

{bible|prayer}

growing through rhythms of grace



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Why Did We Create This Booklet?

Every human being was created to have a relationship with God, but what does it mean to relate to the unseen creator of the universe? This booklet exists to help demystify this relationship by providing a practical framework to engage God relationally through times of daily Bible reading and prayer for one year. A healthy relationship with God, like any healthy relationship, is fostered by consistent patterns of communication and communion. As you spend quality daily time with Jesus you will become more like Him. Our brief journey together in these pages represents the beginnings of what we hope will become your lifelong journey of deeper relationship with Jesus.

How Should You Use This Booklet?

We believe your identity in Christ will be strengthened if you use this booklet in the following ways:

Use It Daily, Then As A Guide

The first section of the booklet is to be used daily for the first month. This first month provides a framework to learn, read and pray into what it means to have our identity in Christ. The rest of the booklet provides a number of resources that serve as a guide to assist you in reading and praying in many different ways throughout the remainder of our yearlong journey. As you begin the first month don't be overwhelmed by the wealth of information on the page; you don't need to read the entire page each day of the week. However, we do encourage you to interact with the additional content provided if you find yourself 'getting stuck' in your daily times of Bible reading and prayer. We have included The following legend will help you navigate the first month of our journey together.

Daily Core	Weekly Guides	Helpful Methods								
Spend majority of time here	Encouraging verses & prayers to help frame your spiritual posture for the week.	Practical approaches to Bible reading & prayer.								
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Passage</th> <th>Theme</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Genesis 1</td> <td>Created For Relationship w/ God</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Genesis 1 & 2</td> <td>Created w/ Unmatched Dignity</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Genesis 1 Matthew 28</td> <td>Created w/ Purpose</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Passage	Theme	Genesis 1	Created For Relationship w/ God	Genesis 1 & 2	Created w/ Unmatched Dignity	Genesis 1 Matthew 28	Created w/ Purpose	 	 
Passage	Theme									
Genesis 1	Created For Relationship w/ God									
Genesis 1 & 2	Created w/ Unmatched Dignity									
Genesis 1 Matthew 28	Created w/ Purpose									
	~Guiding Scripture~ ~Guiding Prayer~	~Bible Method~ ~Prayer Method~								

Use It Together

God created us to relate to Him within the context of community. Our hope is that you would partner with someone on this journey, preferably someone from your life group. If you need help finding someone let us know; we're here to help. Once you have a partner make the commitment to connect face-to-face at least once a month for the next year. If you can connect more frequently throughout the month we would encourage you to do so; the more you invest in each other the more personal transformation you will experience.

Preface

As followers of Christ our future identity is secure, “for God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his son.” (Romans 8:29) We were a broken people, alienated from self, alienated from each other and alienated from God. In love, the Father gave us a new and glorious story in Christ through the restorative power of the Holy Spirit. Amen! However, while our future identity is secure in Christ, we oftentimes fail to live out this identity here and now. We live in the tension-filled reality between ‘already and not yet.’ We have already been made new in Christ, however we’re incrementally being made new daily. The great church reformer Martin Luther understood this – “This life therefore, is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished but it is going on. This is not the end but it is the road; all does not yet gleam in glory but all is being purified.”

Spiritual Formation, or the process of ‘becoming like his son,’ is the holistic journey from unbelief to belief in every arena of our lives. So the Gospel is not only the good news that saved us, the gospel is also the transforming power that is saving us daily to ‘become like Christ.’ But what is the distinguishing characteristic of Christ that let’s us know we’re actually growing in the right direction? The apostle John recalls a deeply intimate relationship between father and son,

“...I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father has taught me... for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” (John 8:28-29). In other words, everything Jesus says and does, his identity, necessarily flows from and for his relationship with His Father. Later in the 15th chapter of John’s Gospel, Jesus again uses deeply relational language to explain how his followers must remain in him if they desire to live fruitful lives – “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) Spiritual Formation is, at its foundation, growth through relationship with God. As this relationship matures, the natural outcomes are the ever-increasing ability to hear God’s voice and the happy desire to do what He says.

A husband doesn’t aimlessly drift into vibrant marriage relationship with his wife. He must pursue her with intentionality. He values time with her above all others, he listens to her, cries with her, he fights for her and with her... he lays down his very life in pursuit of her. Similarly, we believe our relationship with God can be greatly encouraged toward vibrant maturity by communicating and communing with Him intentionally through daily rhythms of Bible Reading and Prayer. And by God’s grace our journey into relationship with Him is not a solitary one; we are in Christ and share his benefits together! We are redeemed together, justified together, forgiven together, created anew together,

and perfected together. We strongly encourage you to go through this year long journey of Bible reading and Prayer with a spiritual partner, someone who will lovingly encourage and challenge you to step into the life of fullness that awaits you in Christ. In agreement with Luther, we believe that this year ‘is not the end, but it is the road.’ Our sincere hope is that you will make use of this booklet and the many resources found within to assist you in forming lifelong patterns of intimate relationship with Christ. Now is the time to step into this beautiful journey with confidence and hope, knowing full well our future in Christ is secure! Be blessed with the overwhelming abundance of life that is found only in Jesus!!!

Prayer: Almighty Father, as we embark on this journey we ask that you would accomplish your purpose in our lives as your Spirit works in us to make us more like Christ. Would you help us to be open to you and to each other? Would you help us avoid self-protecting behaviors, unhelpful attitudes, and the sins that so easily entangle us? Help us, Lord, to be attentive to our lives and to your presence and activity in them. Conform us more and more to the image of your Son, we pray, through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

WEEK 1 - I AM CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE



Then God said, "Let Us make human beings in Our image, to be like us; they will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. ~ Genesis 1:26-27



Understanding the Big God Story

Skye Jethani, author of *10 Commandments of Scripture Interpretation* notes, "In my experience more Christians can recap the meta-narrative (overall story) of the Star Wars saga than can recap the biblical meta-narrative". We must approach Scripture with an understanding that the Bible is a collection of poetry, stories, events, and firsthand accounts that all work together to tell us one story - for all time. As this grand narrative tells us how much God loves us and is redeeming all things back to Himself, we read Scripture not only with the end in mind, but also the middle and the beginning. God's fashioning of His word is unique and wonderfully creative. As we read His word, we know His eternal character, His unending grace, His sacrificial love, and His unswerving pursuit to bring us close to Himself. We want to encourage you to read God's Word, considering not only how what you're reading fits into the bigger picture, but how you yourself can and are playing a part in THE grand story of redemption God is writing.

Passage

Theme

Genesis 1	M	Created For Relationship w/ God
Genesis 1 & 2	T	Created w/ Unmatched Dignity
Genesis 1 Matthew 28	W	Created w/ Purpose
Genesis 2 1 Corinthians 12	T^h	Created for Community
Genesis 3 Romans 5	F	The Image Broken In Adam
Romans 12	S	The Image Restored In Christ
2 Corinthians 3	SU	The Image Perfected

Pray Out Loud



Have you ever said something and then thought to yourself, "I can't believe that came out of my mouth"? Think about saying the words – I love you. It's one thing to think it, but very different to speak it. Praying out loud will not allow God to hear you better or somehow pay closer attention, but it might make you pay a little more attention to what you say. Spend a week praying out loud paying special attention to what YOU hear. During these times take time to recognize and express gratitude for the unique ways in which God has created you in His image.

"Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."

~ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion



Almighty Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth, we acknowledge that our very existence comes only because of your gracious choice to call us into being. You have created us to bear your image, to bring you glory and to exercise dominion in your world, but we confess that we have followed after Adam and have walked in sin. Help us, Lord, to know you more intimately, to think rightly about You, about ourselves and our neighbors, to set aside our selfish ambition in pursuit of your purposes and to build and nurture restorative relationships with believers and non-believers alike. Through Christ Jesus, we pray. Amen.



WEEK 2 - I AM ACCEPTED IN CHRIST

But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. ~ Ephesians 2:4-10



Read For Transformation

As you read the Bible read for transformation not just information. We believe that the Bible contains the actual words of God spoken through His people to His people. In His word God is communicating to His people who He is, who we are in light of who He is and how we should live as His divine image bearers. Approaching the text with these realities in mind and with the joyful expectation that God can and will use these words to speak to you here and now can radically transform your Bible reading experience. Before you read each day this week, reflect on these amazing truths and pray that God would speak to you through His word in transformational ways.

"How easy it is to blame others for our unhappiness, but we are only unhappy when something other than Christ has become our life."

~ Francis Frangipane



We praise you, O God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the grace you have lavished on us in your Son. We who were dead have been made alive. We who were enemies have been made friends. We who were far off and without hope have been brought near and given a living hope through faith in Christ, who is our righteousness, holiness and redemption. We praise you, O God, for giving us a new identity in Christ and we pray that you would enable us by Your Spirit to live in accordance with our new identity more and more each new day, until that day when you bring to completion the good work that you have begun in us. Amen.

Passage

Theme



Romans 5	M	I Am Justified
Colossians 1	T	I Am Redeemed And Forgiven
Ephesians 1 John 1	W	I Am God's Child
John 15	T^h	I Am Christ's Friend
1 Corinthians 6 Verses 12-20	F	I Belong To God
1 Corinthians 12	S	I Am Part of Christ's Body The Church
Colossians 2	SU	I Am Complete in Christ

Adoration. Confession. Thanksgiving. Supplication. Prayer is one of our main forms of communication with God, it's a conversation between a child and a loving father. It is meant to be unique, organic and completely relational, however it can sometimes grow stale. Prayer methods give us guardrails to help focus our prayers and give them new life. The A.C.T.S. prayer structure is one such method. **Adoration** – to begin your prayer spend some time 'adoring' God. Let Him know how much you love Him. **Confession** - acknowledge your sin and humbly ask for forgiveness. **Thanksgiving** - express gratitude for everything God is and for everything He has done, is doing and will do in and through us. **Supplication** - share your needs with God, ask for wisdom, favor and discernment.

WEEK 3 - I AM SECURE IN CHRIST



And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And having called them, he gave them right standing, he gave them his glory. ~ Romans 8:26-30



Read From Multiple Versions

The best tool that you have in studying scripture is the Bible. Fortunately, we live in an age where there are many translations to choose from. Different translations will emphasize different points of the text. This leads to a deeper understanding in our study of scripture. No single translation is right or wrong, and many different translations can and should be used in your bible study. Here are eight possible versions to use: NASB, RSV, ESV, KJV, NIV, NLT, CEV and The Message. This list begins with more word-for-word translations and gradually moves toward paraphrase/thought translations. All are beneficial in helping to understand the passage. We recommend not getting locked into one version for all your study. For more information and access to additional translations please visit www.biblegateway.com.

Passage

Theme

Philippians 3



I Am A Citizen Of Heaven

Philippians 1



I Am Sure God Will Complete His Work

Romans 8



I Can't Be Separated From God's Love

1 John 5



The Evil One Cannot Touch Me

2 Timothy 1



I Have A Spirit Of Power And Love

Hebrews 4



I Can Find Help In A Time Of Need

Romans 8



I Am Assured ALL Works For Good

Write It Down



There is something very different about writing out your prayers versus just speaking them. Occasionally, spoken words fall from our mouths almost without thinking about what we are saying.

However, writing or typing your prayer requires additional consideration; in some ways written prayers may seem more real, more thoughtful or more relational than spoken prayers. Take a week or maybe a month to write out at least one prayer a day. Observe how it changes your prayer life. Are you more honest on paper or more reserved? Maybe try writing your prayers in the form of a sonnet or song like David did in the Psalms.

"I am convinced that not even the apostles, although filled with the Holy Spirit, were therefore completely free from anxiety... Contrary to the ridiculous view expressed by some, the advent of grace does not mean the immediate deliverance from anxiety. ~ Makairos of Egypt



We believe, Our Father, but we find ourselves conflicted with unbelief. We doubt your goodness and run to other things as the source of our identity. Sustain us amidst stress and strain of daily life, help us live in the reality of our secure identity in You Jesus. As we find ourselves facing disappointments and pain, or struggling with sin, give us the grace to persevere and to depend on both You and Your people to hold us up and encourage us. Help us believe deeply that ALL things work together for the good of those who love God. Out of this secure strength in Christ empower us to reach out to a lost and dying world with humility, sacrifice and love. We love you! Amen.



WEEK 4 - I AM SIGNIFICANT IN CHRIST

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ~ 2 Peter 2:3-8



Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina, literally meaning "divine reading," is an ancient practice of praying the scriptures. As you read try to listen to the text of the Bible with the 'ear of the heart,' as if you are in conversation with God, and God is suggesting topics for discussion. The method of Lectio Divina includes moments of reading, reflecting on, responding to and resting in the Word of God with the aim of nourishing and deepening one's relationship with God. Read a small passage numerous times (try at least three) and pay attention to the words, verses or ideas that stand out to you each time. Spend some time waiting for God to speak between each reading to confirm or change what you think He may be directing you toward. To begin, we recommend trying this over several days with the same passage asking God to reveal what it is He may be speaking to you through His Word.

Passage

Theme

Ephesians 2



I Am God's Workmanship

1 Corinthians 3



I Am God's Temple

2 Corinthians 3



I Am God's Co-Worker

2 Corinthians 5



I Am A Minister Of Reconciliation

Matthew 5



I Am Salt And Light

John 15



I Have Been Chosen To Bear Fruit

Philippians 4



I Can Do All Things Through Christ

Listening Prayer



Our world is a noisy place. We are noisy people. Often times, our prayers are just as noisy. Take some time (perhaps 10 minutes to start with and increasing it over a period of days) to be still, quiet, and listen. Don't attempt this in a coffee shop with the espresso machine going and people bustling about. Place yourself in a quite, still environment to eliminate distractions. Ask one simple question, 'God, what do You have for me?' and then simply wait. Don't try to conjure up a response - just relax and listen for His voice. It may take several times, days or weeks attempting this before you hear anything at all, so don't get discouraged; we have to train our minds and hearts to be still and listen. Keep putting yourself in a place to hear from Him, and our God who is faithful, will make Himself known.

*"Like an artist who wishes to develop painting skills, or an athlete desires a strong flexible body for the game, a person of faith freely chooses to adopt certain life patterns, habits, and commitments in order to grow spiritually."
~ Marjorie Thompson*



Father in Heaven, we know that you have created us with a purpose. God, you rejoiced in creating us to uniquely accomplish your divine plans on earth. You have given us gifts to make you famous, to build up Your church and to partner with You in redeeming a lost and dying world. Help us Lord, to better understand how you have designed us and how you desire to use us. Help us to diligently pursue you in daily rhythms of bible reading and prayer so we better learn to hear your voice and happily do what you ask of us. God, we long to become more and more like Your Son Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen

Next Steps, Continuing Your Journey

Well done, you've made it through the first month of our journey together! Whether you were able to read and pray every day or you missed a few days, rest assured your relational investment in Jesus has value far beyond what you have already seen and experienced. We now encourage you to connect with your partner to discuss which Bible Reading Plan(s) you will continue to read for the remainder of the year, decide on a course of action and graciously strive to stay on track. The last four sections of the booklet provide invaluable resources to assist you along the way...

Bible Reading Methods

By no means a comprehensive treatment on how to read and interpret the Bible, Reading Methods provide exposure to fundamental building blocks of Biblical Interpretation.

Prayer Methods

There is no one 'right' way to pray. Prayer Methods provide an opportunity for you to expand your prayer horizons through unique/helpful approaches to prayer.

Bible Reading Plans

Planning your reading path through Scripture plays a vital role in helping to facilitate regular rhythms of Bible Reading. If you don't see something on this list that interests you, or if you're just curious, go to Youversion.com.

Resources For Further Learning

These resources will provide more expansive information on the themes/topics covered in this brief booklet. This list is not exhaustive, however it does provide a helpful starting point to learn more.

B Bible Reading Methods

Read In Context ~

Proof texting (finding verses to make your point), isolating (removing a text from its surrounding material) are ways of abusing the text and landing on bad interpretations. Read entire passages, and books instead of small chunks of verses with the intent of trying to understand the greater context within the biblical narrative (big God story). Take special care not to break up thoughts based on editorial notes, or even paragraph breaks. Scripture will not contradict itself; when read as a whole, passages will confirm God's character and His heart for the redemption of all creation.

What Does It Say? What Does It Mean? ~

We often approach Scripture immediately looking for how it applies to us. However, we have to remember Scripture was first written to/for another person or group. We know the Bible is relevant to us today and God has much to say to us through His word, but it's imperative that we come to a text without our agenda and allow the passage to speak its truth – not just interperate what we want it to say. **What does the passage say?** Try to remove what you think you know about the passage and simply read it for what it's worth. **What does the passage mean?** To establish the original meaning of a text, in addition to understanding the immediate literary context, it's extremely beneficial to understand who is writing, who they're writing to and why. The Additional Books for Your Journey provides valuable resources to support you as you seek to understand the myriad contextual issues at play when approaching biblical interpretation.

What Does It Mean To Me? ~

Now that we have a proper understanding of what comes first when we read Scripture, you are ready for application! After we have a proper understanding of what a passage is saying and what it means, we pray and ask the Spirit to guide us to a response that's appropriate and Kingdom minded. Our starting point for how we apply the text must always be oriented around proper methods of biblical interpretation. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in a response to the text – he will always guide in a way that is in complete agreement with his character. Ask him what to think, consider or do in light of what you have just read. One's response to Scripture should never contradict who God is or how He acts and loves. Application is essential to reading the Bible; we must place it in the proper context of our study.

Genres In The Bible? ~

God has communicated to us in a most unique and dynamic way through His holy word. "The Bible, however, is not a series of propositions and imperatives; it is not simply a collection of 'Sayings from Chairman God', as though He looked down and said, 'Hey, you down there, learn these truths'...Rather, He chose to speak His eternal truths within the particular circumstances and events of human history." [Fee and Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 22] God communicates His word to us in specific genres of literature: Historical Narrative, Poetry, Proverbs, Parables, Letters, Prophecy, Biographical Sketches, and others. To broaden your reading of each literary style, we encourage you to begin considering the genre of the passage/book/chapter you're reading. Please refer to the Additional Books for Your Journey for more tools specific to genre interpretation.

Genre: Historical Narrative ~

Historical narratives are primarily intended to show us God's redemptive plan at work through his people. These stories in turn teach us who God is and what He is like. The narratives record what actually happened — not what should have happened, so we should not always look for a moral (a teaching point for what we should do) in the story. Narratives are interested in telling us the important events of the story (not everything) so that we can see how God worked through a particular situation. We should be careful not to read the stories as allegories, but to try to understand the clear meaning of the text. God's character is on full display through historical narratives. Some Old Testament books composed either mostly or entirely of historical narrative include Genesis, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ruth, Ester, and others. Read these books to discover God's character, plan, and redemptive heart.

Genre: Poetry ~

Poetry is used in multiple places throughout the Bible. The Old Testament includes the Psalms as well as poetry in several other books. The New Testament includes songs, poetry, as well as hymns from the early church. Biblical poetry speaks to both the mind and the heart, expressing a broad range of emotions: fear, anger, comfort, encouragement. The Psalms are almost always directed to God, though other forms of biblical poetry may not be. One crucial facet of Hebrew poetry is the use of parallelism. Ideas are "rhymed" rather than words. For example, Psalm 19:1 reads: The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. A common genre error is to press the poetic language of emotion and symbol too far and use them literally as the basis for doctrine. For example, in the psalm above, the skies do not literally speak with language. The psalmist uses metaphor to declare God's glory through his visible creation. A helpful principle for interpretation is to allow more concrete teachings found in Scripture to assist interpretation of poetic passages.

Genre: Psalm ~

The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus the worshiper's thoughts on God in praise and adoration. Among many teachings, the Psalms also show we can bring all our feelings to God—no matter how negative or complaining they may be; we can rest assured that He will hear and understand. Tremper Longman III categorizes the Psalms into three types: **Hymn** — everything is right with the world and the psalmist just wants to praise God. Some examples are: Psalms 8, 19, 29, 33, 47, 48, 92, 96, 103. **Lament** — the polar opposite of the hymn on the emotional spectrum. Life is hard, the psalmist's enemies are about to crush him, God seems distant. Examples include: Psalm 3, 7, 13, 25, 22, 42-43, 44, 51, 74, 79, 80. **Thanksgiving** — these are similar to hymns, but particularly recount what God has done. They are closely related to laments, in that a thanksgiving psalm is often an answer to a lament. Examples include: Psalms 18, 30, 32, 34. As you read different Psalms, consider its category and how that impacts not only your reading but also your response.

Genre: Epistle ~

Although inspired by the Holy Spirit for all people in all times, Epistles were letters initially written to address specific needs within specific communities at specific times. Therefore, some work must be done to properly interpret the meaning of these letters. 1) read the letter as a letter in one sitting; remove all the chapter and verse markings as well as all the editor's notes. 2) Actually try to place yourself in a first-century church taking in the words as someone read them aloud. 2) think in paragraphs and whole thoughts — not sentences and brief ideas. 3) make sure to factor the audience and author first. Application of the epistles should include the essentials of Scripture and not become bogged down with non-essential, culturally specific passages. There are teachings that are timeless, always applicable, and grounded in God and His character, not in culture. Some of these include: Areas related to the core message of the Bible (sin, redemption, eternity). Also, love as a Christian's basic ethical response.

Genre: Parable ~

We understand what a fable is; we know there is a "point" or "moral" we are supposed to receive after hearing or reading a fable. The tendency with parables is to find the moral as well, but this is not the intent. "... parables function as a means of calling forth a response on the part of the hearer. In a sense, the parable itself is the message. It is told to address and capture the hearers, to bring them in some way to Jesus and his ministry." (How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, p. 152) We often tend to make all the parables some kind of allegory, but most parables were spoken to specific people and for specific situations. The parables were and are a call to action, to life change, and to immediate response. As you read the parables of Jesus, consider what would be a tangible, actionable response to what you read. A sampling of Jesus' parables include: Matt 20:1-16, Luke 15:1-7, Luke 15:8-10, Mark 4:1-20, Matt 18:21-35, Luke 15:11-32.

Memorization ~

Dallas Willard, professor of Philosophy at the USC, wrote, "Bible memorization is absolutely fundamental to spiritual formation. If I had to choose between all the disciplines of the spiritual life, I would choose Bible memorization, because it is a fundamental way of filling our minds with what it needs. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth. That's where you need it! How does it get in your mouth? Memorization." (Spiritual Formation in Christ for the Whole Life and Whole Person). As we memorize Scripture, it begins to infiltrate the fabric of our everyday life, flowing through us and into the lives of the people God has placed in our lives. Strive to hold God's word in your head and hide it in your heart.



Prayer Methods

Change Your Physical Posture ~

Body language matters in communication – we all know this. It also matters in prayer. Certain occasions demand we lift our hands in praise, while other times praying from our knees seems best. There is nothing overly special about how we position our body for prayer, but our physical posture can influence and lead our hearts and spiritual approach to prayer. Experiment with standing, kneeling, or even lying face down to pray and see if you are lead to pray differently.

Pray Outside ~

In 1869, John Muir wrote for the Atlantic Monthly, “No synonym for God is so perfect as Beauty. Whether as seen carving the lines of the mountains with glaciers, or gathering matter into stars, or planning the movements of water, or gardening - still all is Beauty!” There is just something about praying outside that changes our prayers. God’s creation is a testament to his beauty and grandeur. How would God speak louder or more quietly in his Beauty of nature? Spend time in his creation praying and listening.

Lord’s Prayer ~

The model Jesus gave his disciples as a way to pray can lead us into a deep abiding relationship with him. Separate the prayer into phrases or even a word and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about each of these sections. Spend a day or even a week on each phrase or word praying, meditating, and/or journaling. The beginning word, “Our” can be powerful as we understand how our faith is not lived alone. God has blessed us with others to share joys and pains – we “do” Christianity with others. . .

Pray One Prayer All Week ~

We can get really spread out in our prayer lives. We start our prayers with specific thoughts and by the end of our prayer we are asking God to bless ALL the missionaries, ALL the children of the world, and so on. There is nothing wrong with this at all! We should pray with a global perspective, but there is also great power in praying one prayer for a significant length of time (Luke 18:1-8). Begin your prayer in silence asking God what he wants you to really focus on for the day, a week, or even longer. Once you feel you have clear direction, start praying that prayer. It may morph as time progresses and the Spirit enhances your focus, but keep after the heart and intent of the original prayer and ask God to teach you, change you, and embolden you through your single prayer.

Fast ~

There is a dependence and emptying that takes place when food is absent that can create space for a special place of connection with God. If you’ve never tried to go without food and want to start with a couple of meals, no problem, but our encouragement is to give it a shot for a whole day. There isn’t anything extra holy about removing food in and of itself. Simply put, by omitting food from your day, you have the opportunity to spend that time in communion with Christ, to immerse yourself in Him and receive sustenance and strength from Him. Our hunger pains remind us to pray and they remind us that our deepest needs are not met by this physical world.

Five Finger Prayer ~

Symbols, props, and guides have all been used to guide prayers of the Church since its inception. You can even use your hand as a guide to direct your prayers: **Thumb** - pray for those closest to you. **Pointing finger** - pray for those who guide us: teachers, doctors, pastors, counselors, parents, social workers, mentors. **Middle finger** (tallest one) - pray for those who stand tall: government, civic, and business leaders, police and firefighters. **Ring finger** (your weakest finger) - pray for those who are weak: the poor, sick, infirm, infants, homeless, and the powerless. **Pinkie** (the smallest, the least) – humbly pray for your own needs.

Observe And Respond ~

Jesus didn’t simply recognize needs – he wasn’t merely about a public relationship campaign. He recognized where the Kingdom could advance, and he responded with love, compassion, peace, and healing. Begin your day asking the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see and ears to hear the needs around you. Pray for an observant heart during your daily routine and pray for those crossing your path. Or create the space to go on a prayer adventure with God: Spend an hour walking on the streets praying for the people and things you see. Go to the mall and pray for the people God makes stand out to you. . .

Prayer Posts ~

We need to be reminded to pray. Our minds are filled with information, dates, web addresses, and so many other things that it’s helpful to give ourselves tangible, physical reminders to pray and also how to pray. Find a way to post prayers or topics for prayer all over your life’s landscape. Write a prayer on your mirror with an oil pen to read and pray as you get dressed each day, change your computer’s desk top to a prayer, leave a note next to your speedometer as a reminder, set an alarm on your phone, etc. Pray every time you see your reminders. Pray the same prayer or pray new ones – just pray.

Praying From Scripture ~

Throughout the Bible we see people praying. While these prayers may not be our exact prayers, the Spirit can use prayers of Scripture to illuminate areas in our lives by which we need to call out to God. Here are some examples of prayers to read, meditate on, and seek God: Dan 9, Habakkuk 3:2-19, Psalm 51, Acts 2, Matt 6, John 17, Luke 18:13, Eph 3, Mark 15, Eph 1, Col 1. There are many more prayers recorded for us to gain a deeper understanding of who God is and how His children relate to Him. The Psalms contain many prayers.

30 Days of The Big God Story (Meta-Narrative of the Bible)

- Day 1: The Fall of Humanity Genesis 3:1–19
Day 2: A People for God Genesis 28:10–15; 32:22–28
Day 3: The Ten Commandments Exodus 20:1–17
Day 4: Sacrifices Required Under Law Leviticus 5:14–19
Day 5: Punishments for Sin Under Law Leviticus 20:7–27
Day 6: Obedience From Love Deuteronomy 11:13–21
Day 7: Cycles of Disobedience Judges 2:10–19
Day 8: The People Demand a King 1 Samuel 8
Day 9: Saul Fails and Is Rejected 1 Samuel 15:17–23
Day 10: Many Kings Fail Jeremiah 1–17
Day 11: The Sin of the People Ezekiel 20:5–26
Day 12: An Eternal King Promised Jeremiah 23:1–6; Isaiah 9:6–7; Zechariah 9:9–10
Day 13: The Promised King Is Born Luke 2:1–20
Day 14: The Word Became Flesh John 1:1–18
Day 15: Signs and Miracles of Authority Matthew 9:1–8; Luke 13:10–17
Day 16: Jesus Fulfills the Law Matthew 5:17–20; Romans 8:1–4
Day 17: Jesus Teaches About New Life John 3
Day 18: Jesus Willingly Taken John 18:1–11
Day 19: Jesus' Death and Resurrection Luke 23:44–24:12
Day 20: Christ, a Sacrifice for All Hebrews
Day 21: God's Wrath Explained Romans 1:18–32
Day 22: God's Judgment Explained Romans 2:5–11

30 days with Jesus

- Day 1: Jesus Foretold Isaiah 53
Day 2: The Birth of Jesus Matthew 1:18–25
Day 3: John the Baptist Prepares the Way and Baptizes Jesus Matthew 3:1–4:11
Day 4: Water to Wine and the Samaritan Woman John 2:1–11; John 4:1–26
Day 5: Jesus Rejected in his Hometown Luke 4:14–30
Day 6: Jesus Calls his Disciples Luke 5:1–11; Matthew 9:9–13
Day 7: Sermon on the Mount Luke 6:17–46
Day 8: A Centurion, a Widow's Son and a Sinful Woman Matthew 8:1–13; Luke 7:11–17; 7:36–50
Day 9: Encounters With the Pharisees Matthew 12:1–13; 22–45
Day 10: Parable of the Sower, Weeds and Seeds Matthew 13:1–43
Day 11: Jesus Calms the Storm and Later Walks on Water Luke 8:22–25; Mark 6:45–56
Day 12: Jesus Heals a Man, Woman and Girl Mark 5:1–43
Day 13: Feeding of the 5000 John 6:1–14
Day 14: Peter Identifies the Christ and the Transfiguration Luke 9:18–27; Luke 17:1–8.
Day 15: Healing by Faith Mark 9: 14–32
Day 16: Teachings and Parables Matthew 17:24–18:20
Day 17: Teachings and Parables Matthew 18:21–19:15
Day 18: The Rich Young Ruler Mark 10:17–31
Day 19: Disciples Sent Out Luke 10:1–24
Day 20: The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25–37

Bible Through In One Year

Each of the following three plans you will read through the Bible in one year

A. Chronological

The Blue Letter Bible "Chronological" plan is compiled according to recent historical research, taking into account the order in which the recorded events actually occurred. This is a fantastic plan to follow if you wish to add historical context to your reading of the Bible. If the schedule provided is followed, the entire Bible will be read in one calendar year. Youversion.com

B. M'Cheyne Plan

This plan is based on the M'Cheyne reading system, featuring four different readings for use in both family and personal devotions. Each day has two passages from the Old Testament, one from the New Testament, and one from either the Psalms or the Gospels. In one year, you will have read the Old Testament once and the New Testament and Psalms twice. Youversion.com

C. OwnIt365

The OwnIt365.com plan takes you through the entire Bible in one year, with two readings per day, six days per week. The acronym "OWN" represents one daily reading from the Old Testament, along with one from the Wisdom Books or New Testament. Each day's reading is designed to balance both the amount you read as well as provide a section which is easier to understand and apply to your life. Youversion.com

Bible Reading Plans

- Day 23: Righteousness by Faith Romans 3:9–26
Day 24: Life Through Christ Romans 5:12–21
Day 25: Life by the Spirit Romans 8:1–17; Galatians 5:16–26
Day 26: Living Sacrifices Romans 12
Day 27: Walking in the Light 1 John 1–2
Day 28: Living for God 1 Peter 1–11
Day 29: Love for one Another 1 John 3:11–24
Day 30: Promise of Eternity 2 Corinthians 5:1–10; Revelation 21:1–4

- Day 21: Jesus Teaches how to Pray Luke 11:1–13
Day 22: Jesus Revives Lazarus John 11:1–44
Day 23: Jesus Comes to Jerusalem Matthew 21:1–27
Day 24: The Last Supper John 13:1–17; Matthew 26:17–35
Day 25: Comfort for the Disciples John 14–15
Day 26: Jesus Arrested and Disowned Matthew 26:36–75
Day 27: Jesus' Trial John 18:19–19:16
Day 28: Jesus Crucifixion and Death John 19:17–42
Day 29: Jesus' Resurrection and Appearances John 20–21
Day 30: The Great Commission and the Ascension of Jesus Matthew 28:16–20; Luke 24:50–53

Additional Books For Your Journey

Meta-narrative (over-arching story of the Bible):

The Drama of Scripture, Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story
– Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen
Life with God
– Richard Foster
The God Who Is There
– D.A. Carson

The Jesus Storybook Bible, the big God Story for Kids & Adults Alike

Different Versions Of The Bible:

NASB – New American Standard Bible
ESV – English Standard Version
RSV – Revised Standard Version
KJV – King James Version
NIV – New International Version
NLT – New Living Translation
CEV – Contemporary English Version
Biblegateway.com

Understanding The Bible:

The IVP Introduction to the Bible
– Philip S. Johnston
How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth
– Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart
How to Read the Bible Book-by-Book
– Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart

Contextual Resources/Commentaries:

Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology
Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words
The Expositor's Bible Commentary Revised Edition
NIV Application Commentary Series
Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture For Everyone Series

Books On Worship:

Whatever Happened to Worship?
– A.W. Tozer
The Beauty of God, Theology and the Arts
– Daniel J. Treier, Mark Husbands, Roger Lundin
Thin Places: An Evangelical Journey into Celtic Christianity
– Tracy Balzer
The Heart of Praise
– Jack Hayford

Study Approaches/Genre Resources:

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth
– Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart
How to Read the Bible Book-by-Book
– Gordon D. Fee, Douglas Stuart
Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation (Vol. 3)
– Tremper Longman III
An Introduction to the Old Testament
– Raymond B. Dillard, Tremper Longman
An Introduction to the New Testament
– D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo
Expository Nuggets from the Epistles
– D. Stuart Briscoe
The Message of the Psalms
– Walter Brueggemann
How to Read the Psalms
– Tremper Longman III
Working the Angles
– Eugene Peterson

Jesus and the Cross:

The Incomparable Christ
– John Stott
More Than a Carpenter
– Josh McDowell
The Imitation of Christ
– Thomas a' Kempis
Scandalous
– D.A. Carson

Holy Spirit and Prayer:

Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit
– Francis Chan
The Grace Outpouring: Blessing Others through Prayer
– Roy Godwin, Dave Roberts
Fresh Wind Fresh Fire
– Jim Cymbala
Prayer
– Richard Foster
Hearing God
– Dallas Willard

Evangelism:

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God
– J. I. Packer
How to Give Away Your Faith
– Paul E. Little
The Celtic Way of Evangelism
– George G. Hunter

Holiness and Identity:

Rediscovering Holiness
– J. I. Packer
The Holiness of God
– R.C. Sproul
Life of the Beloved
– Henri Nouwen
The Practice of the Presence of God
– Brother Lawrence
Invitation to a Journey
– Robert Mulholland Jr.
The Divine Conspiracy
– Dallas Willard
Renovation of the Heart
– Dallas Willard
Bernard of Clairvaux /On Loving God
– An Analytical Commentary by Emero Stiegman
Thomas a' Kempis / The Imitation of Christ
– Translated by John Rooney

Books on Serving and Loving Others:

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... and Yourself
– Steve Corbett, Brian Fikkert
Interrupted
– Jen Hatmaker
Generous Justice
– Timothy Keller
The Irresistible Revolution
– Shane Claiborne
Seeking God / The Way of St. Benedict
– Esther DeWaal
Life Together
– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Spiritual Formation:

Celebration of the Disciplines
– R.J. Foster
Devotional Classics
– R.J. Foster
The Spirit of The Disciplines
– D. Williard
A Practical Theology of Spirituality
– Richards L.
Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life
– Whitney D.
Space for God
– Postema, D

