

DISCIPLESHIP BATHROOM BOOTCAMP

4-Week (20 day) Training in Patterns of Spiritual Discipline

By Benjamin D Walker, 2021

Week 1 Discipline: Prayer

Day 1: What does God know?

Begin your day:

- Be quiet for one moment and envision a throne room occupied by the one who *“dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see”* (1 Tim 6:16). Your spirit is about to stand before that one; the creator and sustainer of the cosmos. You will have His complete attention... don't do anything else until that has really sunk in.
- Say out loud and with sincerity: *“All-Wise and All-Knowing God, I want to speak with You today.”*

Meditate (think deeply):

- What do you know? (marshal all of your expertise... seriously don't blow this off actually try to mentally list all that you feel very competent in: sports, make-up, a language, instrument, etc).
- Take a few moments to give thought to what you don't know (things like the atmospheric composition of Jupiter or how to speak Swahili... extend that list as far as you can).
- Now consider what you don't know you don't know (the infinite array of information about this cosmos, it's history and future, unfathomable mysteries, hypothetical knowledge; all that might have been or could be, what timelessness is like or what existence is like beyond 3 dimensions, or what it is like to sit in the divine counsel).
- Now consider what God knows (pause and really think about that). Read Job 38-40:5. Ask God this question: *“God, I clearly can't add anything to your understanding, so why would you want to talk with me? Please, teach me today and throughout this week why prayer is important to You.”*

Practice it:

- Here's a phrase to use throughout your day: *“You knew”* or *“You know”*. Everything you hear and see, all international news items, personal minutia, details of life, whatever you encounter; acknowledge that this doesn't surprise God. *“You knew this would happen, God. And you know what will happen next”*. Remember that you started your day with the *One* who knew what it held... you have been talking with the *One who knows*.

End your day:

- Read God's word to the prophet Jeremiah (33:2-3). This is an indication of what the conversation with God can be (1 John 2:27). As you close out the day thank God for the opportunity to speak with Him, and for his desire to speak with you. *“All-Wise God, I want meaningful conversation with you for the rest of my days on this earth. Let's talk again tomorrow!”*

Day 2: What does prayer do?

Begin your day:

- Say *“good morning”* to God (say it out loud). Ask the Lord the following question: *If You (God) know what I'm going to pray before I pray it, why do I pray?* Pause. Listen. Consider.

Meditate (think deeply):

- Read Isa 46:8-10. At the forging of this cosmos, does God know that on this morning we would say *“good morning”* to Him? Does God know what else we will be saying to Him today? If so, then this universe was created with all our prayers having been heard by God *“before”* day one... but only if we *actually* pray them. If we fail to speak with Him, if we do not pray, that too is known by God.
- The question many people ask is whether my prayers really make a difference, and I suspect what people mean by that is *“did my prayer change God's mind”*. Many Christians are confused by this notion because God is also described as unchanging (immutable). But if God is all-knowing, eternal, and unchanging, my prayers that I utter today were part of God's equation of creation from the very

beginning. In other words: creation was forged and is unfolding and may even be shaped by what you will pray today... but again, only if you pray it!

Practice it:

- Yesterday we discussed how God knows vastly more than we do. And we entertained the concern about what prayer does to God (does it change God or what He does?). All day today let us consider how prayer changes us.
- Ask God *“What is talking to You doing to me?”* This is not just something to ask once and answer. Keep talking to God about it throughout your day. *“God, how is prayer transforming me? How is it affecting US? (this relationship)”*

End your day:

- Read Phil 4:6-7. Speak to the Lord about your day, tell Him what you’re learning. He has heard and He knows. Our conversation with Him is helping us to think more like Him, to see the world more like He does.
- Conversation with Him grants a peace that surpasses all understanding (have you felt it today?). Close out today by talking to the Lord about John 15:7-11, Read it and ask for understanding.

Day 3: Formal prayer

Begin your day:

- Start by welcoming Jesus into conversation today. Actually use the term “welcome” and think about what you are saying to Him. Take a moment and be amazed that He desires to spend the day with you. Read Matthew 6:5-13 while praying about your prayer life. *“Lord, help us pray like this!”*

Meditate on it:

- Have you ever memorized any prayers? Depending on your backdrop in the church that might be part of how you learned to talk to God. Are scripted prayers wrong? If not wrong, are they less valuable than spontaneous prayer? Could a spontaneous prayer be inferior to a scripted prayer? How would such an assessment be decided? What is it that makes a prayer “good”? We might suggest a lot of ways to measure, but one measure that is surely on everyone’s list is *“intention”*: Do you actually *mean* what you are praying?
- Memorized prayers have a rich history in the church and have been employed by our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the ages and across cultures. Today we’d like to redeem (reinstate value to) an ancient prayer by using it as it was intended.

Practice it:

- All day today let’s learn and make use of as formal (scripted) prayer. It is an ancient prayer used by the Orthodox church known as *“The Jesus Prayer”*. It’s origins are at latest AD 600, but is thought to have been employed by Christians in Egypt as early as AD 407 (and perhaps earlier). The prayer goes like this *“Lord Jesus Christ Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner”*. Now while it’s short and may seem simple, it is deep and powerful. Pray this prayer in the following fashion given to us by our spiritual siblings in the Orthodox churches.
- A word of warning here: the purpose is not *vain (empty) repetition*; you’re not getting points for the number of times you say it (Matt 6:7). The point is deep reflection, introspection, meditation, and devotion. As you say each word think about what it means and then say it with intention. If you cannot mean it, stop saying it. Pause for a moment then start again when you are focused. Do this alone (without an audience) and if you are sketchy about the meaning of any of those words look them up (*mercy* for instance is equitable to *compassion* or *pity*)
- Let’s begin: Say the prayer out loud over and over again for a minute or two (meaning it each time), slowing down and thinking about the meaning of each word.
- Begin emphasizing different words. Reflect on how the meaning changes as the emphasis changes.
- Next think about it in silence for a few moments to a few minutes. Thank the Lord for this time of prayer and ask Him to call these words to mind again as you need them, today.

- As your day allows just silently pray the prayer again.

End your day:

- Talk through your day with the Lord (spontaneous prayer) then utter the Jesus Prayer one more time.
- Read Rom 8:26. As you devoted yourself to prayer today did you sense the Holy Spirit active beyond the words you were uttering in *The Jesus Prayer*? According to what you just read in Romans 8, what does Paul say will happen when we don't know what we should pray, but just approach God anyway?

Day 4: Informal prayer (practicing the presence of God)

Begin your day:

- Say the Jesus prayer 3 times slowly and thoughtfully as you get going this morning: "**Lord Jesus Christ Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.**" Then wait in silence until you become aware of His presence, then smile and nod your head. Read 1 Thes 5:16-18

Meditate on it:

- How can I possibly pray without ceasing? Does that mean I should spend my days walking around with hands folded muttering all the time? If not what does it mean? What does praying without ceasing look like?
- A Christian Monk named Brother Lawrence was renowned for his intimacy with God and though he was only a cook/dishwasher in the monastery in which he served, he was perpetually sought out for wisdom regarding his evident closeness to God. Brother Lawrence had a series of quotes which were compiled by his admirers into a book called "**Practicing the Presence of God**". What was his secret? He just lived life *constantly aware of God's presence* with him. That's all. That little life changing realization makes EVERY situation different and can turn every moment into prayer.
- When asked how could he exhibit such nearness to God regardless of circumstances and through the hustle and bustle of this life? Lawrence said: "*The time of business does not differ with me from the time of prayer; and the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were on my knees*"
- Brother Lawrence expressed that devotion to the Lord is an every day and every moment experience once you realize God is with you. Mindfulness of God's presence can turn any moment into prayer, as he expressed it: "*...it is not necessary to have great things to do. I turn my little omelet in the pan for the love of God.*"

Practice it:

- What omelets do you have to turn today? Can you be mindful of who is with you? Here's your mission today... it's simple and it's life changing. *Practice the presence of God.*
- Your goal today is not to "say" something. It's to recognize *Someone*. Every time you realize he is with you, just acknowledge it with a smile or nod.

End your day:

- Read Eph 2:4-7. Find your status in that passage and ask when that happened (look for the verb tense in verse 6). Where are you now? How can that be?
- As you're laying in bed dozing off, consider *Who* is with you... then smile and nod before nodding off.

Day 5: Intercessory prayer

Begin your day:

- Acknowledge the Lord's presence and bow your head. Say whichever name/title of God seems most appropriate to you this morning as you welcome him (*Father, Deliverer, Light of the world, Long-suffering*, etc.). Read Eph 6:18. Pray the following: "Lord help your servant understand how to pray for others."

Meditate on it:

- Why do we pray for others? What's the point? (Consider what we learned on days 1 and 2)

- Does God need me to inform Him regarding needs of others? He already knows. Does God need my words in order to be moved to love or pity for others (His love and compassion dwarf my own). So why does He want me to intervene for others, particularly for other believers (saints), in prayer?
- Prayer for other people or circumstances is known as *intercessory prayer* and God calls us to do it. Like other types of prayer this begins to help us see the world as God does and helps us become more like Him, but it's clear that it is also effective: can change people or circumstances (James 5:16-18)

Practice it: All day today pray without asking anything for yourself. Let all your requests of God be on behalf of others. This may be difficult, but failing should be a good reminder of how self-focused we tend to be.

- *Pray for your fellow believers:*
 - Protection from the evil one and his plans (John 17:15)
 - For the sick that they will be restored (Acts 9:36-41, James 5:14-15)
 - For the sinner that he/she might be healed (James 5:15-16)
 - For those who will come to believe and for unity (John 17:18-21)
- *Pray those outside of the Kingdom of God:*
 - For their knowledge of God and salvation (Matt 5:44, 1 Tim 2:1)
 - For those in authority (1 Tim 2:2)

End your day:

- Think about how many requests and prayers God heard today. These things are no burden or weight to God. He is more than capable of handling it all! Read Phil 4:6-7. Imagine all the things and people you are concerned about and envision placing those people and circumstances in a basket and handing them over to God. He takes them out and offers the basket back to you filled with nothing but peace. Rest now; the world and all who reside therein are in His capable hands.

Week 2 Discipline: Confession and Repentance

Day 1: How is God different from me?

Begin your day:

- Read Isa 55:6-11. Say good morning to God, share some time speaking with Him as we discussed last week. When you've practiced some prayer conclude with this request: *"God today I'm asking that you'll help me to see the many ways in which I fail to be like you. I want you to help me, with brutal clarity, to see just how unlike You I tend to be. God please make it obvious."*

Practice it:

- All day today look for the differences between you and God. Confess how you are unlike God (particularly in his goodness and perfection). Your phrase for the day is *"Lord, you are better than this"*. Use it to describe your actions and interactions. The goal is to be mindful all day of how often we fall short of God's perfection.

End your day:

- Read Matt 5:48... read it over and over again and reflect on that command. Read it until you feel a bit overwhelmed by the command. Now pray the ancient Orthodox prayer we learned last week (the Jesus prayer): *"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"*. As you repeat this prayer slowly and thoughtfully and as you say the word sinner, think of the specific ways you've failed today. Now get quiet and just visualize Jesus hanging on the cross and say *"thank you"*.

Day 2: What is sin?

Begin your day:

- Read Gal 5:16-21 slowly and try to see where you have had problems with each of the items mentioned. Remember last night how you left off your time with the Jesus prayer and the cross. Thank Jesus for taking your sins. Breathe deeply in and exhale slowly.

- Smile and say Good morning to your heavenly Father (Gal 4:6-7). Just sit and smile like an idiot in the presence of the creator of the cosmos for a few moments. Breathe deeply and exhale again. Now spend some time speaking with Him about your day yesterday (be specific).
- Wrap up your prayer by asking God the following: *“God I want to understand why you hate sin. Can you show me what makes sin “bad”? Lord as I look around me and within me, will you please help me to see how ugly sin really is?”*

Practice it:

- All day today look for sin in the culture. See it in media, at work or school, see it in your own heart. Ask yourself *“Where does this lead? What does this do to us? How does it change us?”*

End your day:

- Read Gal 5:16-24. God I want to bear the fruit of the Spirit, I know that allowing sin to reign is destroying me, destroying others, and destroying my relationship with you. Holy Spirit, make me aware of how destructive sin is, and produce fruit in me.

Day 3: Giving it up

Begin your day:

- Has mindfulness of sin kept you from it? Well let’s try to resurrect some more sin to deal with! Get in mind some of the worst garbage you’ve ever done (really don’t hold back, see the ugliness and if you have residual guilt be mindful of it).
- Now carefully read Psa 51... sit with that a moment. Then read 2 Cor 5:21 and really focus on the term *righteousness* (being “right” before God). What does that passage tell you about your current state?
- Wash your hands (literally) and thank God that they are clean. Now meditate on the spiritual implications of your Baptism. Read 2 Cor 5:21 again. Tell God what you’re learning so far this week (not that He doesn’t already know, but like a good dad, he wants to hear). Take a bit more time to speak with God about whatever you want. Wrap up your prayer by asking God the following: *“God today I’m going to try to better understand confession and atonement. I need you to help me own my sin past-and-present (to see it like David saw his sin in Psa. 51), and to relinquish it to You. I’m asking You to show me how you deal with sin, and reveal how you’re dealing with me.*

Meditate on it:

- Think about the following quote for a moment: *“Genuine brokenness pleases God more than pretend spirituality”* -John Ortberg
- What pleases God about our brokenness (heartache, failures, difficulties)? How is that a genuine spiritual advantage?

Practice it:

- Our word for the day is “Confession” which is honestly admitting a truth. And our meditation for the day is *“Giving it up.”* This phrase covers a lot of theological ground so try using it the following ways

*“God, I give up trying to convince myself and everyone else that I’m better than I really am.”

**“God I am giving up trying to be good (righteous) on my own or by my own standards.”

***“God I’m giving these sins I’ve committed up to you. Crucify them and destroy their power over me!”

End your day:

- Consider your sinful mindsets and practices again for a moment. And then say to God *“I give up”*.
- Think for just a moment about what confession does to me and think about what it does for me. Read 1 John 1:9-10. Wash your hands again (literally) remembering the work of God in your baptism and say *“Thank You. You have washed me... I am clean.”*

Day 4: Contented sin v. contested sin

Begin your day:

- Take a moment to stretch and try to force a yawn. Pray *“Oh sustainer of the cosmos, please bring my body and mind to full wakefulness.”*

- Splash some cold water on your face... seriously make it cold! Then say to God: *“Lord prepare me for the fight I will encounter today. Make me ready for battle”*.
- Read Rom 7:14-25, take it slow those sentences can be difficult to comprehend (reread them as needed). Are you at war? Take a bit more time to speak with God about whatever you want. Wrap up your prayer by asking God the following: *“Lord of hosts (of armies), I’m going to battle with my flesh today. I know that I am going to fail sometimes, but I’m asking you to help me to stay in the fight and persevere.”* Read Rom 6:1-2

Practice it:

- Our word for the day is *“Repent”* literally changing the mind. Today the goal is to actively fight against our nature. Paul asked the question *“shall we go on sinning?”* The answer is an emphatic NO! If confession is removing the dirt, repentance is learning to stay out of the mud... beginning to think differently. To see things as God sees them. *“Lord, Change my mind (my thinking).”*

End your day:

- Read 1 Cor 9:24-27. How many more days do you suppose you will have to battle against the flesh? It’s limited, you know; the flesh is passing away (and may do so suddenly).
- What’s the difference in fighting to conquer something v. fighting to keep something that has already been conquered? If Jesus already won, which kind of battle are we engaged in?
- Raise your arms in triumph (seriously do it... Rocky Balboa style). Why? You just fought today. That’s one less day of battle, and one day closer to the end of the war. You fought and retained the victory that Jesus has secured. Sleep well soldier, the battle resumes tomorrow and absolute victory is on the horizon.

Day 5: Restoration (Lam 3:19-26, Luke 15:11-32)

Begin your day:

- Say the word *“forgiveness”* out loud. Look at yourself in the mirror with morning hair and sleepy eyes and say it again: *“forgiveness”*. God pities you (has compassion on you). Even when you are faithless He is faithful. Read Lam 3:19-26 and afterward be silent. It is good to be forgiven isn’t it? Good to have sin and guilt wiped away.
- But that forgiveness is conditional! Read Matt 18:21-35. So far we’ve been looking at sin as it impacts God’s relationship with us and we’ve focused on God’s ability to deal with our sin. He’s done all the heaviest lifting, but he requires something of us and it is comparatively small. *“God help me to forgive like you forgive!”*

Meditate on it:

- If Matt 18 didn’t convince you, check out James 2:13, Matt 6:14-15, and Mark 4:24

Practice it:

- Rid yourself of all grudges today. Every time you’re inclined to hold unforgiveness or resentment toward another human being (from human world powers, to family members, to long strained relationships from the past), consider how much God has forgiven you and then do likewise. Make the following a prayer throughout your day. *“As You have forgiven, I will forgive”*.

End your day:

- Read Rom 12:14-21. Meditate for a few moments what the church would look like if every believer practiced this. Look back over what God has taught you this week, pray that God would cause the lessons to stay with you.

(Saturday we rest, Sunday we worship with the body)

Week 3 Discipline: Intimacy

Day 1: Flavor and Illumination

Begin your day:

- Have you eaten yet this morning? Are you still hungry? Read Jeremiah 15:16. Pray it out loud a few times over; thinking deeply about each word as you say it. After you have prayed this passage several times out loud repeat the words silently in your mind continuing to offer them up to the Lord.
- Do you want the *Word of the Lord* to speak to you today? Tell Him you're hungry and ask him for something to eat.

Practice it:

- Read Psa 119:105. Visualize it... walking in the dark with your path lit only by one thing. Think about stumbling through the dark without that one light. Every time you see feet today (yours or someone else's) Think about the image expressed in Psa 119:105. Memorize it today (it shouldn't be too tough). Meditate on it throughout your day.

End your day:

- Read Matt 7:7-11. Today we thought of the word as delightful food and as light that guides us on our path. Now as we close the day I want you to think about God's word as a gift. He's offering you knowledge, insight, wisdom, information, perspective, security, belonging, freedom, foresight, fellowship, and so much more. But you'll have to receive the gift and open it... each day. This gift is his word.
- He wants you to ask so that he can provide. Ask God to speak to you through his written word (the scriptures) and the Holy Spirit within you. Say goodnight to God and ask if your spirit might remain in His presence throughout the night.

Day 2: What is the Bible?

Begin your day:

- This week we're talking about the Bible. What is it? The scriptures are 66 books, written by over 40 authors, over a period of more than 1600 years. The scriptures are histories, and poetry, theology, wisdom literature, letters, biographies, and prophecy. They were all intended to be read, heard, interpreted, and digested by the people of God throughout the ages.
- You should have your Bible with you as you're doing this study. Place your hand on your Bible for a moment and say to the Lord "*Father... forgive me if I have taken this for granted. I want to learn to love your word as I should. Speak to me through your word today.*"

Meditate on it:

- How long do you think it would take you to hand copy the whole of scripture? The kings of Israel were commanded (before Israel even had a king) to make a copy of the Law with their own hands (Deut 17:18-20). Read that passage and ask yourself what such a thing would accomplish. Was it just busy-work or did God have some purpose behind it? Think about what such writing and reading would do to a man. How would it equip a king? What would it do to you?

Practice it:

- You just read about how God commanded the Israelite Kings to process the word. What are you doing each day to make sure you are getting into the word, and the word is getting into you?
- You may have been operating with the assumption that to memorize scripture is sort of a waste of time... after all, you can just read it later. Read Matt 24:35. What does that say all of the physical stuff of this world (your body included)? What does it say about the words of Jesus? Today, write out Matt 24:35 in your own hand and place that text in a pocket or wrapped around your keychain (somewhere where you will encounter it often during your day). Each time you see the text repeat that passage over and over again and consider the durability of the word as opposed to everything else you encounter.

End your day:

- Answer the following questions: How is the word of God like a *lamp*? How is it a *gift*? How is it like delicious *food*? How long does it endure? This is how God describes His word... do you accept God's assessment?
- Close your eyes and recount Matthew 24:35 (if you can't, read it again). What did you do or think today that will endure into eternity?

Day 3: What can scripture do?

Begin your day:

- Stand in front of the mirror and lean in close... really close. See those pores? See the lines and color variations in your eyes? Do you see hairs where you don't want any or perhaps something else that needs attending to? Sometimes those things cannot be discerned unless you get really invested. Unless you get really close. Read Heb 4:12. Scripture provides clarity (helps us see clearly) and discernment (helps us to rightly divide and understand circumstances). The word changes our values and

Meditate on in:

- Is study a burden? Is it a task that weighs you down? Is a key that releases shackles a burden? Is opening a prison cell a task that weighs you down?
- Think for a moment about the following Dallas Willard quote: "*The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is the power to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell upon.*"
- You are free to not study, and you've probably found many empty days and many shallow, meaningless, and forgettable moments that have resulted from that. If you're reading this, you've probably been fairly engrossed in spiritual disciplines (hitched to the word) over the past few weeks. Do you feel more or less burdened? More or less free?

Practice it:

- You've leaned in close to the word of God this morning. Let's do it again: Read John 8:31-36. Get really close to that text... see the pores... carefully hear his teaching and decide to hold to it. All day today consider the bondage that holds most of the people in this world.
- Think about the freedom you now have if you know Jesus' words and hold to Jesus' teaching. Compile a list through the day (mentally or an actual list) of the things that Jesus' teaching has freed you from.

End your day:

- Imagine the world (the literal earth) laid upon your shoulders. Try to imagine how that would feel as that incalculable mass slowly lowers onto your neck and back and your legs wobble and begin to buckle. Burdensome huh? Well not really, it's *imaginary* remember. And imaginary worlds don't weigh anything. See how ideas can seem like burdens and just as quickly those burdens can be lifted with just a bit of truth brought to bear. The word of the Lord is **truth** and it has the power to remove the weight of the world.
- Free indeed. Take a deep breath and let it out. Take a deeper one and let it out. "Thank you Lord for Your word which sets us free!" Sleep well!

Day 4: Study to be changed

Begin your day:

- Take a good look in the mirror and give an honest assessment of how you've done at upkeeping your physical body. Feel free to express to God how you feel about your physical form at present and leave space for His commentary as well. How different would you look if you had been doing an intense exercise regimen for the last 5 years?
- Is the difference in shape simply a biproduct of desire or is it more?
- Could you run a marathon right now? If you're like most people you probably realize running a marathon is not something you can just *will-yourself* to do. But what if you had a year to prepare and a good motivation to do it? Do you think you could run a marathon next year if you really worked?

- Read 2 Tim 3:16-17. Read it carefully several times as you prayerfully talk to the Lord about what it means. How does this text speak to discipline/training of scripture reading?

Meditate on it:

- Why do athletes train? What's the point? Do they run laps so that they get good at running laps? Is the goal to just more movement or is there another point? Some greater objective? Think of martial arts forms: is the goal to do a pretty dance, or is this "*training*" geared toward something else?
- We just read a passage that said the scriptures are for "*training in righteousness*". What is the difference between trying to be righteous and training to be righteous?
- Think of one way your study of the scripture has altered you (Consider your nature, beliefs, priorities, but be specific)

Practice it:

- Your phrase for the day is "*I've been equipped for this,*" or "*I'm being equipped for this!*" Even if you've only been a Christian for a few weeks, I bet you are already discerning some changed attitudes and modes of interaction. You are equipped and being equipped. This is what you've trained for.
- As your day goes on and you are navigating life, try to apply scripture to your predicaments.

End your day:

- Many people approach the scriptures as though the study is the end goal. For those who employ it like that, a bit of reading is likely all they are getting. But God intends something more. The word is training us, altering who we are, giving us competence, endurance, fortitude, and power that we otherwise could never just "will" ourselves to have.
- Read Jeremiah 23:29. What do *fire* and the *rock-shattering-hammer* have in common with God's word? What burning, breaking, and refining has taken place in your life during these last few weeks? Express to God how His word is changing you. Good night. Be refined and chiseled as you rest!

Day 5: Doing

Begin your day:

- Greet the Lord. Cup your hand over your mouth and say "*good morning*" in your most breathy tone... smell that? Yikes... that needs some attention. Pick up your toothbrush and get ready to brush your teeth. Now having looked at your toothbrush and toothpaste, just put them back down. Imagine if every day you just looked at them then did nothing... gross. Is that how you approach the word?
- Okay time to brush your teeth for real. As you're beginning your dental hygiene regimen read James 1:22-25 (pause to spit in the sink rather than drooling on your Bible). Read it again and again as you brush your teeth (btw, if you only read it a few times, you're not brushing enough)

Meditate on it:

- You've all probably had the experience of reading along for several pages in a book and then realizing: for the life of you, you can't remember what you've just read. Reading without understanding and no application. Have you done that with the word? Is it normal for your Bible reading to feel like that?
- Look again at James 1:22-25 and think through the man and mirror metaphor. How is the Bible like a mirror? Explain the absurdity of the man's encounter with the mirror. Explain the result of not being doers. What is this Man's life like?

Practice it:

- Today's goal is **to do**. This is not a lifelong habit (we're not trying to emulate the Pharisees), but for today I want you to try to identify choices made and actions taken that fulfill the commands of scripture. (Some examples: *honoring parents, fearing God, treating children well, build one another up, active forgiveness, honor your spouse, talk less, speak wisdom, etc*)

End your day:

- Read Matthew 7:24-27 carefully. What distinguishes the two builders (2 types of hearers)? What is the result of the two types of construction? We've seen earlier how Jesus speaks about his word

enduring beyond earth and all that was on her. Spend the last few moments of your day tonight talking with the Lord about the foundation that is His word. *“Lord help us be not merely hearers, but doers”*

Week 4 Discipline: Mission

Day 1: Remember

Begin your day:

- Greet the Lord in prayer and thank him for your life up to this point. Take a few moments and just recall some of your high and low points. Ask the Lord if He would help you carefully discern your history today.
- Read Deuteronomy 8:2. Here we see Moses reiterating the commandments of the Law in advance of the invasion of the promised land. But he calls the people to reflect on where they've been before they give their full attention to where they are going. *“Lord, how is my past important to your calling?”*

Meditate on it:

- Do you have a relationship story? How did you meet your spouse or best friend? Perhaps these involve rocky starts or humorous misunderstandings? It's easy to think of relationships like a journey.
- How does having a clear conception of that whole relationship story help the relationship? How does it help you to express the relationship to those outside of the relationship?
- Our whole goal today is to remember what has happened up to this point in your life with the Lord. Take a few moments and consider how clarity about that story will help you better relate to Him. How will it better prepare you to speak about Him?

Practice it:

- Reminisce. Today just start recounting at your earliest Christian memory (maybe the process of conversion or how you came to be baptized). Start from the beginning and try to think through people and situations that really shaped how you relate to God (both for good and bad)

End your day:

- Reviewing your history may have been a mixed bag of painful and joyful, so let's take a few moments and pray the Jesus prayer *“Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.”* (pray it until you feel the peace of the Lord)
- Read Gen 50:20. Are you familiar with the story of Joseph? Though he suffered abuse and difficulties, he says something profound in that passage. Reflect again on your Christian walk. Is it possible those pains and difficulties might be useful to the Kingdom of God? Not that God desired our moral failures or our suffering, but can He take those parts of my life and as with Joseph, use them to save people?
- Read Romans 8:28-30. If your past has caused you shame or if you are still holding unforgiveness about your past, will you offer the whole history up to the Lord and celebrate what He has made of you during your trials in the wilderness?
- Thoughtfully let the following words direct some prayer time for you. Meditate on each sentence: *“Thank you Lord for finding me. Thank you for establishing relationship with me. Thank you for accompanying me through the valley of the shadow of death. Thank you for equipping me for Your work. Thank you for making “us” possible. I look forward to continuing our story together tomorrow.”*

Day 2: Construct Your Testimony

Begin your day:

- Say good morning to the Shepherd who led you through the wilderness. Take a moment and smile, remembering some of the things you've been through together. Envision opening a book and fanning through the filled pages till you come to a blank one and putting pen to paper... ready to start a new chapter today? *“Father, today we write what you have known from eternity. May it be worthy!”*
- Read Isa 61. This is a prophesy about Jesus. Notice what happens to the broken people he encounters; do you see beauty emerging from tragedy? Are you beginning to see it in your own life?

- Pray the following: *“Lord, what could you do with my story? Could I become that Oak of righteousness mentioned in the text? Show me how you’ve forged and prepared me for your work. Use me, O’ God.”*

Practice it (and meditate on it):

- You have one task today, and it will be a bit more intensive than most previous weeks, but I promise it is important. Write down your testimony. A testimony is simply your story of your relationship with God. So if you thought through everything yesterday, it should make today’s task much easier. Make it brief, no more than one page front and back. You may want to begin with an outline starting with *“Before Jesus, I...”* and tracking your major spiritual formation to *“Now I have reached a point in my faith when...”*. After you get the outline, fill in details as needed to flesh out your relationship story.

End your day:

- After having completed a written testimony, can you understand why we want you to write it? If you will read it a dozen times, I bet you could probably talk your way through it without your paper.
- My guess is that you could do the whole thing in under 20 minutes with a little bit of practice, which of course means that you’re pretty much ready to tell anyone who asks or is interested why Jesus means so much to you (using your own story).
- Pray some version of the following: *“Lord Jesus, our story belongs to you. I offer my services as one willing to tell the story if you will provide me opportunities. I’ll ask you to please help me to tell it when the time comes, and trust that you can use whatever I offer.”*

Day 3: Divine Appointments

Begin your day:

- This morning stand in silence for a moment (being still before God). Ask God the following *“Lord help me to discern those around me who need You, but have not met You.”* Patiently wait as He calls people to mind. *“Lord You know others near me who need You as well. Would You help me to love them as You love them”*. (Allow some time of silence to meditate on that and allow the Father to work in you).
- Read Ephesians 2:10. Read it several times. *“Before time, You oh God had plans for me. Help me to walk in them today”*

Meditate on it:

- Read Acts 8:26-40. If God knows the one seeking and God knows the one willing to work. Will the Lord bring them together? We often call these divine appointments. Have you had them before? Have you had the opportunity to sow the seed of the gospel?
- Someone brought you to Jesus, will you do the same for another?

Practice it:

- All day today ask the Lord for opportunities. Pray something like this *“Lord, I know I sometimes blunder words and I don’t have all the answers. I’m often stupid when it comes to spreading your truth, but I’m a willing worker. Lord will you open doors for me to share with those around me? If you open the doors I’ll step in.”* This is all we’re asking of God today. We’re not looking baptize someone by the end of the day, we’re just asking God to start setting up opportunities in our lives. Pray it over and over today, and don’t force anything. Just look at people and love them as God does, and wait on the Lord.

End your day:

- Read Matthew 9:36-38. Pray to the *“Lord of the Harvest”*

Day 4: Ask Questions

Begin your day:

- Stand in front of the mirror and try **not** to look at yourself through your morning routine. It’s hard isn’t it? Disregard is work. The more significant something is, the more work it is to ignore. Ignoring Jesus is not a default condition, it is an activity that many people in our world routinely engage in.
- Your job, disciple of the Christ, is to be a reminder to the world to consider Jesus. To point to Him. Pray to the Lord as you start this morning. *“Master, I want to draw attention to You”*

Meditate on it:

“One of the hardest things in the world is to be right and not hurt other people with it.” Dallas Willard

- No one likes to hear that they are wrong, but the sting of that truth is dulled when we ourselves begin to see what is right (when change comes from within). To this end, Christians should ask questions.
- Questions aren't confrontation, they are invitations to look and think and discover. Jesus asks questions. If you've read the gospels this year you know the truth of that. But his questions come in a few different varieties. Let's distinguish some and consider them.
- Questions of **invitation**: ex. “*What are you looking for?*” (John 1:38), Questions of **identity**: ex. “*Who do people say that I am?*” (Mark 8:27), Questions of **compassionate personal interest**: “*do you want to get well?*” (John 5:6) or “*do you see anything?*” (Mark 8:23), and Questions of **intention** “*Why do you call me good?*” (Matt 10:18) or “*why do you call me lord, lord but do not do what I say?*” (Luke 6:46).
- Think about those categories of questions and formulate some of each type you could ask of others.

Practice it:

- Your mission today is simply to ask questions (to non-believers or believers). Do not try to answer them yourself. Just ask and if they respond ask follow-ups and questions of clarification. This may prove a difficult discipline to hold back, but it becomes easier the more you do it.

End your day:

- Read John 21:1-17. Jesus asks Peter a difficult question, a challenging question, perhaps even a painful question. Read back over v.15-17. Answer Jesus' question for yourself (out loud) and hear his response. Do it all three times. Sit in silence and contemplate the conversation.

Day 5: Share Your Faith

Begin your day:

- Stand in front of the mirror and look at the reflection of the eternal creature in it. Remember how you are being saved and say out loud “*Today is the day of salvation!*” (2 Cor. 6:1-2).
- Read Matt 28:18-20. See the formula set forth by our Lord for the construction of disciples and mark out the different aspects of the process mentally thinking about that process in your own life.
- Pray and ask the Lord: “*Father, where do I fit into this plan? I am willing. Put me to work.*”

Meditate on it:

- Read Romans 1:16. Consider what sharing the gospel cost Paul. What would it cost you to say something about the gospel today? What do you risk by letting someone know that you are willing to speak about Jesus Christ and His church? Are you willing to experience discomfort for Jesus?
- Read Colossians 4:5-6, then read Matt 10:16.

Practice it:

- Your goal today is to have one conversation about Jesus. You may be rejected, you may be ignored, you may get traction and share your testimony, or plant a seed. Your only job is to be bold and say something to someone and let God do with your efforts what He will. Don't be a coward.

End your day:

- Extend upturned hands to the Lord. Read Psalm 95 and mirror the body postures mentioned in the text (insofar as you are able... don't hurt yourself). Reflect on times of your life where you have not lived like you have during this past month. A choice is now before you to resume life as it was before (to live in soft-rebellion against God), or continue in this new pattern of intimacy. Have you made more room in your daily life for commitment, prayer, confession, scripture, and mission?
- Read Joshua 24:15. Pray.

May the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit make use of this training for His Kingdom and Glory! Amen.