FOUR PRACTICES FOR

LIFE WITH JESUS

A simple guide for structuring your daily life around abiding in Jesus.

WELCOME

In Acts 2:42 we see Jesus' people devoting themselves to the ***1) apostles' teaching, 2) the fellowship, 3) the breaking of bread, and 4) the prayers.*** While we always do this in the context of community, here's a short guide for how this looks in our daily personal walk with Jesus.

In this guide, this looks like ***1) Scripture Intake, 2) Community, 3) Self-Denial/Fasting, and 4) Prayer.*** The goal is to learn to incorporate each of these four practices into our lives throughout a week and/or month. But if this is brand new to you, start small. We recommend at least starting with Scripture Intake and Prayer. You can then build from there, rather than trying to start everything all at once.

1. SCRIPTURE INTAKE

[Devoted to the apostles' teaching]

The Bible is God's authoritative word, revealing His character and purposes in the world, while guiding us in all aspects of life and equipping us for good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17). As Jesus' people we are submitted to Scripture as our standard of truth, conforming our lives to God's will rather than cultural trends or personal feelings. Therefore, we continually engage with Scripture in two ways—through both ***study*** and ***meditation***.

STUDY

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness..." 2 Timothy 3:16

- **Why do we do this?**

  We are called to live in submission and obedience to God's word (John 14:15), we must first know what it says and what it means. By studying the Bible, we can come to understand what God intended to say through His word, and therefore learn to live in light of it.

- **What can it look like?**

  - Setting aside time, not just to read the Bible but to do the work of understanding it's intended meaning
  - Attending a Bible class with others
  - Engaging with Bible study tools on a regular basis (study Bible notes, commentaries, overview videos, etc.)

- **Resources:**

  - Centre Church Bible Study Bookmark(s) Tool
  - (Video/Audio) The Bible Project YouTube Channel
  - (Online) BlueLetter Bible and/or ESV Global Study Bible
  - Bible-in-a-year Reading Plan

MEDITATION

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it." Joshua 1:8

➢ **Why do we do this?**

The Bible is a relational document, meaning it is not about learning the facts, but coming to know the author and giver—God. Through meditating on Scripture, we are drawn into God's word, His heart, and His ways, letting it form our desires, our heart, our ways of thinking, and our lives.

➢ **What can it look like?**

- Taking the time to memorize a short passage of Scripture
- Selecting a Psalm to read and meditate on for five minutes every day for a week (or more)
- Being okay with wrestling over a passage of Scripture that we find challenging
- Writing a Scripture passage on a cue card and keeping it in our pocket throughout the day.

➢ **Resources**

- (Book) How to Hear God by Pete Greig
- Dwell Audio Bible App

2. COMMUNITY

[Devoted to... the fellowship.]

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." ***Hebrews 10:24-25***

The New Testament describes the church as a family united in Christ, with a biblical responsibility to love and care for one another. As Jesus' people we are devoted to embodying this identity and calling by living out "one another" practices such as having Christ's mind, offering His welcome, speaking His words, showing His love, and giving His grace.

➢ **Why do we do this?**

For many of us, real, meaningful community does not come naturally. Which is the very reason we need to intentionally practice it in our lives. The truth is that we cannot follow Jesus alone. It's in community that we are formed into Jesus' image and it's with that community that Jesus sends us out into the world. Which means that no matter how challenging it can be, we need the fellowship of other Christians—the church.

➢ **What can it look like?**

- Gathering with God's people for Sunday worship
- Gathering regularly during the week with a smaller group of Christians (a Gospel Community)
- Bearing each others' burdens
- Actively seeking ways to love and support others
- Pursuing relationships with a few other Christians for the purpose of prayer, confession, and encouragement.

➢ **Resources**

- (Sermon Series) Centre Church "Ordinary Church" Series
- (Book) When the Church Was a Family by Joseph Hellerma

3. SELF-DENIAL

[Devoted to... the breaking of bread]

"And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'" ***Luke 9:23***

As Jesus' people we are devoted to a life of dying to self, living by faith, and surrendering personal desires to align with Christ's will. This is the heart of our devotion to the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper), as we eat and drink to remember His sacrifice. But another one of the ways we practice this is through fasting. In giving up normal necessities (biblically, this was always food), we are invited to pay special attention to God, especially as the emptiness we feel leads us to turn to Jesus—the only one who can satisfy.

- **Why do we do this?**

  We fast, primarily because Jesus fasted (Matt. 4:1-2) and clearly expects His people to do the same (Matt. 6:16). It's one way that we enter into the self-denial that Jesus modeled and that we are invited into as we learn to pick up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). Biblically, we also see that fasting was often done in response to significant moves of God that had already occurred or that were desired by His people (2 Chron. 20:3-4; Neh. 1:4; Acts 13:1-3).

- **What can it look like?**

  - Abstaining from food for a set period of time each week (i.e. 24 hours)
  - Abstaining from certain foods, drinks, technology/media, behaviours, etc. for a set amount of time
  - Observing fast days and seasons of the church year (i.e. Lent in the lead up to Easter)
  - Using the time typically devoted to eating/that particular activity to instead spend time in Scripture, prayer, silence.

- **Resources:**

  - (Book) "Fasting" in Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney
  - (Book) "Fasting" in Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster

4. PRAYER

[Devoted to... the prayers]

"And when you pray..." ***Matthew 5:5a***

Prayer in the simplest form is talking and spending time with God. As Jesus' people we are devoted to pursuing an ongoing relationship with Him that is formed by His Word and His Spirit, as He brings us into alignment with His heart.

- **Why do we do this?**

  Simply put, because without prayer we have no relationship with God. That's why Jesus expects us to pray (i.e. "when you pray..."). But it's far from being an obligation. Prayer is a gift. We get to live in constant relationship with our Father, learning to ask, listen, talk, and even just sit in the quiet with Him.

- **What can it look like?**

  - Scheduling a set amount of time each day to devote to prayer and communion with God (i.e. in the morning when you first wake up, on your commute to work, etc.)
  - Learning to pray in the everyday moments of life (i.e. doing the dishes, running errands, etc.)
  - Learning to pray the Psalms (and Scripture in general)
  - Regularly praying with and for others

- **Resources:**

  - (Book) How to Pray by Pete Greig
  - (Book) The Ministry of Intercessory Prayer: A Plea for More Prayer by Andrew Murray
  - (Sermon) Become: Prayer by Matt Menzel

ADDITIONAL PRACTICE: SABBATH-KEEPING

"And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.'" ***Mark 2:27–28.***

Sabbath is the practice of setting apart one day a week devoted to worshiping, resting in and delighting in God. He built sabbath-rest into the order of creation (Gen. 2:3), commanded His people to observe it (Ex. 20:8-11), and today still invites us to experience this life-giving rhythm until the day when we experience ultimate rest in Jesus' presence
(Mk. 2:27-28; Heb. 4:9-11).

➢ **Why do we do this?**

We believe that the Sabbath, although no longer a law, was always intended to be a key rhythm in the life of God's people. It was always meant to teach God's people to rely entirely on Him. So for us today, the intended purpose of the Sabbath is simply to remember that there is only one God, and it's not us. As we set aside this time, we'll find that the rest we need comes when we remember that He is in control, that He alone sustains our life, and that He alone is worthy of our worship.

➢ **What can it look like?**

NOTE: It's important to remember that it's going to look different for each individual, family, or group. But at the core are practices that help turn our attention to God and His careful provision in our lives. For many, this will be on Sundays. But it could also be another day during the week that works with whatever your schedule might be.

➢ **Practice Includes:**

- Setting aside and guarding a 24-hour period, once per week
- Engaging in practices of worship, rest, and delight
- Gathering with others for worship and community
- Setting aside to-do lists, hard conversations, daily chores, shopping, etc.
- Setting aside time for intimacy with God and others you love
- Practicing restful activities: walks, picnics, an afternoon nap, a phone visit with someone you love, tea or coffee with a friend, family time, games with your kids, love-making

➢ **Resources:**

- (Audio/Video) Centre Church Knowing God/Sabbath Sermon Series
- (Book) The Subversive Sabbath by AJ Swaboda

LOOKING FOR FURTHER RESOURCES?

For help with having hard conversations, tools for studying the Bible, and so much more you can always head over to centrechurch.ca/gcresources. And if you still can't find what you're looking for, reach out to community@centrechurch.ca

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