what He has done for us by His grace through Jesus Christ. “

Individual and corporate worship should be a constant catalyst for spiritual renewal in our lives if, Jesus is truly our central focus and not ourselves.

* “God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not banish me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of Your salvation to me, and give me a willing spirit. Then I will teach the rebellious Your ways, and sinners will return to You.” Psalm 51:10-13

Another great resource is <http://www.sbc.net/inallthingspray/resources/ConsecratethePeople-An8-DayRenewal.pdf> this booklet, **Consecrate the People by Claude V. King** is an excellent tool to use in preparing churches, associations or a state convention for a time of personal and corporate worship that lead toward spiritual renewal.

The pursuit of spiritual renewal always begins with me and my relationship to our heavenly Father. Once that relationship with God has been renewed, our calling to share the Gospel with lost people across Georgia will once again become both a priority and joy.