

Getting Started

1. Some of my friends were startled by my choosing to begin a book directed to serious Christians with the question “Which is the better metaphor for the Christian life - marching or dancing?” I trust they quickly settled for themselves that I was not speaking of dancing as a sensual expression of carnal desire, but rather as the outward expression of inner joy. While there are differences to be observed, there are similarities, too. Both require discipline, both require the expenditure of energy, both are most often done in the company of others to mention a few. (If you are the kind of person who defines dancing as simply “moving in time to music” you might have come to the conclusion that marching is a form of dancing!) With all of this in mind, jot down a few characteristics of each.

Marching

Dancing

2. Jot down names of a few people (both biblical and contemporary) who show some aspects of both marching and dancing in their spiritual lives and be prepared to explain why you chose these people.

3. Identify three personal obstacles which you face in your own life, one in the spiritual realm (demonic), one in the social realm (the world), and one in the personal realm (the flesh).

A) _____

B) _____

C) _____

4. In a few words, describe your recurring struggles with one of these and what you think it would take to get victory over that area. Then, invite a friend to pray for you about this.

5. After reading Paul's words in Philippians 3:8-11, consider how he sets a strong example for us as we seek to be more conformed to Christ's likeness. Jot down some areas in which you could improve.

6. Consider the ramifications of deep spiritual change. What commitment are you prepared to make, knowing that there will be a price to be paid in one way or another? We will definitely have to devote some time to it. We may have to give up some cherished goal which conflicts with our spiritual priority. We may meet opposition from friends and family who prefer to avoid confronting the spiritual dimension we will bring into the relationship. We will be opposed by the forces of darkness who hate to see Christians moving toward God and becoming more effective as His agent in the world. Write down a few words about your commitment. Share them with your group or a trusted friend. Invite someone to gently and lovingly hold you accountable to what you purpose in your heart.

7. Briefly describe the course of your own spiritual progress. Is it a smooth upward curve? A jagged line? Like stair steps? Mention a couple of specific high and low points.

For Group Leaders:

Use this occasion to begin building strong relationships within a safe environment. This session is crucial because it will set the tone for what is to come.

In this first session, gently draw out the people in your group so that they feel comfortable with each other. Honesty is crucial. Too often, Christians wear masks to protect their weaknesses and failings. Consequently, they make no progress on them because they are unwilling to own them, even to themselves, much less to anyone else. Encourage appropriately empathic in the group as people become more vulnerable.

Be sure to include supportive prayer as you go along. You can do this yourself, or you can invite others to pray for a specific need in the life of a brother or sister. Don't hesitate to "interrupt the proceedings" to pray.