Essential 5:

**Shepherd Towards Spiritual Maturity**

**Study Guide: Growing to be more like Christ**

As we grow, we're called to "throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception." Instead, we're to let the Spirit renew our thoughts and attitudes, putting on our new nature, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

This process of growth and transformation is just that – a process. We can't grow up all at once, and neither can the people in our lives, no matter how much we might wish it. It's a journey of small steps, taken one at a time, as we move closer to Christ-likeness.

**Key Takeaways from the Sermon:**

1. God calls us to live lives worthy of His calling, growing in Christ-likeness.

2. Spiritual maturity is a process that requires intentional effort and community.

3. We need to speak truth in love and be open to receiving truth from others.

4. Our spiritual growth impacts those around us and serves as a testimony to God's work.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What stood out to you most from the sermon? Why?

2. Sam asked, "What are you living for?" How would you answer that question? Has your answer changed over time?

3. How have you experienced spiritual growth in your life? What has helped or hindered that growth?

4. The sermon emphasized the importance of speaking truth in love. Share a time when someone spoke truth to you in love. How did it impact you?

5. What are some areas in your life where you feel God is calling you to grow more like Christ?

6. How can we create an environment in our group where we feel safe to speak truth in love to one another?

7. The pastor mentioned that "maturity and leadership are two different things." How have you seen this play out in your own life or in others?

**Practical Applications:**

1. Daily Bible Reading: Commit to reading God's Word daily this week. Share with the group next time how it impacted your week.

2. Truth-Speaking Challenge: Prayerfully consider one person in your life who needs to hear a truth spoken in love. Ask God for wisdom and courage to have that conversation.

3. Spiritual Growth Assessment: Take some time to reflect on your spiritual journey. Identify one area where you'd like to grow and share it with a trusted friend or group member for accountability.

4. Serve Others: Look for an opportunity this week to serve someone else with the intention of growing more like Christ. Be prepared to share your experience with the group.

5. Invitation to Leadership: If you're not currently serving in a leadership capacity, pray about areas where God might be calling you to step up. Discuss potential opportunities with a church leader.

Closing Prayer:

Lord, thank you for calling us to a life worthy of Your name. Help us to grow in Christ-likeness, to speak truth in love, and to be open to receiving truth from others. Give us the courage to live out our faith in ways that impact those around us. May our lives be a testimony to Your transforming work. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide**

Day 1: Living Worthy of Our Calling Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6 Devotional: As we begin this journey, let's reflect on Paul's powerful exhortation to live a life worthy of our calling. God, the Creator of the universe, knows us by name and invites us to participate in His divine plan. This calling isn't about perfection, but about aligning our lives with God's purpose. Today, consider how you can embody humility, gentleness, and patience in your interactions. How might your relationships change if you made every effort to maintain unity through peace? Ask God to help you see yourself and others through His eyes, and to give you the strength to live out your calling with grace and love.

Day 2: Speaking Truth in Love Reading: Ephesians 4:15-16 Devotional: Growth in Christ-likeness often requires both giving and receiving truth spoken in love. Reflect on times when someone has lovingly pointed out an area of growth in your life. How did you respond? Also consider moments when you've needed to speak truth to others. How can you cultivate relationships where this kind of honest, loving communication is welcomed? Ask God to give you discernment in recognizing truth, courage to speak it lovingly, and humility to receive it graciously. Remember, as each part of the body of Christ does its work, we all grow together in love.

Day 3: Putting Off the Old, Putting On the New Reading: Ephesians 4:22-24 Devotional: The journey of spiritual maturity involves a continual process of transformation. We are called to "put off" our old self and "put on" the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. This isn't a one-time event, but a daily choice. What aspects of your old nature do you find yourself struggling with? How can you actively choose to "put on" Christ-like attributes instead? Ask God to reveal areas in your life that need renewal and to empower you through His Spirit to embrace your new nature in Christ.

Day 4: Unity in Diversity Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Devotional: God's design for the church involves unity amidst diversity. Each believer has a unique role to play, yet we are all part of one body. Reflect on your place within the body of Christ. What gifts has God given you to contribute to the whole? How can you better appreciate and support the different roles of others? Ask God to help you see beyond surface-level differences and to value the essential unity we have in Christ. Consider how you can actively promote this unity in your local church community.

Day 5: Persevering in Spiritual Growth Reading: Philippians 3:12-14 Devotional: Spiritual maturity is a lifelong journey, not a destination we reach overnight. Paul, despite his significant spiritual experiences, recognized that he hadn't yet arrived at full maturity. He pressed on, forgetting what was behind and straining toward what is ahead. What past failures or successes might be hindering your current growth? How can you adopt Paul's forward-looking attitude in your own spiritual journey? Ask God to give you perseverance in pursuing Christ-likeness, and the wisdom to recognize that growth is a process. Commit to taking one practical step today toward greater spiritual maturity.