

C L A S S

Discovering My Spiritual Maturity

TEACHING GUIDE

C L A S S



G R O W

Class 201: Discovering My Spiritual Maturity — TEACHING GUIDE

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FORMATTING KEY:

TEACHING SCRIPT

(material for the teacher to say)

TEACHING TIP

(material for the teacher to keep in mind)

PARTICIPANT NOTES

(material in the participant's guide)

TEACHING TIP

Welcome to the teaching guide for Class 201! Here are two or three tips for you as you begin.

- The material that the class participants have is in black in this teaching guide, and the material in blue is for you to teach.
- The teaching material is from Pastor Rick Warren. We've kept it with his personal references as a model for you, knowing that you'll often need to change those references to fit yourself and your church.
- The class is filled with great information about who we are and what we believe as a church—but that is not the most important part of the class. The most important part is the commitment that those in the class make together at the end. In 201, there are also prayers of commitment to each of the purposes as you go through the class. Keeping that commitment in mind as you teach will cause you to teach in a different way: Instead of teaching information, you'll find yourself teaching toward a commitment. Think of it like a wedding ceremony—the pastor may do some teaching about marriage in the ceremony, but it is teaching that is pointing to the commitment the couple will make.
- As you go through this class, you'll notice that sometimes Rick moves through the material quickly, and at other times he stops to take longer on a point and tell a story. This pacing is very intentional, because it's one of the things that makes a long class more interesting. As a teacher, this means that you'll need to resist the temptation to add a story to every point and instead move through a section sometimes more quickly.

CLASS 201

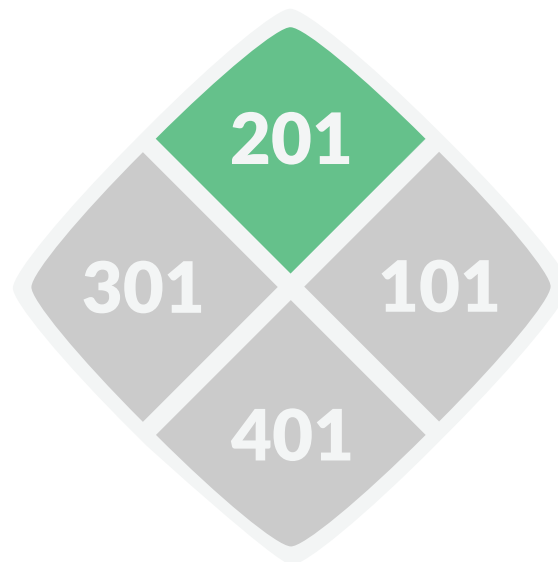
Welcome

Class 201: Discovering My Spiritual Maturity is the second of Saddleback Church's four basic classes. Congratulations on making it to this base.

We're glad you're here. Since these classes build on each other, if you have not attended *Class 101: Discovering Our Church Family*, we highly recommend that you attend it first.

In this class you will learn the following elements on how to develop your own spiritual maturity.

- Overview of Spiritual Maturity
- Habit One: Daily Time in God's Word
- Habit Two: Prayer—Talking to God
- Habit Three: Tithing—Giving Back to God
- Habit Four: Fellowship—Enjoying God's Family
- How to Start and Maintain Good Habits



YOU ARE HERE

CLASS PURPOSE

TEACHING TIP:

This section should take 5 minutes.

Hi everybody. I'm Rick Warren, and welcome to Class 201: Discovering My Spiritual Maturity. I'm so glad you've joined us, and I think this class could be life-changing for you. I wrote this class over 30 years ago. It's been taught almost every month at Saddleback Church, and tens of thousands of people have gone through it there, and others all around the world have enjoyed this class on discovering spiritual maturity. We're going to talk about some habits that will change your life. You're the sum total of your habits, and there are habits that, if you develop in your life, will strengthen you to become all that God meant for you to be. This is one of four basic classes that we have in the life development series or the Purpose Driven Life series that teach you how to move from knowing Christ and loving Christ to growing in Christ, to sharing Christ, to serving Christ, to honoring Christ with all of your life and all of your body.

Now, this class is built on two fundamental verses, one in Colossians 4 and one in Ephesians 4. Look there on your notes. Colossians 4:12, in the Phillips paraphrase says this:

*That you may become mature Christians,
and may fulfill God's will for you.*

COLOSSIANS 4:12 (PHILLIPS)

That's the goal of this class, that you become a mature Christian and fulfill God's will for you. You cannot be all God wants you to be and you cannot fulfill all God wants you to fulfill with your life unless you learn certain habits of personal development, of personal maturity, that will cause you to grow on a daily basis.

The other verse is Ephesians 4:14 and 15, and it says this in the Phillips:

*We are not meant to remain as children . . .
But we are meant . . . to grow up in every way
into Christ, the head.*

EPHESIANS 4:14-15 (PHILLIPS)

We're meant to grow up—circle that—we are meant to grow up. Children are cute. Children are fun. Children are adorable. But a child that doesn't grow up is a tragedy. You want babies, but you also want the babies to grow. If the babies don't grow to full adulthood, something is terribly wrong. One of the biggest problems we have in the church today is what I call the perpetual adolescence of the church or the perpetual immaturity of the church. We have people who are in the family of God but they're not growing in the family of God.

So that's what this second class, 201, is all about.

In Class 201, we will focus on the **Four Basic Habits** every Christian needs to develop in order to grow to spiritual maturity.

You say, "Well, why four?" Well, there are many, many more than this, and I could teach you literally dozens of spiritual habits. The great saints of history called them the spiritual practices or spiritual devotions or spiritual skills. We just like to call them habits—the disciplines of the Christian life that help you grow in your character. Your character is the sum total of your habits. Unless you develop habits, you're not going to be who God wants you to be.

This class will:

- Equip you with the skills you need to begin these habits.

So what we're going to do in this class is equip you with the skills that you need to begin what I consider to be the four basic habits, because they have to do with your time, with your money, with your relationship to God, and with your relationship to others. If Jesus Christ is the Lord of these four areas, Lord of your time, Lord of your money, Lord of your relationship to him, and Lord of your relationship to others, you're going to grow. As time goes on, you can learn other spiritual disciplines and habits and practices, but we're going to stick with these four in this class, because if you'll get this down, if you learn these habits and you were somehow shipwrecked on a desert island, you could keep growing in spiritual maturity the rest of your life just knowing how to do these four things.

We'll equip you with the skills, and then we will also

- Explain the tools you need to maintain these habits.

TEACHING TIP:

Take a few moments at this point to have people introduce themselves to those sitting beside them or at their table.

TEACHING TIP:

This section should take about 10 minutes.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Spiritual Maturity

Let's begin by asking the question, "What is spiritual maturity?" Look at what the Bible says in Ephesians 4:13:

In the unity of the common faith and common knowledge of the Son of God, we arrive at real maturity—that measure of development which is meant by the “fullness of Christ.”

EPHESIANS 4:13 (PHILLIPS)

TEACHING TIP:

Since the Scriptures are more powerful than any other part of the outline of this class, one of the best things you can do is take time to read them well. Remember, you're never telling the truth in purer form than when you read from the Bible. Yet it's easy to fall into the trap of reading a passage quickly to get to what you want to say. Equally distracting is reading so dramatically it sounds like you're an actor in a Shakespearean play. Don't just read Ephesians 4:13; communicate it! Remember to:

- Read slowly. (But not too slowly.)
- Read naturally. (Let your personality shine through.)
- Read clearly.
- Emphasize key words.
- Read passionately. (When you know you mean it, your listeners will know, too.)
- Make the reading of this passage an expression of your love for the Lord.

I want you to circle that phrase “the fullness of Christ.” Because that is the definition of maturity. To be a spiritually mature man, a spiritually mature woman, means to become like Christ. In fact, write that down.

Spiritual maturity is **BEING LIKE JESUS**.

We’re going to talk about this in detail in the sessions **ahead**, but let me just say this: The fruit of the Spirit is a perfect picture of Jesus. Galatians 5 lists nine qualities that are the fruit of having God’s Spirit in your life. It says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace and patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” These are nine qualities that God says were the fruit of Spirit. What are those things? They’re a picture of Jesus. Jesus is total love, total joy, total peace. That’s what God wants to build in your life. If you go to maturity, you’re going to be more loving. You’re going to be more peaceful. You’re going to be more joyful. You’re going to be more patient. You’re going to be more gentle. You’re going to be more kind. You’re going to be more good. You’re going to be more self-controlled.

Now, this has been God’s goal for you even before he created you. The Bible says in Romans 8:29:

For from the very beginning God decided that those who came to him . . . should become like his Son.

ROMANS 8:29 (TLB)

That’s God’s goal for you. So anytime anything happens in your life, instead of asking why—“Why is this happening to me?”—ask what. “God, what do you want me to learn from this? What do you want me to be, and how can I become more like Christ through this event?”

Facts about Spiritual Maturity

Let me just start with some facts about spiritual maturity. Let me give you

four facts.

1. It's not automatic.

The Bible says in Hebrews 5:12–13:

You have been Christians a long time now, and you ought to be teaching others, but instead . . . you need someone to teach you . . . When a person is still living on milk it shows he isn't very far along in the Christian life . . . He is still a baby Christian!

HEBREWS 5:12–13 (TLB)

The writer of Hebrews is saying this: You can grow old without growing up. You know that, and probably some people sitting around you are like that—don't look at them, but there are probably some people. It's easy to grow old. That's automatic. But growing up, there are people who are 80, 90 years old who are still spiritual babies. So, it's not automatic.

2. It's a process.

In Proverbs 8:5 in the Good News Translation, it says,

Learn to be mature.

PROVERBS 8:5 (GNT)

It's a process, and it takes time. The Bible says, "*Continue to grow.*"

Continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 PETER 3:18 (GNT)

Now, what that verse says is that it's not a one-time event. I can't give you a pill that'll make you instantly mature. We all want to look for an event, a program, video, a TV show, an experience that all of a sudden

we'll just be zapped to spiritual maturity—we have no more problems, no more pressures, no more difficulties, and all of a sudden we get along with everybody. It just isn't going to happen. It just isn't there. You will spend the rest of your life growing to maturity.

There are no shortcuts to spiritual maturity.

I can teach you how to grow, but I can't teach you how to grow quickly. Now, that gives me a third truth that I want you to understand, and it is this:

3. It takes time.

The Bible says,

Take time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit.

1 TIMOTHY 4:7 (PHILLIPS)

Circle “time” and “trouble.” Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit. It's like physical fitness. Physical fitness is not automatic. If you want to be physically fit, you have to eat the right things. You have to exercise. You have to get enough sleep. You have to lower your stress. There are things you do. Take the time and trouble to be physically fit. Does it take time and trouble to be unfit? No, that comes naturally. Does it take time and trouble for weeds to grow in your garden? But it takes time and trouble to bear fruit and it takes time and trouble to be fit.

When God wants to grow something, he does it slowly. God is never in a hurry, and a lot of people are in a hurry to grow up. As I said, I could show you how to grow to spiritual maturity, but I can't show you how to grow quickly. There's no such thing as instant maturity. When God wants to make a mushroom, he takes six hours. When God wants to make an oak tree, he takes 60 years. Do you want to be an oak tree or do you want to be a mushroom? Well, I want you to be an oak tree.

Our goal is to measure up to God's plan for us.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:13 (TLB)

The fourth thing that you need to understand is:

4. It takes discipline.

The Bible says:

Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.

1 TIMOTHY 4:7 (NASB)

In this class, we're going to teach you some of those disciplines or habits. Now, let me give you some statements about understanding discipline and discipleship. These words go together; they are related—discipline and discipleship. You can't be a disciple without being disciplined. So let me give you some statements. Write these down.

Understanding Discipleship

1. Mature believers are called DISCIPLES.

The word *disciple* in Greek means learner. It means you never stop learning. All leaders are learners. The moment you stop learning, you stop leading. The moment you think you've learned it all, you are no longer a disciple—because disciples are always learning.

2. I cannot be a disciple without being DISCIPLINED.

Obviously, they go together. There's no such thing as being a lazy disciple or an absentee disciple or a silent disciple. No, you have to have discipline in your life to be a disciple. You have to want to learn; you have to choose to learn; and you have to grow. I cannot be disciple without being disciplined.

3. The more disciplined I become, the more God can USE ME.

This is taught over and over and over through Scripture. That God is looking for people to use. The Bible says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward him." God is looking for people to use. The most dangerous prayer you can pray is, "Lord, use me." But a lot

of people say, “God, use me,” and they’re not usable. If you get usable, God will wear you out. How do I get usable? By learning the disciplines and learning the habits for spiritual growth.

4. The mark of a disciple is **CROSS-BEARING** .

In Luke 14:27, Jesus says this:

“Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”

LUKE 14:27 (NIV)

Circle the word “cannot.” It doesn’t say “might not”; it says “cannot.” You cannot be Christ’s disciple without bearing a cross. What does that mean, to bear a cross? Today, a cross is a symbol of hope. We wear it on a chain around the neck. We put it on hospitals. We put it on churches. We put them in graveyards and wear them as jewelry as symbols of hope. The red cross is a national symbol of hope, but when Jesus said, “Take up your cross,” nobody in those days was going to willingly take up the cross. It was something the Romans nailed people to, to put them to death.

What is he saying? He’s saying you must be willing to die. He’s saying, “You must give me your life completely.” The only thing Jesus Christ cannot be is moderately important. If Jesus is truly God and he came and died on the cross for me, then I owe him everything in my life. If he’s not, then I don’t owe him anything. But to have just a little bit of Jesus, a little bit, enough to bug you but not to bless you—that’s where a lot of Christians try to live, and that’s the most miserable life. The most miserable people in the world are NOT non-believers. The most miserable people in the world are people who know Jesus but have just a little of him. They’re trying to follow him partially. They’re trying to follow him halfheartedly. But the Bible says to be a disciple means to take up my cross. I’m willing to come and die.

What does it mean to come and die? It means that I put God’s agenda before my agenda. I choose his will before my will. I follow his principles over my preferences. I follow his commandments over my conditions and my wants and needs and desires. You say, “Well, how often am I to do this?” Well, Jesus said it. He said you do it daily. Write that down: daily.

5. How often am I to do this? **DAILY** .

In fact, Jesus said,

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

LUKE 9:23 (NIV)

Taking up your cross daily is the number one spiritual discipline of life. What does it mean to take up my cross daily and follow Christ? It means I sit on my bed in the morning, and as I get up, I say, “Lord, I yield myself to you. I surrender myself to you. I give myself to you. I’m willing to let you destroy my plans and agenda today and substitute your plan and agenda. I want to follow your will today.” I do that not just on a daily basis, but on a moment-by-moment basis.

You don’t take up your cross once and then that’s it. To be a disciple means for the rest of your life, you’re making the choices on a moment-by-moment basis. What would Jesus do? What does God want me to do?

Now, number six: What does a cross-bearing involve? What is involved in cross-bearing? Write this down.

6. What is involved in “cross-bearing?” **WHATEVER IT TAKES** to give Christ first place in my life!

I do whatever it takes to give Jesus Christ first place in my life. Now, that’s the overview of being a disciple in just a few short words. Let me give you an overview of the four habits that we’re going to cover in this class. I call them the core habits of being a disciple.

Four Habits of a Disciple

How Can I Become a Disciple?

Remember, write this down:

Develop **HABITS** .

That's the word we're using instead of disciplines. For a lot of people, discipline sounds like a negative word. But it's the same thing.

The Bible says in Colossians 3:9–10:

Do not lie to one another, for you have put off the old self with its habits and have put on the new self. This is the new being which God, its Creator, is constantly renewing in his own image, in order to bring you to a full knowledge of himself.

COLOSSIANS 3:9–10 (GNT)

Now, circle “put off” and circle “habits.” There's some old habits you're going to have to put off, and there's some new habits you're going to have to put on. “Put off your old self with its habits and you've put on the new self. This is the new being which God, its creator, is constantly renewing in his own image in order to bring you to a full knowledge of himself.” That's our goal so that you know Jesus Christ in full knowledge.

During this class, you're going to learn how to put off some things and to put on some things. You want to take off the old, dirty clothes and you want to put on some clean, new clothes. There are some habits you're going to unlearn and there's some new ones that you're going to learn. You know what? It actually takes about six weeks to develop a new habit. So during this session and the next sessions, you'll have lots of time to practice this.

What are the four most important habits of a disciple? Well, let me just give them to you; then I'll come back and explain them. A daily time with God reading his Word; a daily time talking to God, that's prayer; a weekly time giving back to God, that's tithing; and a weekly time enjoying the family of God, that's fellowship. So the four habits we're going to teach you, two of them are daily and two of them are weekly. You do them once a week. Let's look at this, the biblical basis, and then we'll get into them in detail.

1. Daily Time: In God's Word

Jesus said in John 8:31-32:

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

JOHN 8:31-32 (RSV)

Everybody wants to be free today. We want to be free from fear, free from worry, free from guilt. We want to be free from the past. We want to be free from the expectations of others. We want to be free to be ourselves. Where do we get freedom? Jesus said, "The truth sets you free." So you have to know the truth to be set free. How do you know the truth? The truth is in God's Word. The more you get into his Word, the more free you're going to be. So the first and most important habit is learning the Word of God. If you learn to read the Bible and study it, memorize it, meditate on it on a daily basis, that's going to be the foundation for everything else you do in life.

Now, the second habit is not just a daily time with God reading his Word, but it's a daily time with God, talking to him.

2. Prayer: Talking with God

Jesus said this in John 14:7-8:

"If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it . . . In this way you become my disciples."

JOHN 15:7-8 (GNT)

Very important verse. The way we become a disciple is by bearing fruit, and the way we bear fruit is by remaining in him and his words remaining in us. The way we remain in Christ and his words in us is through prayer. We listen to God through his Word. We talk to God in prayer. By talking the Word and listening to the Word, we remain in him, and the Bible says

we bear fruit. If you're a branch and you're cut off, you can't bear any fruit. If you're not spending time with God every day, you cannot bear fruit.

Now, those are the two daily habits: daily time with God reading his Word—daily time with God listening to his Word is another way of saying it—and number two, daily time with God, talking to God. Prayer is a conversation. You don't just talk; sometimes you listen, and you sit in silence. We're going to teach you how to do that.

Now, there are two other habits that you need to develop that involve weekly disciplines, and that is tithing and fellowship. Why tithing and fellowship? Because the two things that make the biggest difference on your life are money and other people. If Jesus is going to be number one in your life, he has to be number one in your money and he has to be number one in your relationships.

3. Tithing: Giving Back to God

Tithing is giving 10%—we'll look at this in a future session—but the Bible says this:

"None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

LUKE 14:33 (NRSV)

You're saying, "Rick, you're saying 10%, and that verse says all." We're going to explain what that means. You give it all to God. Really, you don't own anything. It's all on loan. You didn't bring anything into this world. You're not taking anything out of this world. It all belongs to God. So you recognize that God owns it all. Tithing is the symbol and the reminder that God owns it all in your life.

If God isn't Lord of your possessions, he is not Lord of you. A lot of people are possessed by their possessions. In fact, I would say it this way: If you own something and God told you to give it up and you can't give it up, you don't own it. It owns you. The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 14:23:

The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.

DEUTERONOMY 14:23 (TLB)

You see, if God is first in my time, I give him the first part of every day. God's first in my money; I give him the first part of my money before I pay anybody else. That's a discipline of a disciple.

4. Fellowship: Enjoying God's Family

Fellowship is simply enjoying God's family. It's loving and enjoying other believers. We need each other. Over and over in Scripture, we're told multiple times that we cannot fulfill God's purpose for our lives on our own. We have to learn to love each other. Why? Because life is all about learning to love. Loving God with all our hearts, loving our neighbor as ourselves. John 13 says this:

"Love each other just as much as I love you. Your strong love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

JOHN 13:34-35 (TLB)

It's our love for each other that proves we are disciples.

Definitions of Habit

Now, let me give you a definition of habit. This is Webster's II Dictionary:

- "A continual, often unconscious inclination to do a certain activity, acquired through frequent repetition."

It's something you do over and over and over until you do it without even thinking about it. For instance, when I shave every morning, I get in the shower and shave—I always start with my right side. Why? I don't know. I just started with my right side. Habits save time. Habits save energy. Habits reduce stress. Habits relieve the pressure of having to make a new decision each time.

So when you have a habit, you're actually saving time because it's so ingrained, you do it unconsciously, without thinking about it. We want you to learn how to read the Bible, how to pray, how to tithe, and how

to fellowship without even having to think about it. It's just second nature to you.

- "An established disposition of the character."

Now, the dictionary also tells us that a habit is an established disposition of the character. Habit and character go together. In other words, I can't say I have the character, the quality of integrity unless I am habitually honest. If I'm only honest every once in a while, I don't have the habit of honesty or integrity. I can't say that I'm a kind person unless I am habitually kind. I can't say that I'm loyal to my wife unless I am habitually loyal to her. It's second nature. I don't even have to think about it.

Now, how do you develop a habit? Well, you do it by repetition. Every time you build a habit with a repetition, you're building character. There's an old phrase that says this:



**SOW A THOUGHT,
REAP AN ACT.**

**SOW AN ACT,
REAP A HABIT.**

**SOW A HABIT,
REAP A CHARACTER.**

**SOW A CHARACTER,
REAP A DESTINY.**



Your habits determine your destiny. So these are definitions of a habit.

- "A customary practice." *Webster's II Dictionary*.

Class Goal

We've looked at the facts about spiritual maturity and introduced each of these habits that we will cover in depth in this class. Habit number one: a daily time in God's Word. Habit number two: prayer, talking with God. Habit number three: tithing, giving back to God. And habit number four: fellowship, enjoying God's family. Then we're going to end with how to start and maintain good habits.

Here's my class goal for you. I want you to write this down.
The goal is that:

I will **COMMIT** to the habits necessary for spiritual maturity.

That will be the second most important decision in your life, after giving your life to Christ.

The Bible says this in Romans 6:19, the Phillips paraphrase:

In the past you voluntarily gave your bodies to the service of vice and . . . the purpose of becoming wicked. So, now, give yourselves to the service of righteousness—for the purpose of becoming really good.

ROMANS 6:19 (PHILLIPS)

I want you to circle the word "purpose" twice in that verse. It says, "Don't give yourself to bad habits, bad vices." Vices are bad habits, for the purposes of evil. "But instead give yourself to the service of righteousness for the purpose of becoming good." That's the goal: I want to become good. I want to become godly. I want to become like Christ.

TEACHING TIP

You could include a short testimony on the difference that this class and making a commitment to these four habits made in someone's life here. It could be live, on video, or you could read several short statements from people who have taken the class and committed to the habits.

CLASS 201

TEACHING TIP:

From here through Hear and then Read God's Word should take about 9 minutes. This entire section on the six ways to get a grasp on God's Word should take about 35 minutes.

All right, let's begin with the first habit: daily time in God's Word.

HABIT ONE

Daily Time in God's Word

The Bible says this in 2 Timothy 3:

The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is God's way of making us well prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17 (TLB)

THE HAND ILLUSTRATION¹

On this page, trace an outline of your own hand.

I want you to turn to the page on your notebook where it says the hand illustration, and I want you to take your hand and I want you to put it on the paper and I want you to trace your hand, just like I'm doing right now. Spread your fingers out and trace your hand on that piece of paper because each of these fingers is going to represent one of the five ways that you get into God's Word. All right, man, that's a handsome-looking hand. If you see a little bump on your fourth finger, that is not a cancer nodule, that's your wedding ring, so don't get discouraged there.

Now, in each of these, I want you to write down a word. On the little finger, I want you to write down the word *hear*. Hear. Then on the ring finger, I want you to write the word *read*—R-E-A-D. Then your middle finger, your tallest finger, I want you to write the word *study*. On your first finger, I want you to write the word *memorize*. Memorize. On your thumb, I want you to write the word *meditate*. Meditate. Then in the palm, I want you to write the word *apply*—A-P-P-L-Y.

TEACHING TIP

Another way to do the following illustration is for you to show it as you're teaching. So instead of having participants try to grasp their Bible with one finger, you grasp a Bible with your little finger in front of the group. Then you can walk up to someone and ask them to try to take it out of your hand, showing how easy it is. Ask someone to do the same when you're holding the Bible with two fingers, then three, and then four. When you grip it with all five fingers, make sure you grip it by the spine, which gives you a much stronger grip!

These are the six ways—you've got five fingers, but you've got a palm, too. These are the six ways that you get a grasp on God's Word. Let me explain how this works. First, I want you to take your Bible, if you've got a Bible, and I want you to try to hold it with just your little finger, okay? Just try to hold

it right now with your little finger. If there's somebody sitting next to you, see if you can pull that Bible away from them and see if they can pull it away from you. You'll find out, it's actually quite easy to steal the Word of God from somebody else. This means if the only way you're getting intake of the Word of God is by hearing it, you're going to lose it real quickly. So it's not a good grasp on the Word of God. If all you do is get God's Word at church or on the radio, that's not enough.

Now I want you to try grasping the Bible with two fingers, which represent hearing it and reading it. All right, grasp it. Try to pull it out of your own hand. See, it's a little bit harder, but it's still pretty easy for somebody to steal the Word of God from you because you're just hearing it and reading it. Now, let's add study. That's the middle finger. Hear, read, study. Now try to pull it out of your hand. See? It's getting harder. The more ways you get God's Word in your life, the better the grasp you have of it.

Now let's add the fourth one. All right, hear, read, study, memorize. Okay, you still don't have your thumb on, but you pull that out, it's getting a whole lot harder—all right. Now let's add the thumb: hear, read, study, memorize, and meditate. Grab it together. Nobody is going to grab that. Satan can't take the Word of God out of your life if you're hearing it, reading it, studying it, and memorizing, meditating, and then applying. There's no way anybody is getting this out of my hand. This is why you have to do all six ways of getting God's Bible, God's Word into your life. This is the first habit of life, spending time with God every day: hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, and applying.

Let's look at these six ways together. First, how do you hear the Word of God?

SIX WAYS TO GET A GRASP OF THE BIBLE

1. *Hear God's Word*

Romans 10:17 says:

*So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by
the word of God.*

ROMANS 10:17 (WEB)

How do I hear the Word of God? Well, here are some ways.

WAYS TO HEAR GOD'S WORD

- The Bible on audio
- Church services and studies
- Sermon video and audio
- Radio and television teachers

You can listen on your phone or on your computer, in an app, or on YouTube. There are lots of ways to hear the Word of God audibly.

Of course, when you go to church or you go to a Bible study, you are hearing the Word of God. You're learning through the ear gate. Then there are sermon audios. You can go online. There are literally hundreds of thousands of free sermons online on iTunes and many other places online. You could get free sermons. Then radio and television teachers. Of course, I'm now teaching on the radio. I have a daily program called Daily Hope and you can listen to Daily Hope on the radio. When you do that, be sure and sign up for the *Daily Hope Devotional*, which is an email that I write every day and send out. That's another way to get God's Word, The Daily Hope,

The *Daily Hope Devotional*, the radio program. So these are different ways that you can get God's Word on a regular basis.

Here's the problem. Write this down.

PROBLEM: We forget **95** % of what we hear after 72 hours!

Now, that's the most discouraging statistic for a pastor. In fact, the reason why you have a notebook in front of you is because I don't want you to forget everything I've just taught you. If you just listen to this and walked out and hadn't made any notes, you're going to forget everything you've heard basically but 5% in the next few hours.

How do you improve your hearing? Well, the Bible gives us a couple of suggestions.

How to Improve Your Hearing

- Be ready and eager to hear God.

Attitude makes the difference. The Bible says,

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

LUKE 8:8 (NIV84)

When you come to church, when you walk into a church building where you attend, you're going to sit down and say, "Lord, I'm all ears." I'm all ears. I'm ready to hear what you want to say to me. Just speak to me.

- Deal with attitudes that prevent hearing God.

Then deal with attitudes that prevent God from speaking to you, that block your hearing. These are hearing barriers. The Bible tells us this in Luke 8:18:

“Therefore consider carefully how you listen.”

LUKE 8:18 (NIV)

Jesus told an entire story about this. It's called the parable of the seed and the sower. Jesus said that we're like one of four kinds of soils. Our hearts and our minds can be closed, that's the hard soil; they can be superficial, that's the shallow soil; they can be preoccupied, that's the rocky soil; and there's the willing and receptive attitude, which is the good soil.

A Closed Mind

Is fear, pride, or bitterness preventing me from hearing God?

A Superficial Mind

Am I really serious about wanting to hear God speak? “I really don't care about any of this. It's just not that important to me.”

A Preoccupied Mind

Am I too busy and concerned with other things to concentrate on what God has to say?

A closed mind can be caused by all kinds of things. If I'm fearful, if I'm bitter, if I'm feeling guilty—any of these negative emotions can cause me to not hear God. So I've got to get rid of those things in my life. I have to confess them to God.

A superficial mind is saying, “Well, I'm here just to go to church because I want to see some friends or I want to look for a new boyfriend or girlfriend. I'm just here because it's the thing to do on Sunday.” Your attitude isn't really one of learning, coming ready to be open and responsive. That's a superficial mind.

A preoccupied mind is when I listen to the Word of God in a Bible study or church, but I'm really thinking about the football game or the meal that I've got to plan or the birthday party that's coming up or the job I have to finish at work. When my mind is preoccupied, I can't hear God speak. So what I need to do is be ready and eager to listen, and then I need to deal with the attitudes that would keep me from listening.

- Confess any sin in your life.

The third thing is confess any sin in my life. Sin is a hearing block. The Bible says in James 1:21:

So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls.

JAMES 1:21 (NLT)

It's very important when you sit down for your daily quiet time that you start with the right attitude—say, “Lord, anything I need to let go of,” and you need to confess any sins, “God, I wasn’t very kind to my wife a few moments ago and I need to ask forgiveness, I need to offer forgiveness.” “Get rid of the filth and evil in your lives. Humbly accept the word of God that is planted in your hearts for it has the power to save you.” Confess any sin.

Then here’s a real important thing. Anytime you listen to the Word of God, you need to write it down.

- Take notes on what you hear.

Look at this verse, Hebrews 2:1. I want us to read this verse aloud together:

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

HEBREWS 2:1 (NIV84)



**KEEP A SPIRITUAL
NOTEBOOK**



It doesn't have to be fancy. It could just be a binder you put papers in.

I have kept a notebook, a spiritual notebook, now for over 50 years of my life. I have literally files and files of notebooks where I can go back and review what God spoke to me five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago. It's amazing that when you do that, you don't have to relearn a lot of the lessons. You see, we all have good forgetters. So what you need to do is write it down. The shortest pencil is longer than the longest memory. Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips. If you say it and you write it, you're going to remember it longer.

So the way you keep careful attention is when you read the Word of God and God says something in you, you stop and you write that down. Then you can go back later and review it. So confess any sins. Take notes on what you hear.

And then the most important is act on what you hear.

- Act on what you hear!

James 1:25 says it like this:

But if you look closely into the perfect law that sets people free, and keep on paying attention to it and do not simply listen and then forget it, but put it into practice—you will be blessed by God in what you do.

JAMES 1:25 (GNT)

"Do not simply listen"—circle that.

Question: Do you want to be blessed by God? The answer is obviously yes. Well, the pathway to blessing in life is there in that verse. Notice, "if you look closely"—circle that. "Look closely"—that's reading the Word of God. It says, "If you keep on paying attention"—circle that. Okay, paying attention, that's studying the Word of God. "If you do not simply listen"—circle that, simply listen. That's listening to the Word of God. It says, "You do not forget it"—circle that. That's remembering the Word of God. Then it says, "But put it into practice." That's applying the Word of God. He said, "If you do that, you will be blessed."

Let me go back to our illustration. If I hear the Word of God, I read the Word of God, I study the Word of God, I memorize the Word of God, I meditate on the Word of God, and I apply the Word of God, it says then I will be blessed. Do you realize why this is an important habit in your life? Why we start with this one, why if you want to be a mature Christian you need to develop this habit? You cannot be mature unless you hear, read, study, memorize, meditate, and apply the Word of God on a daily basis. I could just stop right now and just say, “Go home and start practicing what we do.” But let me give you a little bit more detail on these other fingers.

The first is hearing the Word of God.

2. Read God's Word

The Bible says:

*Happy is the one who reads this book . . .
and obey[s] what is written in this book!*

REVELATION 1:3 (GNT)

Are you happy with every time you read the news? No, it makes you sad. Are you happy when you read some gossip magazine? No, it makes you envious and jealous. Why do we spend more time reading things we don't believe than something we do believe? Why do we spend reading things, watching things we don't trust than we do something we do trust? We need to read the Word of God. How often should I read the Word of God? Real simple—write it down: daily.

How often should I read God's Word? **DAILY**

That's the first habit of the Christian life, reading the Word of God every day. We're fortunate that the Bible is now available in every translation and in every size and with helps and all kinds of things, but you need to read it daily. Deuteronomy 17 says this, talking about the Bible:

*He should keep it with him all the time and read
from it every day of his life. Then he will learn to
respect the Lord his God, and he will obey all the
teachings and commands.*

DEUTERONOMY 17:19 (NCV)

I've listed some suggestions for reading the Word of God. I'm not going into these in details, but you can figure this out.

SUGGESTIONS FOR READING GOD'S WORD

- Read it systematically.

In other words, if you pick a Bible, don't just do the dip-and-skip method where you open up and just put your finger down. Pick a book of the Bible and read the whole book. Read through the book of Genesis, then read through the book of Esther. Read through the book of Mark. You don't have to go through the Bible chronologically, but you should take a book and read through one book at a time because they're written as letters and they're written as stories and they go together. So read it systematically.

- Read it in a Bible without notes.

I suggest for your reading, not studying, you read it in a book without notes, so you're not getting side tracked.

- Read it in different translations: The Message, Good News Translation, New Living Translation.

There are differences in translations. Some are word-for-word, and some are thought-for-thought translations. Which one is better? The answer is they both have values. Some people think that a word-for-word translation is actually more effective than a thought-for-thought, but that's not true, because you could get the actual words and not understand it.

For instance, there are a lot of expressions in the Bible that you could translate them word-for-word and they wouldn't mean anything to you today because you don't understand that word. As an example, there's a phrase in Spanish—*tomar me pelo*—which means you're pulling my hair. You might read that and say, "Oh, Rick was pulling Buddy's hair." Well, no. What that actually means is you're kidding me, you're teasing me. In the English language, we say, "You're pulling my leg." Well, if you read that a thousand years from today, we'd wonder why you'd pull someone's leg. So a better thing would have been to translate "You're pulling my leg" as what it meant: "You are teasing me. You are kidding me."

- Read it aloud quietly to yourself.

That's an important thing. I encourage you to find the place for your quiet time where you can read the Bible aloud so you're not just getting it through the eye gate; you're getting it through the ear gate.

- Underline or color code key verses.

Mark your Bible up. It's okay to mark up your Bible. In fact, a marked-up Bible is a wonderful thing to have. I buy a new Bible every decade of my life, and I'm now in my fifth decade, and so I have five Bibles. You could see them standing on my shelf, and if you will open up, they're all marked up differently. God speaks to me at one stage and then he says something different in another stage. Different verses are important at different times.

- Choose a reading plan and stick with it.

That's a good thing to do.

I want you to write this down. You may not realize this but . . .

If I read approximately **15** minutes a day, I can read through the entire Bible in one year.

That's pretty good. Did you know that the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* has more words in it than the entire New Testament? A lot of people think nothing of sitting down with a Sunday paper and reading it all the way through, and yet they've never read through the New Testament.

Here's the reading plan for the New Testament in 30 days. I would encourage you, if you've never read through the New Testament, start right here. This would be a good plan for you so you get a good overview of the entire New Testament in one month. You'll start on the Day One with Matthew 1 to 9, and go on from there.

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN 30 DAYS

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Matthew 1-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Acts 15-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Matthew 10-15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Acts 22-28 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Matthew 16-22 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Romans 1-8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Matthew 23-28 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Romans 9-16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Mark 1-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. 1 Corinthians 1-9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Mark 9-16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. 1 Corinthians 10-16 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Luke 1-6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. 2 Corinthians 1-13 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Luke 7-11 | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. Galatians-Ephesians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Luke 12-18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. Philippians-2 Thessalonians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Luke 19-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 25. 1 Timothy-Philemon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. John 1-7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 26. Hebrews |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. John 8-13 | <input type="checkbox"/> 27. James-2 Peter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. John 14-21 | <input type="checkbox"/> 28. 1 John-Jude |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Acts 1-7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 29. Revelation 1-11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Acts 8-14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 30. Revelation 12-22 |

All right, so we've talked about hearing the Word and we've talked about reading the Word—now let's go to that third finger, studying the Word.

TEACHING TIP:

Study God's Word should take 6 minutes.

3. Study God's Word

We did a full six-week sessions on this in a campaign we called 40 Days in the Word. Maybe if you've never gone through that, you might want to go back to study *40 Days in the Word*. That curriculum is available through Saddleback Resources on how to study the Word of God. I teach you in depth how to do that.

The Bible says in Acts 17:11:

They accepted the message most eagerly and studied the scriptures every day.

ACTS 17:11 (PHILLIPS)

Circle the phrase "studied the scriptures" and underline "every day." Second Timothy 2:15 says:

Work hard so God can say to you, "Well done." Be a good workman, one who does not need to be ashamed when God examines your work. Know what his Word says and means.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 (TLB)

When you know what the Word says and you know what it means, now you're talking about study. The difference between Bible reading and Bible study is the presence of a pen.

The difference between reading and studying the Bible is that you

TAKE NOTES when you study.

You can read the Bible without writing things down, but you cannot study the Bible without writing things down.

Study means you take notes and you write down what you're learning.

The secret of effective Bible study is knowing how to ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.

There are a whole lot of different questions. I wrote a book on this one. You might want to get the book. It's called *Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods*, and it talks about thematic study, word study, book study, book synthesis,

devotional study, character study, and chapter analysis study—12 different methods of study. The only difference between those 12 methods is the kind of questions you ask. The more questions you bomb a particular text with, the more you're going to get out of that passage. So you can get the book *Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods*. It'll teach you 12 different methods of study.

One of the questions I'm often asked is, "Rick, there's so many translations out there. Which of the Bible translations should I use?" Well, it depends on what you're doing. Some translations are better for Bible reading, and some translations are better for Bible study. There are paraphrases, which are more thought-for-thought translations. Those are fine for Bible reading. When you're going to do a Bible study, I would suggest you use a more word-for-word translation. Now, I think that in my opinion, the best personal Bible study right now is the Life Application Study Bible. It's printed by Tyndale, and there are some other suggestions there on your notebook that will give you possible suggestions for the kind of study Bibles: topical study Bibles, background study Bibles. There are doctrinal study Bibles. These are all good, and over time you're going to want to invest in all of these. You're going to want to have one of each of them in your library if you truly intend to be a disciple of Christ.

We here in America have benefits that so many others don't because we speak English. All of the tools of Scripture are available to us. I go to many countries around the world where they don't even have much of the Bible in their language, and if they do, it's not that available. Because we live in America, you can go on to Amazon or other sites and find every tool you want. I would highly recommend you get the YouVersion of the Bible. It's free. You can get it

WHICH VERSION OF THE BIBLE SHOULD I USE FOR STUDY?

The Best Personal Study Bible	<i>The Life Application Study Bible</i> , New Living Translation (NLT)
The Best Topical Study Bible	New International Version (NIV) <i>Thompson Chain-Reference Study Bible (Kirkbride)</i>
The Best Background Study Bible	New International Version (NIV) <i>The NIV Study Bible</i>
The Best Doctrine Study Bible	<i>Disciple's Study Bible</i> (Broadman & Holman)

for your phone. It's a free product. I think everybody should have that on their phone so you have the Bible there all the time.

In your notebook, you'll see there's some suggested Bible study resources, and there are handbooks, which are short and brief. There are background study books. There are atlases that help you understand the different places. There are even some computer software programs that are out there. You can look at all of those, but I highly recommend you invest some in tools. When somebody says, "What do you want for Christmas?" give them this list. Photocopy this page; say, "Get me anything on this list for Christmas."

SUGGESTED BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

PASTORS.COM

Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods: Twelve Ways You Can Unlock God's Word (Zondervan)

BIBLE HANDBOOKS

Richard's Complete Bible Handbook (W Pub Group (September 1, 1987))
Halley's Bible Handbook (Zondervan Revised and Expanded edition)
Eerdmans Handbook to the Bible (Eerdmans)

OTHER IMPORTANT STUDY TOOLS*

Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (Eerdmans)
The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands (Moody) *The New Moody Atlas of the Bible*
 WORDSearch Software (WordSearchBible.com)
 Bible.com
 BibleGateway.com

COMPUTER SOFTWARE AND MOBILE APPS

QuickVerse 2011 Standard Bible Study Software (Findex)
 YouVersion Bible App
 BibleGateway

* As many different Bible translations as you can afford.

Now let's go to number four, the fourth way to get God's Word, and that is we hear it, we read it, we study it, and then fourth is:

TEACHING TIP:

Memorize God's Word should take 7 minutes.

4. *Memorize God's Word*

The Bible says in Proverbs 7:2-3:

*Guard my words as your most precious possession.
Write them down, and also keep them deep within
your heart.*

PROVERBS 7:2-3 (TLB)

How do you keep God's Word deep within your heart? There's only one way. You have to memorize it. You say, "Why should I memorize Scripture?" Well, let me give you five reasons.

Benefits of Memorizing Scripture

- It helps me resist temptation.

Every time you're tempted, you're not going to have a Bible nearby. So you need to have it memorized. It is the memorized Word of God that is the sword of God.

*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might
not sin against you.*

PSALM 119:11 (NIV)

If you're out and you're being tempted in some place about materialism or about sex or tempted to lie or tempted to exaggerate or tempted to be unkind, if you have that verse memorized in your mind, God could bring it to mind. God cannot bring to mind verses you haven't memorized. Let me say that again. God cannot bring to mind the verses you haven't memorized. So the stronger Christian you want to be, it means the more verses you need to memorize in your life.

- It helps me make wise decisions.

Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path.

PSALM 119:105 (GNT)

I can't tell you how many times I've been praying about a major decision and God brought to mind a verse I'd memorized to get a word from him that would guide me. Sometimes you have to make a quick decision; you don't have time to do an extensive Bible study.

- It strengthens me when I'm under stress.

The Bible says,

Your promises to me . . . are my only hope. They give me strength in all my troubles; how they refresh and revive me!

PSALM 119:49-50 (TLB)

"They give me strength in all my troubles and they refresh and revive me." When you are tired, when you are discouraged, when you are lonely, when you are feeling beat up, don't turn on the TV—turn to the Word of God and let it revive and refresh you.

- It comforts me when I'm sad.

Jeremiah 15:16 says:

You spoke to me, and I listened to every word. I belong to you, Lord God Almighty, and so your words filled my heart with joy and happiness.

JEREMIAH 15:16 (GNT)

This is a sustaining soul food. It's food for the soul, and it will comfort you in your time of need.

- It helps me witness to unbelievers.

The Bible says,

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

1 PETER 3:15 (NIV)

It says when somebody asks you a question, you need to be able to give an answer. If you haven't memorized the Bible, you can't give a biblical answer. People sometimes will see me on media shows, on one of the television stations, or one of the networks, and sometimes they ask very inflammatory questions or very provocative questions. They say, "Do you ever get nervous about those questions?" No. The reason why is for 30, 40 years, I have been memorizing the Word of God and it's there in my heart. I can't tell you how many times I've been asked by a reporter a question that would have stumped me, but then God would say, "Remember this verse," and then I would be able to make a principle and teach a truth based on what I had memorized.

WHEN TO MEMORIZE A VERSE

- During your quiet time
- While exercising
- While waiting (spare moments)
- At bedtime (Psalm 63:6)

You can put verses on your phone. I can't tell you how many times in a doctor's office I pulled out my phone and memorized a verse while I'm sitting there waiting, rather than reading some *People* magazine or some trashy or one-year-old magazine that they have at a typical doctor's office. You can use it anytime. I know people who write verses on cards and put them on their visors, and when they come up to stoplights, they flip it down and they read the verse aloud. Remember, read the verse aloud, and then they flip it back up. (People behind you will politely remind you that the light changed if you miss it!) You do that enough times, you'll get that verse memorized.

TIPS FOR MEMORIZING A VERSE

Here are a number of steps that you can remember, and you could go back over these.

1. Pick a verse that speaks to you.

That's important. If the verse doesn't speak to you, don't memorize it because you're not going to remember it. You remember what's important to you. That's why you remember recipes and phone numbers and baseball statistics and anniversaries. You remember what's important. So find a verse that's important to you.

2. Say the reference before and after the verse.

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," etc., John 3:16. The hardest part to remember is where it is in the Bible. So you say the verse reference before and after.

3. Read the verse aloud many times. Record it!

If you say it aloud many times, you learn through the ear, not through the eye. Remember that: You learn through the ear, not only through the eye. Read the verse aloud many times.

4. Break the verse into natural phrases.
5. Emphasize key words when quoting the verse.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. **I can** do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

6. Write down the verse and erase a word at a time.

That's a fun thing to do. You can write the verse down and scratch out a word; read it again. Scratch out another word, read it again. Scratch out another word, read it again. You can do this with your children.

7. Write out the verse on a flash card.
8. Carry some cards with you at all times for review.

You can turn times of waiting into times of memorizing.

9. Display your verses in prominent places.
10. Always memorize the verse word-perfect.

In other words, don't mess it up and then find yourself saying, "Well, it's kind of like this." Memorize it word for word.

11. Put the verse to music. Write a song!

If you like to sing, you can make up songs.

TEACHING TIP:

If you know a verse that's set to music, sing a little of it here.

12. Get a partner so you can check each other.

That's a good thing to do. Have a spiritual partner who will check up on you with your verses. Make sure it's someone who's encouraging!

Suggested beginning rate: two new verses a week.

Don't try to memorize a whole lot at start. It's better to get one a week or two a week. Now, if you memorize one verse a week, you have 50 verses memorized by the end of this year. That's a whole lot more than you've got right now. If you did two verses a week, you have a 100 verses of the Bible memorized.

Three keys to memorizing: **REVIEW** ;
REVIEW ; **REVIEW** .

That's the three keys to memorizing Scripture. Review, review, and review. It's the power of repetition, doing it over and over. You just keep on doing it over and over, and you'll get that verse down in your heart.

We remember what is **IMPORTANT TO US** .

If you feel that you can't remember Scripture, the place to start is to get a verse that is important in your life. Get a verse that you need. If you're having a problem with anger, get a verse on anger. If you have a problem with lying, get a verse on lying. If you have a problem with impatience, get a verse on patience. Start with that.

The Bible says,

*The law that you gave means more to me than all
the money in the world.*

PSALM 119:72 (GNT)

When the Word of God means something to you, you're going to hear it and you're going to read it, and you're going to study it, and you're going to memorize it.

Now, on the next page, there is a Scripture-memory course. I'm not going to go through this, but the following verses suggest the balance of Scripture. These verses selected are the keys in understanding the foundations of the Christian life. If you learn these verses, you will learn the most fundamental verses that every disciple needs to know. Don't feel tied down to this list. It's just a tool. It's just a tool to lead you in an understanding of importance of memorizing key Bible verses. But if you don't know where to start, I highly recommend you start with these verses to memorize, one or two verses a week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY COURSE¹

The following verses suggest a “balance” in Scripture memory. The verses selected are key in understanding the foundations of the Christian life and growth. Do not feel tied down to this suggested list. This is only a tool to lead you in an understanding of the importance of memorizing “key” verses.

LIVE THE NEW LIFE

Christ the Center	2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20
Obedience to Christ	Romans 12:1; John 14:21
The Word	2 Timothy 3:16; Joshua 1:8
Prayer	John 15:7; Philippians 4:6-7
Fellowship	Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:24
Witnessing	Matthew 4:19; Romans 1:16

PROCLAIM CHRIST

All Have Sinned	Romans 3:23; Isaiah 53:6
Sin's Penalty	Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:27
Christ Paid the Penalty	Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18
Salvation Not by Works	Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5
Must Receive Christ	John 1:12; Revelation 3:20
Assurance of Salvation	1 John 5:13; John 5:24

RELY ON GOD'S RESOURCES

His Spirit	1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:12
His Strength	Isaiah 41:10; Philippians 4:13
His Faithfulness	Lamentations 3:22; Numbers 23:19
His Peace	Isaiah 26:3; 1 Peter 5:7
His Provision	Romans 8:32; Philippians 4:19
His Help in Temptation	Hebrews 2:18; Psalm 119:9

BE CHRIST'S DISCIPLE

Put Christ First	Matthew 6:33; Luke 9:23
Separate from the World	1 John 2:15-16; Romans 12:2
Be Steadfast	1 Corinthians 15:58; Hebrews 12:3
Serve Others	Mark 10:45; 2 Corinthians 4:5
Give Generously	Proverbs 3:9-10; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7
Develop World Vision	Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20

¹ *Topical Memory System*, by The Navigators, copyright © 2006. All rights reserved.

The fifth way that we talk about grasping the Word of God is:

TEACHING TIP:

Meditate on God's Word should take 6 minutes.

5. *Meditate on God's Word*

The word for meditation is also the word for rumination. Rumination is the process where a cow chews its cud, swallows it, regurgitates it, chews it again, swallows it—goes through that process something like seven times. The reason the cow does that is to get every bit of nourishment that it can from that grass.

That's what we're to do with God's Word. We are to focus our thinking, spend time on it, trying to drain every bit of spiritual nourishment and food we can from the Word of God.

The Bible says this in Psalm 1:2-3:

[Those who are] *always meditating on his laws . . . are like trees along a river bank bearing luscious fruit . . . [They] shall never wither, and all they do shall prosper.*

PSALM 1:2-3 (TLB)

If there's any verse that I'd like to pray for your life, it's that—that you don't wither, that you don't faint, that you don't shrink, that you don't dry up spiritually, but instead that you prosper and that everything you do has the blessing of God on it. What is the key to the blessing of God? It is this fifth form of getting the Word of God into my life; it's called meditation.

Meditation is **FOCUSED THINKING** about a Bible verse that speaks to you, in order to apply its truth in your own life.

If you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate because if you take a negative idea and you think on it over and over and over and over and over and over and over, that's called worry. If you take a Bible verse and you think on it over and over and over and over and over and over, that's called meditation.

Why Meditate on Scripture?

- It is the key to becoming like Christ.

The Bible says:

Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.

PROVERBS 4:23 (GNT)

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

ROMANS 12:2 (NIV)

Both of these have to do with meditating on God's Word.

Second Corinthians 3:18 gives us the full understanding of how meditating on Scripture makes us more like Christ:

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:18 (NIV)

Look at that verse closely: It says as we contemplate, we think about, we meditate, we chew on what it means to be like Jesus, that transforms us while we contemplate. And the truth of God's Word powerfully enables us to contemplate God's glory. While contemplation and meditation is going on, transformation is taking place in our lives. We're becoming more and more like Jesus with ever-increasing glory. Literally the word there is from one degree of glory to another. The Greek word is *katop-triz-o*, which means to reflect on the glory of the Lord one degree at a time. We become little by little. The more you spend time with somebody, the more you become like them, and this is true with Jesus—the more you meditate on Jesus, the more you become like Jesus.

The second reason you ought to learn to meditate on the Word of God, seriously think about it, spend time considering it, contemplating it, is

- It is the key to answered prayer.

You want your prayers to be answered? Then you need to learn how to think seriously about the Bible. The Bible says in John 15:7:

“But if you live your life in me, and my words live in your hearts, you can ask for whatever you like and it will come true for you.”

JOHN 15:7 (PHILLIPS)

That’s an amazing promise. It doesn’t say you can ask for whatever you like and it will become true. It says that if God’s Word lives in you, you can ask for whatever you like. Because when God’s Word lives in you, whatever you’d like is transformed to become what God would like.

A third reason you need to learn to meditate is:

- It is the key to successful living.

Joshua 1:8 says this:

Meditate on it [the Word] day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

JOSHUA 1:8 (NIV84)

Okay, hang on there. Do you want to be prosperous? Do you want to be successful in life? This is the only promise of success in the Bible, and it is tied to meditating on Scripture. The more you seriously think about and consider and meditate on God’s Word, the more successful you’re going to be in life because you learned the truths of life.

Some people would look at that and think it’s kind of a magic wand—if I meditate, then there’s a presto-chango stuff and I’m going to be successful. That’s not it at all. Again it goes back to what you think about is what you become. If you’re thinking about the Lord Jesus and his ways and becoming like him, then you’re going to have success and live in a successful way. You’re going to love people instead of reacting negatively to them. You’re going to be honest in business, and God prospers those that are honest and

have integrity. So it's not a magic wand; it just has a way of bringing our thoughts in line with the Lord so that he can bring success to our life.

So how exactly do you meditate on a verse? Here are a couple of tools to help you:

SIX WAYS TO MEDITATE ON A VERSE

Picture it!	Visualize the scene in your mind.
Pronounce it!	Say the verse aloud, each time emphasizing a different word.
Paraphrase it!	Rewrite the verse in your own words.
Personalize it!	Replace the pronouns or people in the verse with your own name.
Pray it!	Turn the verse into a prayer and say it back to God.
Probe it!	Ask yourself the "APPLICATIONS Questions" on the next page.

Let's just go through these again real quick. Picture it; you visualize the scene in your mind. If it's a story, you visualize what it would be like to be there, what it would be like to feel that. Think of the wind, think of the atmosphere, think of how you would feel being in that situation with Jesus, with some other character in Scripture.

Pronounce it; you say the verse aloud, each time emphasizing a different word. For instance, if you take the phrase "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," you say, "**I** can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Then you say it again: "I **can** do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Then you say it aloud again: "I can **do** all things through Christ who strengthens me." Then, "I can do **all** things through Christ who strengthens me." Then, "I can do all **things** through Christ who strengthens me." Then, "I can do all things **through** Christ." You see, each time you say it, pronouncing a different word, emphasizing that a little bit, you get a little bit different emphasis on the verse.

A third way to meditate is to paraphrase it, and that is you rewrite the verse in your own words. Kenneth Taylor was a man who took the New Testament

and rewrote it in his own words, paraphrased it in modern English, and we got The Living Bible that way.

You can personalize it. One of the ways you personalize it is to put your name—for instance, “For God so loved Rick Warren that he gave his only begotten son, that if Rick would believe in him Rick would not perish, but Rick would have eternal life.” See, it personalized it. I make it mine.

You can pray it; you can actually turn the verse into a prayer and pray it back to God. And then I probe it. How do you probe it? Well, you ask questions. Remember, the secret of good Bible studies is asking questions, and I actually put in a little acrostic called APPLICATIONS: 12 Different Questions.

APPLICATIONS QUESTIONS

Is there any . . .

Attitude to adjust?

Promise to claim?

Priority to change?

Lesson to learn?

Issue to resolve?

Command to obey?

Activity to avoid or stop?

Truth to believe?

Idol to tear down?

Offense to forgive?

New direction to take?

Sin to confess?

You ask first, “Is there an attitude to adjust as I read the Scripture? He’s been jealous, I have been jealous, so I need to get rid of that. He’s been envious, I need to not be envious.” Is there an attitude to adjust? I can ask, “Is there a promise to claim?” I ask, “Is there a priority to change in my life?”

Is there a lesson to learn?
 Is there an issue to resolve?
 Is there a command to obey?
 Is there an activity to avoid or stop?
 Is there a truth to believe?
 Is there an idol—something that I’m putting my trust in—to tear down?
 Is there an offense to forgive?
 Is there a new direction to take?
 Is there a sin to confess?

What I would recommend you do is take those 12 questions, write them inside the flyleaf of your Bible, just put them there, so anytime, anywhere you’ve got your Bible with you, you could open to that page and you can remember those 12 questions to meditating on Scripture.

To fill our lives with the Word of God, we hear it, we read it, we study it, we memorize it, we meditate on it, and then the sixth way is:

TEACHING TIP:

Apply God’s Word through the conclusion to this section should take 6 minutes.

6. *Apply God’s Word*

When you apply the Word of God, you’ve got a firm grip. James 1:22 says this:

Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice.

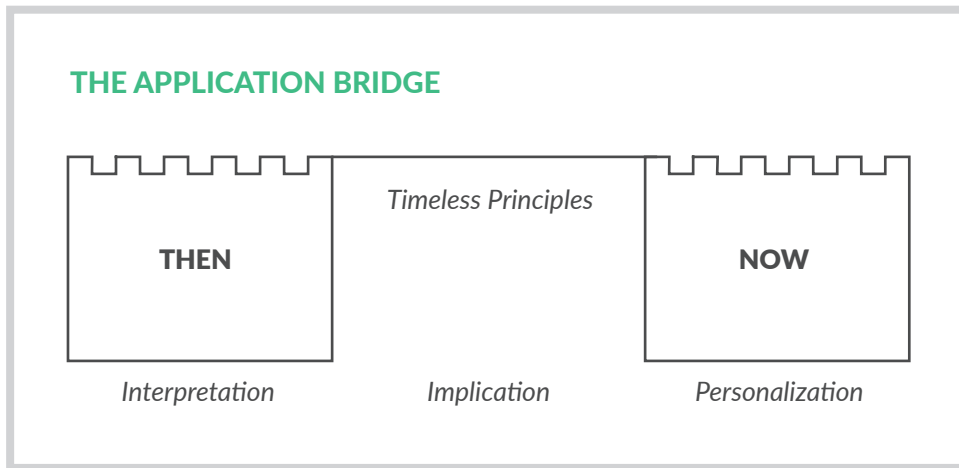
JAMES 1:22 (GNT)

The Bible tells us in Matthew 5:19:

*“Whoever practices and teaches these commands
will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

MATTHEW 5:19 (NIV)

How to Apply Scripture



How do I apply God's Word to my life? Notice there on your worksheet, we have what I call the application bridge, and the application bridge is bridging the gap between then and now, the then of the Bible and the now of today—and how do you get across the bridge? Well, you need to look at what does it mean then and how do I apply it now? In order to get from then to now—from what did it mean to Moses to what does it mean to me now—you have to look for what's called the timeless principle. The timeless principle is the implication of the Scripture. First is interpretation—“What did it mean then?”—and then the implication is “What's the timeless principle?” and then the application or personalization is “What does it mean to me now?”

First ask: What did it mean to the original hearers?

Then ask: What is the underlying timeless principle?

Then ask: Where or how could I practice that principle?

TEACHING TIP:

Below you'll find one brief example of how the application bridge works. You can use this one, or even better one out of your own Bible study. It can be helpful to walk from one side of the room to the other as you're on the different parts of the "bridge" in your illustration.

Let me give you an example. In the book of Exodus, when Moses meets God at the burning bush, there is a moment when God tells Moses to throw down his staff. He does, and it becomes a snake. Then God tells Moses to pick it up again, and it becomes a staff again.

What does that story mean to us today? Let's look at the bridge.

Begin with "What did it mean to them?" A little study shows that Moses had been using a staff to guide sheep for 40 years—the staff represented his life and livelihood. Moses had been arguing with God that he couldn't possibly be the one that could be used to set the people free from Egypt. God told him to throw down his staff, and when it became a snake, God was showing Moses what he could do when something was made available to him.

Now we're getting to the timeless principle. God can do miraculous things when something, or someone, is made available to him. A preacher would say, "It's not our ability, but our availability that matters."

But you haven't crossed the bridge until you ask the third question: "What am I going to do about it? Where have I been telling God that he could never use me? Where do I need to make myself available to God?" The next class after the one we're in today is 301: Discovering My Ministry. You may think that God could never use you in a ministry. Moses thought that, too. God told him the question wasn't whether he thought he was usable, but whether he'd make himself available.

Write out a sentence that describes a project or action you will take to apply the truth.

.....

.....

.....

When you get to writing out an application, most applications are going to focus on one of three relationships. Write this down: relationships. It's all about relationship.

Most applications will focus on one of the three **RELATIONSHIPS** :
with **GOD** , with **MYSELF** , with **OTHERS** .

Most of the time when I read the Word of God and ask, "What am I going to do about it?" it has something to do with how am I going to change my relationship with God, how am I going to change my relationship to myself, or how am I going to change my relationship to others?

The key to a good application is writing down an application action statement, and that is what am I going to do based on what I've read. You only believe the parts of the Bible you actually do—you read it and you study, you memorize it, you meditate on it—all of these things don't make any difference unless you actually do it. You only believe the parts of the Bible you do.

Four Marks of a Good Application Action

There are four marks to a good application—in other words, to writing out "What am I going to do based on what I have read?" What you want to do is write down these four things—a good application is

1. It's **PERSONAL** .
2. It's **PRACTICAL** .
3. It's **POSSIBLE** .
4. It's **PROVABLE** .

First, it's personal; you write down a personal application. If I'm going to make a personal application on the verse where Jesus says, "Don't worry about tomorrow; each day has enough trouble of its own," I start the sentence "I." It's a personal application, I don't say "We," I don't say "My wife, my kids, the church, America"—all applications can only deal with who you

are because you can't control anybody else's behavior. So you say "I" need to.

Practical. Practical would be something that you can do. "I need to trust God to lose some weight."

Possible: "What do I trust God for? I need to lose 10 pounds." You don't say, "I'll lose 100 pounds in a month." Make it something possible.

Provable means you set a date. You set a date. For instance, if you're memorizing a verse on losing weight, you say, "I want to do this by such and such by such and such a date." If you're memorizing a verse on "I want to share the good news with my friend"—"I need to talk to John about the Lord by the end of next week." That's personal, practical, possible, and provable. I can judge it; I can test myself. Unless it's personal, practical, possible, and provable, you just have a dream. You don't have an application.

The Bible says in John 13:17:

"You know these things—now do them! That is the path of blessing."

JOHN 13:17 (TLB)

The path to blessing in life is not simply knowing the Word of God; it's doing it. So you need to write applications out when you are studying the Word of God.

TEACHING TIP:

The entire section on prayer should take 25 minutes. From here through “How to Revitalize Your Prayer Life” is about 5 minutes.

All right, we’re going to turn our focus now to the second habit of spiritual maturity, and the second habit of spiritual maturity is:

HABIT TWO

Prayer

TALKING WITH GOD

The Bible says in Romans 12:12:

*Base your happiness on your hope in Christ.
When trials come endure them patiently,
steadfastly maintain the habit of prayer.*

ROMANS 12:12 (PHILLIPS)

Circle the phrase “the habit of prayer.” This is the second great habit of the Christian life. First, letting God speak to you in the Word; and second, speaking to God in prayer. Prayer is a conversation.

HOW TO REVITALIZE YOUR PRAYER LIFE

You've probably been taught to pray from being a little child, but prayer can get boring, so how do you revitalize your prayer life? The way you do that is you follow the instructions that Jesus gave in Matthew chapter 6, which is in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' most famous sermon:

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

MATTHEW 6:5-8 (NIV)

Jesus gives us three steps to revitalizing our prayer life, and then he gives us six steps in modeling our prayer life around the Lord's Prayer. Let's look at these. First, if you're going to pray effectively on a daily basis, you have to approach prayer with the right attitudes.

Approach Prayer with the Right Attitude

And there are three attitudes that are extremely important.

Be **REAL** .

You don't want to fake it with God. God doesn't want to hear you say fake things; he doesn't want you to just mouth words that you don't believe at all. The Bible says in Matthew 6:5:

“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them.”

MATTHEW 6:5 (NLT)

What's he saying there? He's saying that in prayer there's two things you want to avoid:

- Don't try to impress **GOD** .

As if you could pray a prayer where God said, “That's the best prayer I've ever heard!”

- Don't try to impress **OTHERS** .

If I'm trying to impress God with my prayers or I'm trying to impress you with my prayers, I'm not really praying, I'm performing. I need to be real. I just need to tell God what's on my heart—that's the important thing.

Be **RELAXED** .

This is the next thing Jesus says in Matthew 6:6:

“But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

MATTHEW 6:6 (NLT)

The Bible tells us to pray with others, so Jesus isn't saying to only pray alone here. He's telling us that whenever we pray, we should have this sense of just being with God. Relaxing in his presence. You're not attempting to be somebody you're not because taking away the audience makes you not just real, but it makes you more relaxed.

Be **REVEALING** .

"Don't recite the same prayer over and over as the heathen do, who think prayers are answered only by repeating them again and again. Remember, your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!"

MATTHEW 6:7-8 (TLB)

I love that verse. God already knows what I need even before I ask him, so why do I even pray? He wants me to know what I need. He says you don't need to recite the same prayers over and over and over; he says that's just a pagan ritual. He said God knows what you need; you just need to reveal what's on your heart.

TEACHING TIP:

From here through Provision (the third of the six parts of prayer) is about 10 minutes.

USE THE MODEL JESUS GAVE US

Then after these three instructions of being real and being relaxed and being revealing, Jesus gave us a model; we call it the Lord's Prayer. Jesus didn't actually pray this prayer himself and he didn't say to pray this prayer. He said this is how you should pray. Look at Matthew 6:9–15:

“This, then, is how you should pray.”

MATTHEW 6:9 (NIV)

“This, then, is how you should pray.” Circle the word “how”—circle it, star it, put arrows pointing to it; this is how you should pray. It didn't say this is what you should pray—a big difference. It's not a ritual prayer. This is how you should pray. And in this prayer we get the six parts of the prayer God answers.

The Six Parts of Prayer

Look at this—first,

1. Praise: I begin by **EXPRESSING MY LOVE FOR GOD** .

That's the first thing that I do. I don't start with confession; I start with praise. I begin by expressing my love to God.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

MATTHEW 6:9 (NIV)

We start with seeing God as our Father, and we say, “Hallowed be your name”—this is a form of prayer.

TWO KINDS OF PRAISE

ADORATION

Praising God for *who he is*.

THANKSGIVING

Praising God for *what he has done*.

When you pray, you want to do both. You want to brag on God; whenever you don't know what to pray, you start bragging on God, tell God what you love about him, and praise God for who he is and what he's done. The Bible says in Psalm 100:4:

*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.*

PSALM 100:4 (NKJV)

HOW TO PRAISE GOD

As you read your Bible, make a list of God's character qualities that you discover and then review them when you pray. (See Prayer Guide 1, on page 39.)

EXAMPLES

God is <i>patient</i> .	Numbers 14:18
God is <i>merciful</i> .	Numbers 14:18
God is <i>forgiving</i> .	Numbers 14:18
God <i>knows everything</i> .	2 Samuel 14:20
God is <i>loving</i> .	1 John 4:8

Hebrews 4:16 says:

*So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious
God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will
find grace to help us when we need it most.*

HEBREWS 4:16 (NLT)

Why can we come to God boldly? Because we know he's patient, we know he's merciful, he's forgiving, he's gracious, he's loving, he wants us to come talk to him.

So the key to this, write this down:

KEY: **GOD'S CHARACTER** is the basis for our boldness in making requests in prayer. We ask with faith when we ask according to God's character. God answers the prayers that acknowledge who he is!

What right do I have to come to the Creator of the universe and ask him for anything? God's character is the basis for our boldness in making our request to God. We ask with faith when we ask according to God's character, and God answers the prayers that acknowledge who he is. So when you start your prayer, you say, "God, I know you're loving. God, I know you're merciful. God, I know you love me. God, I know you care about everything in my life. God, I know you have the power to answer my prayers. God, I know that you listen."

- Remind yourself and affirm the promises God has made that are contained in the meaning of his names. (See Prayer Guide 2, page 40.)
- Make a list of all that you are thankful for and review it when you pray. (See Prayer Guide 3, page 41.)

2. **Purpose:** I commit myself **TO DOING GOD'S WILL**.

This is the prayer of surrender, and it goes like this:

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

MATTHEW 6:10 (NIV)

There are some things in your life that you don't understand—right now they're going on in your life. There's lots of stuff going on in your life you don't understand, and you just have to come to God and say, "God, I don't understand it, but I surrender it to you. Your kingdom come, your will be done."

You pray this prayer of surrender to God's purposes in every area of your life.

Pray for God's will to be done in your family, your church, your ministry, your job, your future, your city, your nation, your world.

The Bible says in Romans 12:1:

*Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God,
dedicated to his service and pleasing to him.
This is the true worship that you should offer.*

ROMANS 12:1 (GNT)

So when you do these first two parts of prayer—praise and purpose; praise our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be your name—and I think about the names of God, and then, thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, I'm committing myself to do your will here. Because in heaven God's will is done perfectly; it's not done perfectly on Earth. We say, "Lord, I want it done here like it's done there."

Then, you come to the third part of prayer:

3. Provision: I ask God to **MEET MY DAILY NEEDS**.

In provision, I ask God to meet my daily needs. Notice what the Bible says—Matthew 6:11, let's read this aloud together, "Give us today our weekly bread."

"Give us today our daily bread."

MATTHEW 6:11 (NIV)

It doesn't say that, does it? It doesn't say monthly bread, it doesn't say annual bread. It says what? Yeah, daily—daily bread. God says you are to pray for just enough for today. God doesn't want to give you everything you're going to need the rest of your life now because if he did, you wouldn't need to trust him. So, we are to pray, "Lord, give me enough energy for today, give me enough wisdom for today, give me enough money for today, give me enough energy and strength for today." That's the provision; I ask God to meet my daily needs. I ask God, "Give me today our daily needs."

- What needs can I pray about? **ALL OF THEM** !

There is no need that you cannot pray for, that you cannot ask God. Do you have financial needs? You could pray about that. Do you have health needs? You can pray about that. Do you have sexual needs? You can pray about that. Do you have relational needs? You could pray about that. There is no need in your life that God is embarrassed by or ashamed of. The Bible says,

And it is he who will supply all (circle that word) your needs from his riches in glory because of what Christ Jesus has done for us.

PHILIPPIANS 4:19 (TLB)

God will meet your needs because of what Jesus has done. When Jesus died on the cross for you, he solved your biggest need; everything else is small by comparison. Your greatest need is salvation. Everything else is minor by comparison.

Jesus didn't promise to meet all your greeds, but he did promise to meet all your needs. There are things that I want that I really don't need; I think they are needs but I don't really need them.

Look at Romans 8:32:

Since he did not spare even his own Son for us but gave him up for us all, won't he also surely give us everything else?

ROMANS 8:32 (TLB)

The answer is, "Well, duh. Yes, of course." If God loves you enough to send Jesus to die for you, he loves you enough to take care of your minor needs. By the way, everything is minor in your life to God. There's no such thing as a big problem; they're all small problems to God. So, God says, "Just bring them to me."

James 4:2 says this:

You do not have because you do not ask God.

JAMES 4:2 (NIV)

I wonder how many people are going to get to heaven, when they get to heaven they're going to see these warehouses filled with all kinds of gifts for them and there will be a tag on every one of the gifts, and it says, "Never asked for." How many things do you not have in your life simply because you never asked for them? So, I challenge you to ask for everything you need and even what you desire in life.

KEY: BE SPECIFIC.

The Bible says:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6 (NIV84)

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Interestingly enough, I think that's the most difficult verse from the Bible. It says don't worry about anything—that's a pretty hard thing to do. But it says instead of worrying, it says pray about everything. You're either going to pray or you're going to panic; you're going to worry or you're going to worship. The Bible says don't panic, pray, and then ask by prayer and petition, present your requests to God.

When you're in the third part of prayer—remember, first it's praise; then it's purpose, thy will be done; then it's provision; God, here's what I need—the key is to be specific. The more specific you are, the easier it is for God to answer your prayer request. Let me tell you how to be specific.

- Write down your requests, with a promise you are claiming from the Bible, and expect an answer! (See Prayer Guide 4, page 42.)

Remember when we talked about studying the Word of God and about filling out an application on each verse? It needs to be personal, practical,

possible, and provable. You can do that with prayer. Make a request that is personal, practical, possible, and provable, and then you can celebrate when God answers it.

TEACHING TIP:

From here through the end of the section on prayer is about 10 minutes.

4. Pardon: I ask God to **FORGIVE MY SINS** .

In this phase, I ask God to forgive my sins. This is an important part of prayer. The Bible says:

“Forgive us our debts.”

MATTHEW 6:12 (NIV)

There are four parts to feeling forgiven. Once you ask God to forgive you, you’re forgiven, but you don’t always feel forgiven so you keep asking over and over and over and over, and that’s not any good, so I want to teach you now how to feel forgiven. Here’s how you do it; write these steps down.

FOUR STEPS TO FORGIVENESS

Step 1: Ask the Holy Spirit to REVEAL every sin.

When you're praying, you say, "Lord, I don't even know all the sins I've done, so would you reveal them to me? Would you help me understand them?" You ask God to reveal every sin in your life. Here's a good verse, Psalm 139:23-24; it says,

Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me.

PSALM 139:23-24 (GNT)

So the first thing I do is I examine myself, I do a little self-evaluation, and I ask God to reveal every sin in my life.

Step 2: Confess each sin SPECIFICALLY.

It's not enough to ask God, "Please forgive all my sins." You committed them one by one; you ought to confess them one by one. Confess each sin specifically. The Bible says, Proverbs 28:13:

You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you.

PROVERBS 28:13 (GNT)

So you know what? Cover-ups never work. We know that. We know that God teaches it, but we see it in society every day. People who try to cover up the sins, they always get found out in the end. It's better to just be open, confess each sin specifically.

Step 3: Make RESTITUTION to others when necessary.

If the sin is between you and God, you just need to confess it to God. If the sin is between you and another person and they know about that sin

or you have harmed them, you need to go to that person. The Bible says in Matthew 5:23–24:

"[When] you remember that your brother has something against you . . . go at once and make peace with [him], and then come back and offer your gift to God."

MATTHEW 5:23, 24 (GNT)

This shows the priority of reconciliation. It says don't even waste time praying if you're out of whack with somebody else. If you're out of harmony with your wife, your prayers aren't going to be heard; you're out of harmony with your husband, your prayers aren't going to be heard; you need to make restitution, you need to do confession and restitution, ask forgiveness, offer forgiveness.

Step 4: By faith, ACCEPT God's forgiveness.

I accept God's forgiveness. Why do we accept God's forgiveness? On what basis? On the basis of the promise of God. First John 1:9 says this:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:9 (NIV)

I call that the soap bar verse of the Bible. Even if there was no such thing as heaven or hell, it would be worth becoming a Christian just to have a clear conscience. Do not go around carrying guilt. Most people carry around this load of guilt all through life; let it go. Let it go, and you let it go through confession, and that's the pardon position of prayer.

Okay, let's review. Praise—I honor God for who he is and what he's done. Purpose—I surrender my life to his purpose; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Provision—I ask God for my needs; he says, "Whatever you need ask for me in prayer, be specific about it." And then pardon—I ask God to forgive me and to forgive my sins.

The next part, the fifth part of a prayer:

5. People: I pray for **OTHER PEOPLE** .

This is called intercession, and this is when you forgive others who need to be forgiven and you pray for others who need your prayer. The people part of praying is intercession, praying for other people.

“As we also have forgiven our debtors.”

MATTHEW 6:12 (NIV)

It says not only do we just say, “Forgive us our debts,” it says, “as we have also forgiven our debtors.” And so if there’s anybody that you have not forgiven, you need to let it go in prayer. Resentment will eat you alive. The Bible says that resentment kills a fool. The Bible says it’s foolish to hold on to resentment. It makes you bitter, not better.

First Timothy 2:1 says this:

Pray much for others; plead for God’s mercy upon them; give thanks for all he is going to do for them.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1 (TLB)

When you do this, do you know what happens when you pray for others? God smiles and God meets your needs. When Job lost everything in his life, the Bible says God restored all of Job’s fortunes when he prayed for his friends—not when he prayed for himself, but when he prayed for his friends.

There in your outline, you will see in your notes, a list of other Scriptures that will help you pray for people.

Scriptures below will help you pray for others:

- Ephesians 1:15–19
- Colossians 1:3–12
- 1 Thessalonians 1:2–3
- 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12

These are very powerful passages. I want you to look them up later. It'll give you some ideas on how to pray for other people. If you ever want to know how to pray for other people, just read the prayers of Paul, and the prayers of Paul are usually at the very beginning of each of the books that he wrote in the New Testament.

I highly recommend you make a prayer list.

Make a prayer list of people you want to pray for. You might pray for different people over different days of the week. (See Prayer Guide 5, page 43.)

Make a prayer list of the people you love and what you want to pray specifically for each of their lives. This will change your life if you do this; it'll make you more loving, it will make you more considerate, and you will see God work in your ways that you have no idea.

6. Protection: I ask for **PROTECTION** and **DIRECTION** .

The Bible says,

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

MATTHEW 6:13 (NIV)

This is a very important prayer. We as believers are in a spiritual battle every single day of our lives. The moment you give your life to Christ, you become public enemy number one in Satan's book, and Satan wants to defeat you through temptation and Satan wants to defeat you through fear. Those are the two big ways he works in your life. Satan can't take you out of God's family or care, because you're a child of God. But he can get at you through temptation and he can cause fear. And if you listen to that, then he'll dominate that area of your life. By praying for protection, what you get is the confidence to face every situation that comes your way during the day.

Here's a great promise; this would be a good verse to memorize. First John 4:4 says this:

The Spirit who is in you is more powerful than the spirit in those who belong to the world.

1 JOHN 4:4 (GNT)

That gives you confidence. So, pray the prayer of protection and direction. "Lord, don't lead me in the wrong way; lead me in the good way, and protect me from the evil one."

Believers face a spiritual battle every day. Satan wants to defeat us through temptation and fear. By praying for protection, you will have the confidence to face every situation that comes your way.

I want to close this section by encouraging you to remember that prayer is the only way you can talk to God. God has ways of communicating to us through his Word, through creation, through other people, through thoughts that come into our mind. There are numbers of ways that God can communicate with us, but the only way that you and I have to communicate to God is through prayer. I encourage you to take these steps to revitalize your prayer life.

The next five pages in your notebook contain five prayer guides that we've put together for you. The first one is character traits of God, the second is the names of God, the third is my thanksgiving list, the fourth is my personal request, and the fifth is my prayer list.

PRAYER GUIDE 2: THE NAMES OF GOD

Did you know that God has several names? They are all in the Bible, and each name describes a facet of his character. You can take each of these eight names and focus individually on what God is really like! Pray the names of God as affirmations of praise!

EIGHT HEBREW NAMES OF GOD DECLARE WHO GOD IS

Jehovah-Shammah	God is present with me. Ezekiel 48:35 You are here! I am never alone!
Jehovah-Rohi	God is my shepherd. Psalm 23:1 You lead me and feed me and protect me!
Jehovah-Jireh	God is my provider. Genesis 22:14 You see what I need before I even ask!
Jehovah-Rophe	God is my healer. Exodus 15:26 You can heal my body, emotions, and relationships!
Jehovah-Tsidkenu	God is my righteousness. Jeremiah 23:6 You accept me and forgive me because of Jesus!
Jehovah-M'Kiddish	God is my sanctification. Leviticus 20:8 You make me holy and like Jesus!
Jehovah-Shalom	God is my peace. Judges 6:24 You give me peace in spite of circumstances!
Jehovah-Nissi	God is my banner. Exodus 17:15 You are my victory in conflict and confrontation!

Think on the implications of these names and you'll have plenty to praise God for!

For my church

PRAYER GUIDE 4: MY PERSONAL REQUESTS

Write down your requests, with a promise you are claiming from the Bible, and expect an answer!

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6 (NLT)

PRAYER GUIDE 5: PRAYER LIST

Make a prayer list of people you want to pray for. You might pray for different people on different days of the week.

FAMILY

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS

FRIENDS I'D LIKE TO SEE BECOME CHRISTIANS

SPIRITUAL LEADERS

GOVERNMENT LEADERS

OTHERS

TEACHING TIP:

This entire section on Quiet Time should take about 30 minutes. From here up to “Purpose of a Quiet Time” should be about 5 minutes.

A DAILY QUIET TIME WITH GOD THROUGH PRAYER AND BIBLE READING

A daily quiet time with God combines the first two daily habits of the Christian life: daily Bible reading and daily prayer. Let’s go back to a verse we looked at earlier for these habits, James 1:25. It says this:

But the man who looks into the perfect mirror of God’s law, the law of liberty (or freedom), and makes a habit (there’s that word) of so doing, is not the man who sees and forgets. He puts that law into practice and he wins true happiness.

JAMES 1:25 (PHILLIPS)

Definition of a Quiet Time

A quiet time is a daily time I set aside to be alone with God to get to know him through the Bible and prayer.

Now, I want us to look at the importance of a quiet time, the purpose of a quiet time, and how to have a quiet time, and then even the problems that you’re going to deal with in a daily quiet time. First, let’s look at the importance.

The Importance of a Daily Quiet Time

Your time alone with God should be the top priority in your schedule for five reasons:

1. We were **CREATED** to have fellowship with God.

It's the reason you exist. If you're not having daily fellowship with God, you are missing the first purpose of your life. The Bible tells us in Genesis 1:27:

So God created mankind in his own image.

GENESIS 1:27 (NIV)

The Bible starts with man having fellowship with God, and in the end of the Bible—Revelation, the last book in the Bible—Revelation 3:20, Jesus is still talking about this purpose.

“Look! I have been standing at the door, and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with me.”

REVELATION 3:20 (TLB)

This is the first purpose of your life. You were created to have fellowship with God.

2. Jesus **DIED** to make a relationship with God possible.

Now, why would Jesus die on a cross, and then you ignore the very thing he made possible? The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:9:

God will surely do this for you, for he always does just what he says, and he is the one who invited you into this wonderful friendship with his Son, even Christ our Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:9 (TLB)

You're invited into friendship with God. Jesus died to make that possible.

3. Personal time alone with God was Jesus' **SOURCE**
OF STRENGTH.

The Bible tells us in Luke 5:16:

Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

LUKE 5:16 (NIV)

If Jesus knew his personal need for constant communication with God and he was the Son of God, how much more do you and I need that constant, everyday time where we're together with the Lord, telling him how much we love him?

See also Mark 1:35 and Luke 22:39.

4. Every person who has been effective in **SERVICE** for God
 developed this habit.

Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Paul, etc.

All throughout Scripture, from the Bible beginning with Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Daniel, and Paul, all the way to all the great saints throughout 2,000 years of Christian history, the one common denominator you could find in every person that's greatly used by God is this: They spend time alone with God on a daily basis.

5. You cannot be a **HEALTHY** Christian without it!

You just can't—any more than you could be physically healthy without ever eating. The Bible says:

"People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

MATTHEW 4:4 (NLT)

That's Jesus talking. If you did not eat physical food, you would dry up and die from starvation, and if you don't eat spiritual soul food on a daily basis, your life will be stunted and it will shrivel and die.

*I have treasured the words of His mouth more than
my necessary food.*

JOB 23:12 (NASB)

It's how we keep our lives clean. It's how we stay on course. David says in Psalm 119:9:

*How can a young man cleanse his way? By living
according to your word.*

PSALM 119:9 (NKJV, NIV)

If you don't shower each day, you start to stink. If you don't spend time with God each day, your attitudes start to stink. You may not notice it, but everyone around you sure does!

TEACHING TIP:

Purpose of a Quiet Time should take about 5 minutes.

The Purpose of a Daily Quiet Time

Your time alone with God has four main purposes:

There are four primary purposes of a quiet time: to give devotion to God, to get direction from God, to gain delight in God, and to grow daily like God. Let's look at these. First, the first purpose of a quiet time is:

1. To give **DEVOTION** to God.

The Bible says in Psalm 29:2:

*Give to the LORD the glory his name deserves.
Worship the LORD in his holy splendor.*

PSALM 29:2 (GW)

Second Chronicles 31:21 says this:

He [Hezekiah] was successful, because everything he did for the Temple or in observance of the Law, he did in a spirit of complete loyalty and devotion to his God.

2 CHRONICLES 31:21 (GNT)

Now, the Bible tells us very clearly that God deserves our devotion, but more than that, God desires our devotion.



**GOD DESERVES OUR
DEVOTION!**

REVELATION 4:11

**GOD DESIRES OUR
DEVOTION!**

JOHN 4:23



By the way, if you ever go to church, and you walk out and say, “You know, I didn’t get anything out of that today,” well, sorry—it wasn’t for you. The purpose of worship is for God. It’s to give devotion to God. There will be times when you sit down and you read the Bible and you pray, and you’ll walk away thinking, “I didn’t get anything out of that.” Well, that’s not the first purpose of it. The first purpose is to give, not to get. To give devotion to God. That’s not the only purpose, but it’s the first purpose. We worship God by giving him our attention. By giving him our love. By giving him our devotion. Now, do we get anything out of it? Yes, we do.

2. To get **DIRECTION** from God.

I give devotion to God, and I also get direction from God when I spend time with him. The Bible tells us this:

*Show me the path where I should go, O Lord;
point out the right road for me to walk. Lead
me; teach me.*

PSALM 25:4-5 (TLB)

What I've discovered is that the Bible is not a map. There's no map in here where it's going to show you your life from beginning to end, because if God showed you everything you are going to do in your life, it'd scare you to death. Believe me, you don't want to know your future. That probably surprises you. You say, "Oh, I'd love to know my future." No, you don't want to know it. You wouldn't have to trust God. You would be frightened by some; you would become prideful by other things. You don't want to know your future.

So God doesn't give us a map; he gives us a scroll that he unrolls a little bit and you can see that much, and you do that, and then he unrolls a little bit more and you do that; he unrolls a little bit and you do that. It is "Give us this day our daily bread," and we get daily direction from God.

There are a couple things you want to do in your quiet time.

TWO THINGS TO DO IN A QUIET TIME

1. Consider your way.

*Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways
be established.*

PROVERBS 4:26 (KJV)

First, consider your way. You look at your life and you say, "Lord, what's out of whack in my life? What's not right in my life? What do I need to be doing in my life?" If you're not having a daily quiet time, you're going into life without a plan. Taking 10, 15 minutes every day just to sit before God will make all the other time expand.

2. Commit your day.

Psalm 37:5—this would be a verse that I highly recommend you memorize. It says this:

*Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him to help
you do it, and he will.*

PSALM 37:5 (TLB)

You consider your way. “Lord, help me to look at what matters most and get that done, and not worry about the other stuff,” and then you commit your day.

Are you somebody who always feels like you never have enough time to get everything done? Well then, you’re not doing these two things.

You’re not considering your way and committing your day. Because if you’ll do those two things, you have just enough time to do God’s will. No more and no less. God doesn’t give you more to do than he gives you the time to do it, so if you don’t have enough time to get everything done, it means one of two things—either A, you’re trying to do something God never intended you to do, or B, you’re doing it in the wrong way. The antidote to both of those is to consider your way and to commit your day.

So, the second reason is to get direction from God. I give devotion; I get direction. There’s a third purpose of a quiet time:

3. To gain **DELIGHT** in God.

You’ll be happier if you’ll spend time with God. You’ll be more joyful. Your mood will improve. You will gain delight in God. Here’s how the Bible says it—Psalm 37:4:

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

PSALM 37:4 (KJV)

You delight in the Lord, and God delights in you. You delight in the Lord; he shall give you the desires of your heart. What do you need more of? Instead of focusing on what you need more of, why don’t you focus on God? Delight in the Lord; learn to love God. I love what Psalm 16:11 says. David said,

Your [God’s] presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever.

PSALM 16:11 (GNT)

If you’re going through a tough time right now, you’re not feeling very happy, you’re not feeling very joyful, you’re not feeling very positive, the antidote is real simple: Get in the presence of God.

FACT:

The better I get to know Christ, the more **I LOVE HIM**.

When people say, "I just don't love Jesus enough," that's not the problem. The problem is you don't really know him. Because if you knew him fully, you couldn't help but love him.

Put a huge star by this next statement.

The objective of your quiet time is not to study about Christ, but to actually spend time with him!

A quiet time is not a study time; it's a relationship time.

That brings us to the fourth purpose of a quiet time. To give devotion to God. To get direction from God. To gain delight in God, and:

4. To grow **MORE** like Christ.

You're going to become like whoever you spend the most time with. You'll pick up their pet phrases and start to enjoy what they enjoy. Have you noticed that when a couple has been married for 50 or 60 years, they actually start to look like each other? A woman who has a pet poodle for 10 years has the same haircut as the poodle!

If you want to become like Jesus, you have to spend the most time with him. The Bible says this in 2 Peter 1:3-4:

Jesus has the power of God, by which he has given us everything we need to live and to serve God. We have these things because we know him . . . With these gifts you can share in God's nature.

2 PETER 1:3-4 (NCV)

Look at that. As you know him better and better, he will give you, through his great power, everything you need for living a truly good life. You want to live the good life? Here's how you do it: Spend time with God. The promise to save us and to give us his character. He gives us his own character. We grow more like him. You can always tell people who have been spending a lot of time with Jesus because they're like Jesus.

In fact, the Bible says this about the disciples in Acts chapter 4:

When the Council saw the boldness of Peter and John . . . they were amazed and realized what being with Jesus had done for them!

ACTS 4:13 (TLB)

TEACHING TIP:

You might consider having someone share a testimony here, live or on video, of how they found time for a quiet time. Possibly a mom with preschoolers who could encourage other moms.

TEACHING TIP:

How to begin a quiet time should take about 10 minutes.

How to Begin a Daily Quiet Time

Let me give you some very practical steps now to setting up this extremely important habit to your Christian life.

These steps take advantage of the ways that you and I develop habits, the ways that we can establish new habits.

First, you've got to select the specific time, then you've got to get a special place, then you've got to get the right resources, and you've got to have the right attitude. When you do those things, you have a great chance of developing a habit that sticks. If you've ever tried to start the habit of a quiet time but haven't been able to keep it going, these steps will help you. Let's take these in order.

Select a specific time.

When is the best time to have a quiet time? Well, write this down.

- The best time is when you are **AT YOUR BEST**.

Now, some people are morning people and some people are night people. Raise your hand if you're a morning person . . . if you're a night person. Did you notice how morning people almost always marry night people?

If you're a morning person, you certainly ought to have your quiet time in the morning. If you're a night person, you might consider having your quiet time later in the day, but whatever the time is, you need to write this down.

- Whatever time you set, **BE CONSISTENT**.

Do it at the same time every day. I want to highly recommend that you have your quiet time in the morning. I want to recommend that you have it first thing when you get out of bed—even if you're a night person, if you can—for a number of reasons. First, every character in the Bible had their quiet time in the morning. Every single one of them. I greet the morning with the Lord. Jesus—it was his custom to get up early in the morning and go out and pray.

You know, Hudson Taylor compared it to playing a symphony. If your life is a symphony, you tune up the instrument before you play the orchestra piece, not afterward. I compare it to putting on the armor of God. The Bible says that when I study Scripture, I put on the whole armor of God. Why would I put on the whole armor of God right before I go to bed? That doesn't make sense. It's best to tune up before you start your day. It's best to put on the whole armor of God before you start your day. I don't know about you, but I've found in my own case, if I don't have it in the morning, I usually don't get it done because the moment I hit the ground, I run at high RPMs, and you know, things get pushed out. It's amazing how many distractions will come during the middle of the day, so I encourage you to do it right after you get out of bed.

You're more rested. Your mind is cleared. Doctors tell us that the most important meal of the day is breakfast. I would say the same thing is true, too, spiritually.

Now, how long should my quiet time be?

HOW LONG SHOULD A QUIET TIME BE?

Well, notice there in your notes I've given you three guidelines.

A PLAN TO GET YOU STARTED

1. Start with 15 minutes and let it grow.

That's a good start. Just say, "Lord, I'm going to spend 15 minutes with you every day." If you say, "I want to spend an hour with God every day," you won't be consistent in that, and then you'll give up. So start with 15 minutes a day. Anybody can set up 15 minutes a day where you sit down, read the Bible, and then talk to God about it.

2. Don't watch the clock!

Nothing will kill your quiet time faster than watching the clock like, "Oh, only eight more minutes. Oh, only five more minutes. Oh, two more minutes. Ten, nine, eight." You will get nothing out of it. If you're watching the clock, you may as well not even have it because you're not focusing on God; you're focusing on the clock.

3. Emphasize quality, not quantity!

Start reading the Scriptures and read until God speaks to you, and then stop. Stop at a verse that he speaks to you about, and then just think about that. It's not important how many times you go through the Bible; it's how much it gets into you. I remember when I was in college, I was on a plan to read through the entire Bible every 13 weeks. It was like, "Zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom." I was just reading through it so I could mark it off, and I think I read through the Bible nine or 10 times in a row just like that, and then I realized it's not important how much I go through the Bible. What's important is how much it gets into my life.

So you start with a specific time, select a specific time, and make that your daily quiet time. Number two, next thing you want to do is

Choose a special place.

The Bible tells us in Luke 22:39:

Jesus left the city and went, as he usually did, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples went with him.

LUKE 22:39 (GNT)

Circle the phrase “as he usually did.”

Jesus not only had a specific time that he prayed every day, he had a specific place. His place was the Mount of Olives. He loved to go to the Mount of Olives, specifically Gethsemane. Later, on the night when he was betrayed, that’s where he went back to. He went back to his quiet time spot. It was his favorite place. It says, “As it was his custom.”

So you need to choose a place. Now, how does it become special? By meeting with God there every day. It may be a chair in your backyard that you meet with God every day. You may drive to a park and meet with God. I know a number of men in our church who drive to work every day, and then sit in their car in the parking lot for 15 minutes prior to going in. Their car has become their sanctuary. It doesn’t really matter. It will become special to you when you keep meeting God there. When I was in college, one year I got up every morning at 5 a.m., and went out to the baseball field at the college I was going to, and I had a prayer partner. We would get on our knees, and we would pray in the dugout from 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. Two things about having a quiet time that early: I would never close my eyes, and I prayed aloud.

By doing that, I never fell asleep. You can’t fall asleep while your eyes are open and you’re praying aloud.

The most important factor in your place is in the next verse.



THE IMPORTANT FACTOR



VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING, WHILE IT WAS STILL DARK, JESUS GOT UP, LEFT THE HOUSE AND WENT OFF TO A SOLITARY PLACE, WHERE HE PRAYED.

MARK 1:35 (NIV)

Circle “A solitary place.” It needs to be a place where you won’t be distracted. That place will become more and more special to you as you spend time with God there. So you get up in the morning, sometimes your eyes are a little blurry, so the main thing is get fully awake. Throw some water on your face. Get a Starbucks, whatever you need to do.

Same time, same place—that’s what begins to establish a habit that will stick.

Gather the resources you’ll need.

Then after you’ve chosen a special place, you want to gather the resources that you’re going to need for your quiet time. Put them in a place where you can easily find them each day, or you’ll spend the time you’ve given to your devotions just looking for where you left your Bible.

- A Bible with readable print

A Bible—get one with readable print. Some of you have small Bibles that you carry in your pocket, or in your purse, and those are fine, but I wouldn’t recommend you use a Bible with small print for your quiet time. As I said, in the morning, you’re not reading real clearly. Your eyes are a little blurry. Get something with readable print, big print, something that you can underline. You can use YouVersion on your tablet or phone if that works for you.

- A notebook to write down what the Lord speaks to you about and to keep your prayer list

Get a notebook that you can write down what the Lord speaks to you, and write down the date. Write down the place, and then write down what the Lord says to you.

Over time, those journals will become very, very precious to you. You can even pass them on to future generations, and that's a heritage.

- A song book if you want to sing

If you don't want to sing yourself, you can gather some favorite Christian music to listen to. You might put together a playlist for your quiet time.

Then the fourth thing you're going to need, is:

Begin with the right attitude.

There are three attitudes that you're going to need.

REVERENCE

The Bible says, Psalm 46:10:

"Be still, and know that I am God."

PSALM 46:10 (NIV)

In other words, don't rush into God's presence.

"Hi, Lord. I'm in a hurry. Here I am." It's not like going to a fast-food line.

"God, I need an order of encouragement and two answers to prayer, and I'll be at the pickup window in 30 seconds." No. You have to come in reverence.

"Be still, and know that I am God."

EXPECTANCY

The Bible says this:

Open my eyes to see wonderful things in your Word.

PSALM 119:18 (TLB)

That's a good verse to memorize so you can pray it out at the beginning of your quiet time. "Father, open my eyes and let me see wonderful things in your Word. I expect you to speak to me."

OBEDIENCE

Jesus said it like this, John 7:17:

"Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own."

JOHN 7:17 (NLT)

If I am willing to do the will of God, God will show me the will of God.

Let me say this to you who are having a hard time with guidance. You can't miss God's will if you're sincerely listening to God. It's not like God's playing games with you. You begin with a willingness to do it. God says, "Anyone who's willing to do my will, I will reveal myself to them."

Now, the fifth thing you're going to need is

Follow a simple plan.

You get a special place, you get a specific time, gather the resources, you get the right attitudes, and then you need a simple plan. Now, in your class notes, I've included a simple plan to get you started in quiet time. I have used this plan for over—well, maybe 40 years. Here's how it works.

15 MINUTES WITH GOD

A PLAN TO GET YOU STARTED

1. **RELAX** 1 minute

Be still and quiet! Slow down! Prepare your heart. Take a few deep breaths and wait on God.

I sit down, I take a deep breath, I be quiet, I slow down, I prepare my heart, and I take a few deep breaths, and I just wait on God. I don't run into the presence of God and just start talking. I just be quiet. Sometimes I'll just sit there and I'll say, "Lord, is there anything you want to say to me even before I start?" I just sit and be quiet. That's why they call it the quiet time, by the way.

Take in a deep breath with me—now let it out. It's amazing how much you can relax in just a few moments.

Then after I've been quiet for about a minute, the second thing I do after I relax is

2. **READ** 4 minutes

Read a section of Scripture. Maybe four minutes, five minutes. The key thing is read a section of God's Word. Read a book at a time, and you should read until God speaks to you. If God speaks to you in a couple verses, don't blow past it. It's more important to get a couple of verses down than it is to feel like you've covered a whole chapter. Then the next day you begin reading where you left off the day before. You read until you feel God has told you something, and then you stop. And then you do the third thing.

See the section on how to "Read God's Word," page 17.
Begin reading where you left off the day before. Read until you feel God has told you something. Then stop and think about it.

3. REFLECT 4 minutes

See the section on how to “Meditate on God’s Word,” page 25.

You may use A.P.P.L.I.C.A.T.I.O.N.S. Questions (see page 27) or any of the 6 methods of meditation. Think about what the passage means to your life. Write down your thoughts. Part of reflecting is memorizing verses that speak to you in a special way. See the section on how to “Memorize God’s Word,” page 21.

You reflect on the section of Scripture you’ve just read.

How do you do that? All those ways we talked about in meditating: Picture it, pronounce it, probe it, paraphrase it, personalize it. All of those six ways we talked about in meditating on the Word of God. You might want to use the APPLICATIONS Questions. Those 12 questions, or any of the methods that we talked about in the previous section. You think seriously about the passage. You mull over and over. What does this mean to me? What am I going to do about it? Now, part of reflecting is memorizing. Memorizing a verse that speaks to you in a special way. You can go back to the section on how to memorize God’s Word, and do it there.

Then the next part of the quiet time is what I call recording.

4. RECORD 2 minutes

See the section on how to “Apply God’s Word,” page 27.

Write out a personal application statement that is practical, passable, and measurable. “Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips.”

This is where you write down what you’re going to do about what you’ve just read. So, you can review the section on how to apply God’s Word on this. We’ve talked about this already. Write down a personal application statement that’s personal, practical, possible, and provable or measurable. Remember, writing things down causes you to disentangle your thoughts. Thoughts disentangle themselves when they pass through the lips and the fingertips.

Finally, you want to

5. **REQUEST** 4 minutes

See the section on “Prayer Guides,” pages 39–43.

Conclude your quiet time by talking to God about what he has shown you and making your requests from your prayer lists.

Request—this is your prayer time. You make your request, and you conclude your quiet time by talking to God about what he’s shown you.

You say, “Well I can’t do that in 15 minutes.” Yeah, you can, and the neat thing about it is if you’ll do that, your quiet time will start expanding. If you relax, then you read, then you think about it, you reflect on it, then you record, and then you request, that’s how you do it. Friends, it’s not rocket science, but it’ll change your life.

Now flip the page, and let me talk to you a little bit about the most common problems that people have in having a daily quiet time and being consistent.

TEACHING TIP:

How to overcome problems through the end of this section should take about 10 minutes.

How to Overcome the Problems with Your Quiet Time

I have faced every one of these over, and over, and over, and over my entire life. The problems do not go away. So you know how to deal with them. The first problem is what I call:

PROBLEM OF DISCIPLINE: The first problem in establishing a quiet time that you will face the moment you wake each morning is, “Am I going to get out of bed?” *We call that the Battle of the Blankets.*

That’s the question of when you wake up in the morning, the question is,

“Am I going to get out of bed and go have a quiet time, or am I going to stay in bed and sleep some more?” The Battle of the Blankets. Your first problem in establishing quiet time will be the moment you wake up. Satan will always exaggerate how tired you are. And when you’ve got Satan and your flesh teaming up, that’s a potent combination to keep you from having a quiet time. So you’ve got to have a desire.

Here’s some suggestions on how to defeat the Battle of the Blankets, or the discipline of getting out of bed every day and having a quiet time. The suggestions in this section are simple things that we all already know—yet you’ll find that they just might be the key to your winning the battle to establish the habit of a daily time with God.

Here’s the number one thing you need to do.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Go to bed on time.

Or better yet, go to bed earlier. You have to decide whether what you’re watching at night is more important than reading the Bible. Because if you stay up to watch late-night TV, it’s going to make you too tired to have your quiet time the next day. So you have to ask yourself, “Is the comedian I’m watching on television right now helping me more than the time I’m going to spend with God tomorrow?” No—the answer is no. So you need to go to bed earlier.

- Get up immediately.

Don’t lay around in bed. The longer you stay in bed, the more likely you’re going to fall back to sleep. I’ve found that the battle for the quiet time is won or lost in the first few seconds. If you wait, you’re going to be defeated. I know a well-known Christian who once asked, “Do you pray about getting up in the morning to have a quiet time?” He said, “No, I don’t pray about it. I just get up.” I can’t tell you how many times that I’ve laid in bed, trying to have a quiet time in bed and immediately fallen asleep. I wake up 30 minutes later. My Bible’s on my chest. I think, “Man that’s really spiritual,” but you don’t get the Bible by osmosis, all right?

Then you start making excuses. “Lord, I’m sorry. I didn’t get to spend time with you today because something came up.” And God says, “Yeah, I know I saw it. It was big and white, it’s called a sheet.”

- Be aware of quiet time robbers.

What are the quiet-time robbers? They're the things that rob you, and the number one robber, as I said, is late-night television the night before.

- Fall asleep thinking spiritual thoughts.

That's a good suggestion. Dawson Trotman used to have a phrase. He said, "First word, last word, his Word." In other words, the last thing he would do as he was going to sleep at night was say, "Lord, I'll see you in the morning," and he'd quote a Bible verse.

So he goes to sleep thinking a spiritual thought. Thinking, "Lord, tomorrow morning, the first thing I'm going to see is you." Fall asleep thinking spiritual thoughts.

These are all suggestions that'll help you with the problem of discipline and help you to be more consistent. The reason why most people are not consistent at quiet time is they've never done it every day for 40 days. It takes about six weeks to develop a habit. If you'll do a quiet time every day for six weeks, and not miss it, you will begin to establish that pattern in your life.

Here's a second problem that you'll face:

PROBLEM OF DISTRACTIONS: Satan will try to use anything to get your mind to wander during a quiet time.

Satan will use anything he can to get your mind to wander during a quiet time. So, here are some of my suggestions.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Get out of bed.

One of them I already mentioned. That is get out of bed. Don't try to have a quiet time in bed. I know that I used to try this in college, and an hour later I'd wake up and forgotten that I was doing anything.

- Get thoroughly awake.
- Read and pray aloud.
- Walk during your prayer time.

Those of us who have ADD, we have a hard time sitting still. So there's nothing that says you can't walk and pray at the same time. You will not go to sleep while you're walking.

- Keep a notepad nearby.

One of the things that'll happen is while you're having a quiet time, Satan is going to remind you of all the things you need to do.

What do you do when you're praying and you think of something you can't forget? Here's what you do. You stop your prayer, you keep a notepad nearby, you write down what you need to do, and then you go back. You've just taken that distraction away from Satan. There's nothing that says you can't pause to write something down. A lot of times I'll be praying, and all of a sudden I remember, "Oh I can't forget that." If I keep that in the back of my mind, I'm under tension the whole time. Just stop in the middle of your prayer. Say, "Excuse me, Lord; I need to write something down." Then go back and pray. Keep a notepad nearby. That'll be very, very helpful. Satan will be glad to remind you of all the things you need to do while you're having your quiet time, particularly while you're praying.

Then along comes the third problem of the quiet time, which I call . . .

PROBLEM OF DRYNESS: Sometimes you will feel like you're not getting anything out of your quiet time. *We call that The Battle of the Blahs.*

Sometimes that can go for weeks, and I've actually had it in my lifetime when it went for months. A couple months, and there was a spiritual dryness. I was literally going through the desert spiritually.

Here is the secret to facing a time of spiritual dryness.

Never judge your quiet time by your **FEELINGS**.

Feelings lie. They lie to you all the time. You can get feelings from eating a bad pizza the night before.

You could get feelings from watching some movie that went under your subconscious, but don't trust your feelings for whether you're getting anything out of God's Word or not. I've found that if I wait to have a quiet time until I feel like it, the Devil will make sure I never feel like it.

It's also good to be aware of some common causes of spiritual dryness.

Possible Causes of Spiritual Dryness:

- Your physical condition

Shakespeare once said it's hard to be a philosopher with a toothache. If you're hungry, or you're tired, or you're catching a cold, or you're sick, you know you're not going to be very alert. Maybe you're just tired.

- Disobedience to the Word of God

Why would God teach you 15 more new things if you haven't acted on the things he's already told you?

So, God doesn't show you new things from his Word. There's no way God's going to say, "I'm going to give you a lot of fresh insights because you didn't practice what you did yesterday." So you need to say, if you're spiritually dry, "Is there something I need to confess? Is there something that I know I need to be doing?" What are you pretending not to know in your life?

- Rushing your quiet time

I only have 30 seconds, Lord—so give me what I need, fast!

- Getting in a rut

That six-point outline I gave you, I don't use it all the time anymore, but I've been having a quiet time for decades now and I just—sometimes I spend the whole time memorizing Scripture. Sometimes I spend it reading. Sometimes I spend it being quiet, so you can vary your quiet time to get out of dry spells.

Try something new. Shake it up. Do something different. Do it in a new place. Do it in a new format. Then another thing that will cause you to be dry spiritually, is

- Not sharing insights with others

If you don't give out what God is giving you, then you start stagnating spiritually. You know, in the nation of Israel there are two lakes. There's the Sea of Galilee in the north, and the Dead Sea in the south. The Sea of

Galilee is alive. It's vibrant. They still fish out of it. The Dead Sea literally is dead. Nothing is alive in it. What makes the Sea of Galilee alive, and what makes the Dead Sea dead? The Sea of Galilee receives water off the mountains that surround it, and the Golan Heights, they all drain into the Sea of Galilee, but the Sea of Galilee also gives out.

The water flows out of the Sea of Galilee, which becomes the Jordan River and it goes south. The Dead Sea only takes in. It does not give out. If you only take in, you're going to get bigger, and bigger, and bigger—spiritually so fat until finally they're just going to have to roll you down the aisle, which is by the way, where we get the term "holy roller." You need to learn to give out. You need to learn to give away.

Now there's one more problem, and that is

PROBLEM OF DILIGENCE: Your greatest problem will be your struggle to stay consistent. "I find Satan fights nothing harder than my quiet time."

Your greatest struggle will be the struggle to stay consistent. I'm going to tell you personally as a pastor, and having walked with the Lord for over 50 years, that I find Satan fights nothing harder in my life than my daily quiet time. He doesn't care what I do, preach great sermons, meet world leaders, be kind to the sick, and the poor, and help all kinds of people, as long as I miss the number one purpose of my life: daily time, daily devotion with God. Satan is going to fight it. How do you deal with the problem of being consistent? The problem of diligence?

SUGGESTIONS:

- Make a covenant or vow to God.

Make a vow to God and say, "God, I am going to spend 15 minutes a day, and I will not go to bed at night until I spend 15 minutes with you." Make a vow. Make a covenant and keep that covenant the rest of your life.

- Schedule it on your daily calendar.

You could also set an alarm on your phone. That reminds you to go spend time with God. Be a good thing to do. Set it up on your phone, or on your iPad, or whatever.

- Be prepared for Satan's excuses.

Satan knows that if he can keep you out of God's Word, he's got you defeated. Dropping your quiet time is usually the first step in backsliding into major sin. So, you realize that the moment you wake up in the morning, Satan is scheming to keep you out of God's Word. If you get up in the morning, and you don't face Satan head-on, it means you're going the same direction as he is.

- Leave your Bible open at night to the passage for the next day.

Leave it open, just on your nightstand or wherever, so when you get up, when you see the Bible open you go, "Oh"—it's just a reminder to sit down and start there.

WHAT IF I MISS A DAY?

This is a lifetime habit, so of course you'll miss a day from time to time.

Don't GET ON A GUILT TRIP.

When the Devil comes to you and says, "You didn't have your quiet time today," you say to him, "Well, you didn't either." So don't get on a guilt trip. You're going to miss it; when he tries to condemn you, remember there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Don't BECOME LEGALISTIC.

You live by grace. You don't give yourself punishments for not having a quiet time. "I missed my quiet time, so I have to put 10 dollars for missions in the 'missed my quiet time jar.'" It doesn't work; because your quiet time is a relationship, it can't be run by rules.

Don't **GIVE UP** .

What happens when you miss a meal? Well, you don't say, "Oh, I'm so inconsistent. I'm going to give up eating." No.

If you miss a meal, you just make up for it by eating a little more the next time. You do the same thing with quiet time. Most important of all, don't give up. Don't give up. You just keep on keeping on.

Write this down.

It takes **THREE** weeks for you to become familiar with a new task. Then it takes another **THREE** weeks before it becomes a comfortable habit.

So you need to have a quiet time every day, basically for 42 days before it's going to become an ingrained habit in your life. That's why we do so many of these 40-day campaigns. The Bible says this, Galatians 6:9.

Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up.

GALATIANS 6:9 (TLB)

I want to conclude this session on how to have a quiet time with a prayer of commitment. It's there on your notes, so I want you to look at your notes, and I want you to keep your eyes open. As I read this prayer, I want to encourage you to read it with me and make it your prayer as we make a vow of commitment to have a daily quiet time—that's a habit of prayer and habit of Bible reading. Let's bow our heads. And as I read this, you just read it along with me and make it your prayer.



PRAYER OF COMMITMENT



Father,

I realize that I was created to have fellowship with you. Thank you for making this privilege possible through Jesus' death. I know that daily fellowship with you is to be the most important thing in my life. I now want to commit myself to spending at least some time every day with you in a quiet time of Bible reading and prayer. I'm trusting in your strength to help me be consistent.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

TEACHING TIP:

The entire section on Tithing should take about 35 minutes. From here through “Benefits of Giving” should take about 10 minutes.

Now, we said that there are four habits—two of them that you do daily, daily time alone with God reading his Word and daily time alone with God praying, talking back to him. Now we’re going to look at two habits that we do at least weekly.

Habit number three is the habit of tithing or giving back to God.

HABIT THREE

Tithing

GIVING BACK TO GOD

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 14:23:

*The purpose of tithing is to teach you always
to put God first in your lives.*

DEUTERONOMY 14:23 (TLB)

You see, God doesn't need my money. What he wants is what it represents. If I give God the first part of my money, it shows that he's first place in my life. Now, you may not realize this, but the Bible is a book about giving. In fact, the Bible says more about giving than it does about a lot of other things. Jesus talked more about money than he did about heaven or about hell. Did you know that? In fact, over half of Jesus' parables have to do with the issue of money.

Why is this? We spend most of our lives dealing with money: how to get it, how to save it, how to spend it, how to invest it, how to keep others from getting it. Money dominates our lives. Did you know that there are more promises in the Bible about giving than any other subject? I want to tell you personally that this habit, the habit of tithing—and more specifically, the habit of learning to be generous—has brought more personal blessings in my life than any other habit in my Christian life. I've learned more, I've experienced more, and I've been blessed more from this one habit—putting God first in my money—than in any other area.

Now, what I want us to do as we start this session is talk about how giving reveals my spiritual maturity.

HOW MY GIVING REVEALS MY SPIRITUAL MATURITY

The Bible says this:

Since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness . . . see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:7 (NIV)

Circle that phrase: "the grace of giving." Now, as I said, the Bible is a book about giving. You may not realize this, but let me show you a little comparison of words. We know that believing is important in the Christian life, but the Bible uses the word *believe* only 272 times. We know that praying is important, but the Bible only uses the word *pray* 371 times in the

Bible—371 times. We know that love is important in the Christian life, but the Bible uses the word *love* only 714 times in the Bible.

On the other hand, the word *give* is used 2,162 times. God is a giver, and God wants us to become like him. God is generous. You cannot become like Jesus until you learn to be generous. The Bible tells us many, many things about the advantages of being a generous person. Let's start by why God wants me to give.

Why God Wants Me to Give: Seven Benefits of Tithing

There are seven amazing benefits to your life when you learn to be a giver. Write these down.

1. Giving makes me **MORE LIKE GOD**.

God is a giver, and if you're going to be like him, you've got to learn to be generous. The most famous verse in the Bible is John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son."

JOHN 3:16 (NIV)

Circle the word "love" and circle the word "gave" and draw a line between them.

You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. You may say you love God, but if you don't give, you don't love him. You may say you love others, but if you don't give, you don't love them. Loving and giving go together. That's why Christians are the most generous people in the world, bar none. Christian charities outnumber every other charity put together because Christians are generous because they have been taught by God to be like him.

2. Giving draws me **CLOSER TO GOD**.

Jesus said it like this:

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

MATTHEW 6:21 (NIV)

In other words, wherever I put my money shows my heart. It shows my priorities. It shows what I value. If I put my money into expensive cars, it shows where my value is: I value expensive cars. If I put my money into clothes, it shows what I value most: I value clothes. If I put my money into art or a collection, I collect guitars or I collect stamps or anything, it shows what I value. Wherever you put your money shows what you value most.

If you want Jesus to be your number one value, that's where you put your money. Where do you want your heart to be? That's where you ought to invest. You see, if you don't invest in Microsoft, you couldn't care less about Microsoft stock. If you don't invest in McDonald's, you couldn't care less about McDonald's. If you want to start caring about McDonald's or Microsoft, all you need to do is buy some stock. All of a sudden you're going to be very, very concerned about whether they're profitable or not. Where your treasure is, Jesus said, your heart is. You need to figure out where you want your heart to be and you put the most money into that.

I decided a long time ago I want Jesus to be where my heart is, and I put most of my money in that direction.

3. Giving is the antidote to **MATERIALISM**.

Now what is materialism? We all know that we live in a materialistic world, but what is materialism? Materialism is summed up in one word: get. Get, get, get, get, get. Get all you can, can all you get, sit on the can, and spoil the rest. Materialism is it's all about me. Every advertisement that you see is geared to stroke and feed your materialism.

Now here's what the Bible says about materialism. In 1 Timothy 6:17 it says this:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way . . . they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19 (NIV)

Now let me stop right there. It says, “Command those who are rich not to put their hope in wealth.” Who is rich? If you live in America you’re in that category—you’re rich. Most of the world would love to have your problems. Just by living in America, you’re in the top 1% of the richest people globally.

We don’t realize how little most of the world has. All of us, even the poorest of the poor in America, are rich by the world’s standards. Most of the world would love to be poor in America because they’d be far richer than they are now. He’s talking to us. “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” Circle that phrase “everything for our enjoyment.” Everything you have in life, God gave you for your enjoyment. God wants you to enjoy life, not endure it.

Then he says, “Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” We are commanded by God to be generous. We are commanded to be willing to share. You see, we make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

Why does God want me to be a giver? Why does God want me to be generous? It makes me more like God. It draws me closer to God. It breaks the grip of materialism in my life. Number four:

4. Giving strengthens **MY FAITH**.

You see, faith is like a muscle, and God uses finances to test your faith. Have you figured that one out yet? Yeah, when you have more needs than you have money to meet, this is a test. In fact, the Bible says money management is the acid test of your faith. There’s so many Scriptures I could go over about this, but here’s just one—Proverbs 3:5, 9.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; . . . (Then down in verse 9) Honor the LORD by giving him the first part (circle “first part”—not leftovers, but the first part) of all your income, (here’s the promise) and he will fill your barns.

PROVERBS 3:5, 9 (NIV/THE MESSAGE)

God says the way we prove our trust in him and the way we demonstrate our faith is by giving the first part of our income back to God. Jesus said it like this is Luke 6:38:

“Give, and it will be given to you. . . . For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

LUKE 6:38 (NIV)

This is the law of sowing and reaping.

This is true in every area of life. If you give out criticism, you’re going to get back criticism. If you give out compliments, you’re going to get back compliments. If you give out gratitude, you’re going to get back gratitude. If you give out praise, you’re going to get back praise. It’s true of money, too. Give out money, you’re going to get back money. Whatever you need more of, you give it away.

You need more time? Give your time away. God will reimburse you. You need more money? Give it away. God will reimburse you. Jesus said, “Give and it will be given to you.” Giving tests my faith. It actually strengthens my faith, and it tests my faith.

5. Giving is an investment in **ETERNITY**.

We’re not going to live forever here on Earth. We only get 80 years, maybe at the most 100. This life is preparation for the next. The Bible says how you use your time, how you use your money now is actually an investment for eternity. Did you know that you can actually bank in heaven? The Bible says this, 1 Timothy 6:18–19:

Tell them to . . . give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven—it is the only safe investment for eternity!

1 TIMOTHY 6:18–19 (TLB)

Now look at that. On your notes I want you to circle the phrase “for themselves.” By doing this, what’s that? By being generous with my money, by giving my money away, by doing this, they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven. This is not storing up for God. The Bible says you can actually store up for yourself in heaven. It is the only safe investment for eternity. You’ve heard people say, “You can’t take it with you.” Well, that’s true, but you can send it on ahead. How do you send it on ahead? By investing in people that are going there.

We live in America, and this is one of the most affluent countries in the world, and yet many people spend everything they’ve got on themselves. The Bible says that every time you give, God treats that as an eternal investment. He treats it, he stores it up in heaven for you. No one is ever honored for what they got in life. They’re only honored for what they give away.

6. Giving blesses me **IN RETURN**.

In fact, the more you give, the more you are blessed. I wish I could go through the promises. As I’ve said, there are more promises in the Bible about giving than any other subject in the Bible. God says, “I want my children to learn to be like me, not stingy.” God says, “I want you to give.” Here’s just one promise:

A generous man will himself be blessed.

PROVERBS 22:9 (NIV84)

Look at the verse right underneath it:

A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

PROVERBS 11:25 (NIV)

I said there’s so many promises on this.

7. Giving **MAKES ME HAPPY** .

The Bible says giving is the way; it's the pathway to happiness. The happiest people are the most generous people in life.

*“There is more happiness in giving
than in receiving.”*

ACTS 20:35 (CJB)

Now, you know what the problem with that verse is? We don't really believe it. Most people really don't believe that. They think there's more happiness in receiving. They don't really believe Jesus. You know why? They've never done it. They've never done it. There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.

Now, there are two kinds of people in life. There are givers and there are takers. It's not by accident that the words *miser* and *miserable* come from the same root word. The more miserly I am, the more miserable I will be. Karl Menninger, who is one of the most famous psychiatrists of the 20th century, did a study. He said, “Giving is the criterion of mental health. Generous people are rarely mentally ill.” No, it's self-centered people, it's selfish people—the more selfish I am, the more self-serving I am, the more I'm likely to be mentally ill.

The Bible says the more healthy you are, the more unafraid you are to give it away; the more you hold on to things, the more you hold it in, it's an indication of a lack of health in your life.

*The people rejoiced . . . for they had given freely and
wholeheartedly to the LORD.*

1 CHRONICLES 29:9 (NIV)

Giving results in rejoicing.

The Bible tells us that the attitude of generosity is developed and expressed in a habit. You can't say you have the character of generosity unless you're habitually generous. That habit of generosity is called tithing.

TEACHING TIP:

From here through “Eight Reasons to Tithe” should take about 10 minutes.

Now, what does the Bible teach specifically about tithing? Let’s look at that.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT TITHING

What Is Tithing?

Tithe is simply a word that means 10%. That’s all it means.

“Tithe” means “a **TENTH** part.”

It’s not 20%, it’s not 1%, it’s not 5%, it’s not 30%. Tithe means 10; it means a 10th part. The Bible says that the first 10% of all we make goes back to God. Why did God choose 10%? I haven’t the slightest idea. I don’t know. He could’ve said 50%. He could’ve said 60%. God could’ve said, “You give me 90 and live on 10.” I don’t know why he chose 10, but if that’s what God says to do, that’s what I’m going to do.

Tithing means the first 10 percent I make goes back to God. If I make \$1, 10 cents goes to the Lord. If I make \$10, \$1 goes to the Lord. If I make \$100, \$10 goes to the Lord. That’s a tithe. Tithe isn’t 1%, it’s not 5%, it’s not 50, it’s 10.

“WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A “TITHE” AND AN “OFFERING”?”

A “tithe” is giving the **FIRST 10%** of my income.

An “offering” is anything I give **IN ADDITION TO** my tithe.

It’s not an offering until after I’ve given my tithe. If I haven’t tithed and I give money, that’s not an offering. That’s what I owe. God says, “The first 10% comes back to me.”

Why Should I Tithe?

Eight Reasons from God’s Word

You say, “Rick, I can’t afford to tithe.” I want to tell you as clearly as I can say this. You can’t afford not to, because you want God’s blessing on your life. If you want God’s blessing on your finances, whatever you want God to bless, you need to put him first in. If you want God to bless your marriage, you put him first in your marriage. If you want God to bless your education, then you put him first in your education. If you want God to bless your parenting, you put him first in your parenting skills. If you want God to bless your work, you put God first at work. Whatever you want God to bless, you put him first in. The Bible says, “Seek first the kingdom of God.” If you want God to bless you financially, you need to put him first in your finances.

Let me give you eight reasons on why you should tithe.

Number one, this one should be enough:

1. Because God **COMMANDS IT.**

Over and over in Scripture, God tells us that the first 10% of all I make is God’s money. I give it back to him for three reasons: out of gratitude for the past, out of faith in the future, and as a sign that he’s number one in my life today. It has a past, present, and future component. Gratitude for the past; he allowed me to make this money. Hope in the future; he’s going to take care of all my needs. He’s number one in my life right now, so the first part goes to him. Just like I said give God the first part of every day in a quiet time, give God the first day of every week in Sunday worship, and give God the first consideration in every decision, and give God the first 10% of everything I make.

The Bible says this—Leviticus 27:30:

“Ten percent of everything you harvest is holy and belongs to me.”

LEVITICUS 27:30 (CEV)

I’m robbing God if I’m not giving the first 10% back to God, because it all came from him in the first place. Number one, God commands it.

2. Because Jesus **COMMENDS IT**.

You know, I’ve actually heard people say, “Well, tithing is Old Testament.” Anybody who says that has not read the Bible because tithing is taught through the entire Scripture. In fact, Jesus commended tithing himself in Matthew 23:23. Jesus said this talking about the Pharisees:

“Yes, you should tithe, but you shouldn’t leave the more important things undone.”

MATTHEW 23:23 (TLB)

“You should tithe”—underline that. That’s the words of Jesus. That’s not Old Testament. “Yes, you should tithe, but you shouldn’t leave the more important things undone.” He’s saying this isn’t the most important thing, but just because it’s not the most important thing doesn’t mean you don’t do it.

It’s interesting to me tithing was the only thing Jesus commended in the Pharisees. That’s what he said. Guys, that’s the one thing they got right. Tithing is commended by Jesus.

3. Tithing demonstrates that God has **FIRST PLACE IN MY LIFE**.

It’s the physical expression that he really is number one. We looked at this verse earlier, Deuteronomy 14:23:

The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.

DEUTERONOMY 14:23 (TLB)

It shows that he’s number one.

4. Tithing reminds me that **EVERYTHING I HAVE** was given to me by God!

Deuteronomy 8:18 says this,

But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

DEUTERONOMY 8:18 (NIV84)

You know, the Bible teaches wealth production, and the Bible says God gives us the ability to do wealth production. Every time I sit down and I write out my tithe check, it reminds me, "God, everything I have comes from you, and if it weren't for you I wouldn't have anything."

5. Tithing expresses my **GRATITUDE TO GOD**.

The Bible says in Deuteronomy 16:17:

Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

DEUTERONOMY 16:17 (NIV)

If I make a lot, I give a lot. If I make a little, I give a little. It's just the same proportion. It's the 10% that God tells me to give. In Psalm 116:12 the Bible says, "How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?" Well, tithing expresses my gratitude to God.

6. God says that refusing to tithe is **STEALING** from him.

Now, I didn't make that up. God says it in the Bible. In Malachi 3:8, 10, God says this:

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house."

MALACHI 3:8, 10 (NIV)

What's a storehouse? That's the temple. It's the place where you worship. The tithe goes to the house of worship as an act of worship. You don't tithe to charity. You don't tithe to the United Way. You don't tithe to your cousin. Those are gifts; that's charity. The tithe goes to the storehouse. You bring it as a gift in worship, as an act of worship to the house of worship. He says, "So that there may be food in my house." Malachi 3:8-10.

Now, that's pretty strong, but that's exactly what God says. The Bible says that when I use God's money to pay my bills, I'm robbing God. The Bible says when I use my tithe money to go to the movies or to buy a dinner or to pay my bills, I am robbing God.

These are very important things. God commands it, Jesus commends it, it shows he's first place in my life, reminds me it all comes from him in the first place, it's an act of gratitude, and God says if I'm not doing it, I'm actually stealing from him.

Now, there are two other reasons. Notice this:

7. Tithing gives God a chance to prove **HE EXISTS** and wants to bless you!

Did you know that there's only one place in the Bible where God says you can prove that God exists? When I was in seminary we learned the theological and philosophical arguments for the existence of God. We learned the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, the ontological argument, Kant's moral reproof, the argument by design, and all these different arguments for the existence of God. Did you know that in the Bible there's only one place in the Bible where God says, "Here's how you can prove, you can test me, you can see if I really exist"? He says, "Try tithing."

The Bible says this in Malachi 3:10-11:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty."

MALACHI 3:10-11 (NIV84)

God says, “Test me.” God says, “Here’s how you could prove I exist. Try tithing.” Why does God say this? As I said, money tends to dominate our lives. It tends to become our God. The most sensitive nerve in the human body goes from the heart to the pocketbook, to the wallet, to the purse. When it comes to giving, a lot of people stop at nothing.

8. Tithing proves that I **LOVE GOD** .

It proves—it’s putting your money where your mouth is. Jesus said:

*“If you love me, show it by doing what
I’ve told you.”*

JOHN 14:15 (THE MESSAGE)

In other words, if you love me, keep my commandments. One of the clearest commands in Scripture is “The first 10% goes back to me.” As I said, a lot of people say, “Well, tithing is an Old Testament principle. Actually, that’s part of the Law, and we’re free from the Law.” Actually, they’re wrong because tithing was invented and established before the Law was given. Long before Moses was given the Ten Commandments and the Law of God, God established tithing all the way back in Abraham’s day. It was pre-Law, so it’s not even part of the Law. It’s a life principle before the Jewish nation even became the nation of Israel.

Let me conclude this part of our study with this verse: 2 Corinthians 8:7–8. God says this:

*Now I want you to be leaders also in the spirit of
cheerful giving . . . This is one way to prove that
your love is real, that it goes beyond mere words.*

2 CORINTHIANS 8:7-8 (TLB)

This is one way to prove that your love is real, that it goes beyond mere words. Tithing, this spiritual habit of putting God first in my money, is about growing in my faith. It’s about learning to trust God more. Now, we’ve looked at the benefits of giving.

TEACHING TIP:

This would be a good place to include a testimony—live or on video—from

someone in your church who has seen what the spiritual discipline of tithing will do for your life. The best example would be from someone who struggled with the decision to give.

TEACHING TIP:

From here through the prayer of commitment should take about 15 minutes.

Let me wrap this up by talking about some practical things. What should I tithe? Where should I tithe? When should I tithe? How do I tithe with the right attitude? Let's just wrap this up real quick.

What Should I Tithe?

The answer is this—write it down.

The **FIRST** part of what I earn, not the **LEFTOVERS**

It's the first 10% of what I earn, not the leftovers.

Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income.

PROVERBS 3:9 (TLB)

If I tithe at the end of the month, there will be nothing there to tithe from. It's got to either come off the top or it's not going to happen. When Kay and I got married, oh wow, many, many decades ago we decided God gets paid first. We may be in debt to other people, but God is going to get paid first. Every time I got a check, the first 10% we wrote that right back to God. That way we made sure we don't run out where there's more month left over at the end of the money. I give God the first 10% of what I earn, not the leftovers. The Bible says this, "Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of your income." All right?

Where Should I Tithe?

Where I **WORSHIP**

Tithing is an act of worship. Tithing is not charity. There are many good things out there to support—the local organizations that do good, to help the poor, to feed and clothe and help the sick, and lots of other charities around—but that's not tithing. That's giving; that's charity. That's offering. Tithing is an act of worship. It's undesignated giving during worship as the act of worship in the place I worship. The Bible says,

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse [Temple].

MALACHI 3:10 (NIV)

That's referring—that's a term for the temple. It's where you worship.

When Should I Tithe?

Well, the answer is what I just said:

WHEN I WORSHIP

Jesus tells us that, and Paul tells us that in 1 Corinthians 16:2:

On every Lord's Day each of you should put aside something from what you have earned during the week, and use it for this offering. The amount depends on how much the Lord has helped you earn.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:2 (TLB)

Now notice, on the first day of every week. What is that? That's Sunday. He says you put aside. That means there's got to be planning in your tithing. Then bring it for your offering. The amount depends on how much the Lord has helped you earn. If you didn't earn anything, you don't have a tithe that week. If you earned a little, you tithe on what little you make. If you earned a lot, you tithe on a lot of what you make.

Now, one of the biggest problems of tithing is even people who believe in tithing, we just forget.

HOW TO REMEMBER

- Create a spending plan and make tithing your first priority.

When Kay and I first got married, I went out and bought a little \$1.98 notebook. I made a little budget. We had like 23 different items in the budget. Gas was a budget item and rental was a budget item and food was a budget item and gifts for other people was a budget item. On each of those little notebooks—and we kept them for years—number one, budget item number one was tithe. Budget item number two was offerings, which we give above that to help other people. Then we had rent and insurance and all those other things.

When I would get—let's say I made \$100, then I'd write \$10 tithe. When I had paid that, we'd cross it out and we'd done it. Now if you make \$2,500 during the year, at the end of the year if you haven't given \$250, you haven't tithed. If you made \$10,000 and you haven't given \$1,000 a year, you haven't tithed.

- Use weekly envelopes or online giving (saddleback.com/give).

Now I've set up online giving. In fact, about 40% of the tithers at Saddleback Church give online now. Why? It's just so much easier. You can go to saddleback.com online giving, or in your church if you're from some other church, you could go to your church, probably set that up. Then you can make automatic payments so that whether you're at church or not, whether you're on vacation or sick, you're tithing every week.

- Teach your children to tithe.

Now, even when your kids aren't old enough to read or write, you can teach them to give. I taught all three of my kids how to be generous by creating three little boxes. One box was save. One box was spend. One box was tithe. When we would give them—let's say if they made \$3 as an allowance, well then, \$1 went in the tithing box and \$1 went in the saving box and \$1 went in the spending box. Now, I didn't teach them at the time that they were spending box. Now, I didn't teach them at the time that they were actually tithing 33% of their income, not 10%! They could spend the money whichever way they wanted to, but they gave their tithe to the Lord. Then the savings, they could keep adding it up and then when they want to spend it, they could do that. Teach your kids the joy of generosity. It's a visual lesson. Get three little boxes and do that.

Now, let's talk about how do I give? This is the most important thing of all because God doesn't want our money. What he wants is the right attitude. The Bible gives us about four right attitudes we need to do in developing the habit of tithing and learning to be generous.

GIVING WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Give **WILLINGLY**.

That's the first attitude. I'm to give willingly. I love this verse—2 Corinthians 8:12 says this:

For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:12 (NIV)

You know what that verse says? God is not impressed with how much I give him. God is impressed with the attitude of my heart—the willingness. He said if the willingness is there, it doesn't matter if it's a lot. By the way, anybody can sacrifice. The Bible tells about a woman that only had two pennies and she put in her two pennies. She put in her mite, the widow's mite.

Giving willingly means if you're willing to give it, the gift is acceptable regardless of the amount. God doesn't look at the amount that you give. You know what he looks at? The amount left over. He looks at how much I've got left over after I've given.

The Bible says this:

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7 (NIV)

Now, let me just say right here as your pastor: If anybody ever pressures you to give, do not give.

I'm telling you, you should never give under pressure. Never be under emotional pressure or guilt because it doesn't count. You don't get any

benefit out of it. You don't get any worth out of it. Never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never give under pressure. Never give out of guilt. The Bible says each of you should give what you've decided in your heart. What does that mean? It means you plan it. A lot of people think it's spiritual to give spontaneously. It's like, "Oh, I see some poor dogs crying on television so I feel moved and I get a quiver in my liver. I'm going to go help save the poor dogs." Actually, that's not spiritual giving. That's emotional giving.

Spiritual giving, listen, is planned. The verse says you decide in your heart to give. You plan it. It's not based on emotions. It says, not reluctantly or under compulsion.

By the way, how do you give joyfully whenever you've got so many bills to pay and you think, "I can't afford this; I've got bills to pay. How could I give joyfully?" When I don't feel joyful in my giving, I go back and review those six benefits we just talked about. Go back and review the promises of God. I start to get joyful again.

Give **CHEERFULLY** .

The Bible says:

For God loves a cheerful giver.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:7 (NIV)

This word *cheerful* in Greek in the Bible is the Greek word *hilaros*. It's the word we get *hilarious* from. God says, "I want you to laugh, I want you to party, I want you to celebrate when you give." Most churches, when we take the offering, that's like the low point in the service. Everything comes to a standstill. It's like, "Okay, now we got to pass the plate." Actually, in the New Testament church it was party time every time they gave an offering.

I know a church here in the United States that when the pastor says, "Now it's time for us to give our offerings back to God," the people start clapping and shouting and cheering. Why? They want to be hilarious givers. I think that's great.

Give **SACRIFICIALLY** .

The Bible says this—2 Corinthians 8:3-4, this is talking about the church in Macedonia:

They gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:3-4 (NIV)

How do you give beyond your ability? That's sacrificial giving. "They gave as much as they were able, even beyond their ability, entirely on their own. They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service."

Now, let me give you the background of this verse. Paul is collecting an offering from all of the churches in the eastern part of Europe in order to help the Christians who were starving to death in Jerusalem because there was a famine and poverty going on and they were being persecuted. He's using an offering from all these churches to go help people who were less fortunate. Well, there was one of the groups, the church in Macedonia, which was a very, very poor church. These people were dirt, dirt poor. Paul was going to pass them up on the offering and say, "They can't afford to give." They said, "No, no, no; we've got to give." This is an incredible church. Paul says they were begging to give. They gave beyond their ability.

How do you give beyond your ability? Well, there are two ways you can give: by reason or by revelation. If I give by reason, what I do is I sit down and I figure out what's a reasonable amount to give. "We can afford to give this much," and that's giving by reason. To give by revelation you say, "God, what do you want to give through me? I may not even be able to afford it. I may not even have the money, but God what do you want to give through me?" That's called giving by revelation. That's where God acts in our lives. That's where God comes in and does miracles. God doesn't give miracles to giving by reason. A non-Christian can give by reason. People give generously reasonably all the time. "I reasonably think we can give to this college, and we can give that amount." Giving by revelation is when you give beyond what you've got. You say, "God, I don't even have this, but I'm going to trust you to provide."

I give willingly, cheerfully, sacrificially. The fourth thing Paul tells us to do in this passage is

Give **EXPECTANTLY**.

I love this. Give expectantly, giving by faith. Look again at this verse we looked at earlier:

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6 (NIV)

Now, God says it's like the farmer who sows seeds. If a farmer has had a tough year and there haven't been many crops and he stored up what little seed he's got in the barn, he could say, "Oh, you know, I can't afford to give away this seed by planting it because it's all the seed I've got, and I've got to live on this seed." If he keeps the little seed that he's got, he's not going to have any crops the next year. The only way he's going to bear fruit, the only way he's going to have a harvest is he gives up what little he's got.

He takes the seed that's in his barn. He goes, "This is all I've got. I don't have any life savings. I'm taking my seed corn, but I'm going to go out and I'm going to give it away. I'm going to plant it." The Bible says if you sow sparingly you'll reap sparingly; if you sow generously you'll reap generously.

Over the years here at Saddleback Church, I have read literally not thousands, but thousands upon thousands upon thousands of stories of people who gave in faith and watched God do incredible miracles in their lives. I could share with you hundreds of stories in my own life. I could give you one from this last week, but I don't even have time to tell you about that one. I see God working in this area. God has built my faith more through giving than anything else, and God's blessing is on my life because I've trusted him in this area.

When Kay and I got married over 40 years ago, we decided that God would get paid first. We started tithing. Each year of our lives we decided we would raise our tithe by at least 1%. At the end of our first year we went to 12% giving. Then at the end of our second year we went to—we went 11% first year, 12 the second year. Third year we added it by 3%. Each year we would raise this. Now, we weren't trying to show off, because I didn't even tell anybody about this for nearly 30 years. Today, this last year, we raised our giving another percent. We went from 90 to 91%. Now, I've played this game with God for over 40 years where God says, "You cannot out give me." There are more promises in the Bible about giving than anything else. I just decided that I was going to be one guy to see if this was really true.

Every year God says, “You give to me, Rick, and I’ll give to you. We’ll see who gets blessed.” I cannot out-give God. Now we live on 9% and give away 91. I dare you. I dare you to trust God. Here’s the key to giving, here’s the key to this third habit of the Christian life.

“THE KEY TO GIVING
FIRST THEY GAVE
THEMSELVES
TO THE LORD.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:5 (GNT)

The starting point is, “Does God really own your heart?”

I don’t understand people who have enough faith to trust God for salvation but don’t have enough faith to trust God to tithe. That doesn’t make sense because there’s more promises about tithing and giving than there are about salvation in Scripture. The Bible says if God loves you enough to send Jesus to die for you, don’t you think he’ll take care of you? He will. Now, I want us to close with a commitment prayer. Again, I want you to look at this prayer. Keep your eyes open, look down at your notes, and I want you to pray this prayer in your heart as your commitment prayer for this third habit.



PRAYER OF COMMITMENT



Father,

I know that you love me, and I know you want what's best for me. I recognize that all I have or all I ever will have comes from you. I'm more interested in pleasing you than I am in having more possessions.

I want you to have first place in my life. I am willing to begin tithing as you have commanded. I do this out of gratitude for all you've done for me, and I do this in expectation that you'll continue to provide for me. I commit myself to returning at least the first 10% of all I earn back to you. I want to begin this adventure. I want to begin investing for eternity. Help me to remain faithful to this commitment.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

CLASS 201

TEACHING TIP:

The entire section on the habit of being in a small group should take about 20 minutes. From here through “Why Is Fellowship So Important” should take about 10 minutes.

Now, we’re going to look at the last habit, called fellowship. This is the one that involves giving your relationships to God, and we call this enjoying God’s family.

HABIT FOUR

Fellowship

ENJOYING GOD’S FAMILY

A lot of Christians don’t understand the importance of a small group, but the Bible says this in Hebrews 10:25:

Let us not give up the habit (there’s that word) of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another.

HEBREWS 10:25 (GNT)

That's the purpose of a small group. It's the habit of fellowship, the habit of loving each other, encouraging each other, supporting each other.

WHY IS FELLOWSHIP SO IMPORTANT?

Out of all of the habits that you could develop in your Christian life, why is being part of a small group so important?

Let me give you seven reasons. Write these down.

1. **I BELONG** in God's family with other believers.

Here are a number of verses. Galatians 6:10:

Let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

GALATIANS 6:10 (NIV)

Circle "belong" in that verse.

Ephesians 2:19 says:

You are members of God's very own family . . . and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.

EPHESIANS 2:19 (TLB)

Circle the word "belong" again.

Look at this next verse, Romans 12:5:

So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

ROMANS 12:5 (NIV)

Circle that word “belongs.” You may not realize this, but everybody in the group that you’re sitting in right now, you belong to each other. We belong not just to God, but we belong to each other. We are brothers and sisters in the family of God. We are parts in the body of Christ.

I like this quote from Ray Ortlund. He said:

THE CHRISTIAN, WHO IS NOT COMMITTED TO A GROUP OF OTHER BELIEVERS FOR PRAYING, SHARING, AND SERVING, SO THAT HE IS KNOWN, AS HE KNOWS OTHERS, IS NOT AN OBEDIENT CHRISTIAN. HE IS NOT IN THE WILL OF GOD. HOWEVER VOCAL HE MAY BE IN HIS THEOLOGY, HE IS NOT OBEYING THE LORD.

DR. RAY ORTLUND

Wow. That’s pretty strong. He’s not obeying the Lord. Why is that? Because none of us have the full picture of Christ in ourselves. We’re all parts of the body of Christ. I can’t say, “I don’t need you,” just like the foot can’t say to the eye and the hand can’t say to the ear, “I don’t need you.” We need each other.

I remember one time talking to a lady. She said, “Oh, I believe in Jesus. I just don’t need the church.” I said, “Really?” She said, “No, I don’t need the church.” I said, “Well, the church is the body of Christ.” That’s like saying, “I like you, but I can’t stand your body.” You’d be offended. The Bible calls the church the bride of Christ. How about if I said, “I like you, but I can’t stand your wife.” You’d be offended. God is offended when we say we don’t love his body, when we don’t love his bride, when we don’t love his family. It is the height of arrogance to say you don’t need a church family, or you don’t need to be in relationship to a small group. That is the ultimate narcissistic individualism that the Bible teaches is the exact opposite of what we’re to be. We are to depend on each other. We are to serve each other. We are to share with each other, and we are to make together the body of Christ and the family of God.

It's important because I belong. The Christian life is not just a matter of believing; it's a matter of belonging. In fact, any Christian without a church family is an orphan. It's like saying, "I want to be in the army but not a part of any platoon. I want to be a bee but not in the hive. I want to play the trombone but not be a part of an orchestra. I want to play football, but I don't want to be a part of any team." It isn't going to happen. You cannot live the Christian life by yourself. You must have the church in your life. This is a myth that we don't need the church. It's just wrong, because the only thing that's going to last is the church, the family of God. It's the only thing that's going to last for eternity. I belong in God's family.

2. I need **ENCOURAGEMENT** to grow spiritually.

The Bible says:

Let us think of one another and how we can encourage each other to love and do good deeds.

HEBREWS 10:24 (PHILLIPS)

I need to support you, and you need to support me. You cannot grow to spiritual maturity by yourself. You must be in a small group. These small groups are found all through Scripture, but particularly in the New Testament, where people get together in homes or in other places to encourage each other. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4,

Two are better off than one . . . If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it's just too bad, because there is no one to help him . . . Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10, 12 (GNT)

You don't need a whole lot of strong Christian friends in your life, but you do have to have a few. You don't need 50; you don't need 60. The Bible says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." I do need you in my life to help me have the encouragement to grow spiritually. We need each other.

3. I need **ACCOUNTABILITY** to grow spiritually.

The Bible says it like this in Proverbs 27:17:

People learn from one another, just as iron sharpens iron.

PROVERBS 27:17 (GNT)

The Bible says in Hebrews 3:13:

Encourage each other every day while you have the opportunity. If you do this, none of you will be deceived by sin.

HEBREWS 3:13 (GW)

Galatians 6:1-2 says:

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently . . . Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

GALATIANS 6:1-2 (NIV)

Now, let me just talk to you very frankly about your small group for a minute. It's like a marriage. Sometimes each of us has to carry the other person. Always in a relationship, one person seems more committed to the relationship than another, and it varies back and forth. The same is true in a small group. In a small group, those of you in a small group will go through different stages of life, different pressures of life, and the Bible says we need to be there for each other.

One of my favorite verses in the book of Job, it says, "Even a dying and desperate man deserves the devotion of his friends, even when he forsakes the Almighty." What does that mean? Sometimes you may be going through a trial that's so difficult and so hard, you think, "I don't even know if I believe in God right now." That's when you need a small group. That's when you

need other people to say, “That’s okay. We will believe God for you.”

Friends walk in when other people walk out. When you have a sin in your life, if you’re in a small group, friends don’t sit in judgment. Friends offer grace. That’s what the church is for. That’s what a small group is for, to help you through those rough spots. There are times when my faith will help you grow, and there are times when your faith will help me grow. You need to practice that in your small group. Show grace to each other when everybody’s having a tough time. The Bible says we’re to lift others up when they’re going through periods of doubt.

4. Christ is **PRESENT** when we fellowship together.

In ways that we don’t understand, Jesus shows up in small groups. The Bible says:

*“For where two or three come together in my name,
I am there with them.”*

MATTHEW 18:20 (GNT)

Jesus is with you all the time, but when you’re in a small group, you can actually sense that presence even better many times than you can on your own. Jesus said, “I’m there when you need me, when we fellowship together.”

5. There is **POWER** when people pray together.

Now, there’s power when you pray on your own, but there’s even more power when you pray together. I love this promise of Jesus in Matthew 18:19.

*“Whenever two of you on earth agree about
anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my
Father in heaven.”*

MATTHEW 18:19 (GNT)

There is power in group prayer. I want to encourage you to make prayer a major part of your small group. Don’t just tack it on the end and say somebody pray at the end. No, pray together. Pray with each other. Pray for each other. Share prayer requests. That’s what a small group does. That’s the habit of fellowship. Fellowship is not simply sitting and listening to

somebody teach, watching a video. Fellowship is praying together, laughing together, sharing together, crying together, doing all these things in harmony.

6. Fellowship is a **WITNESS** to the world.

The Bible says that when we come together in groups, like in a small group, that it actually becomes a powerful witness to other people. Many people come to Christ not because of the witness of just one person, but because of the witness of an entire group. If each of you has somebody that you're praying for to come to know the Lord, you ought to share that with each other, and all of you should have a prayer list where you're each praying for each other's number one concern, the person you most want to go to heaven with you that isn't there yet.

In John 17, Jesus is praying the night before he goes to the cross. Now, he knows the next morning he's going to die a terrible, terrible death on the cross. While he's in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prays. Do you know what was on Jesus' mind the night before he goes to the cross—what he was thinking about more than anything else? It wasn't the pain he was going through. Jesus was thinking more than anything else about the unity of his church, the oneness of his body, the fellowship of his family. John 17 is Jesus' prayer for unity. That's the true Lord's Prayer that he prays before he goes to the cross. In verse 21 he says this:

"My prayer for all of them them (that's talking about all of the disciples) is that they will be of one heart and mind . . . so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me."

JOHN 17:21 (TLB)

Notice the connection between unity and evangelism. He says, "I pray that all Christians will be one so that the world will be won." In other words, when Christians are one, then the world can be won. It is a powerful witness when we stick up for each other.

"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

JOHN 13:35 (NIV)

If you hear somebody in your church family or in your small group or another Christian being criticized, you should say, "Wait a minute. Back off on that." You need to speak up. When you hear about a Christian who's being maligned maliciously at work, you stand up for them.

You say, "As a friend, I don't take sides." Listen, friends take sides. Friends take sides. Friends stand up and speak up. They don't shut up. They're not silent. They're not cowards. The Bible says we are a powerful witness to the world when we show our unity and we bless other Christians, even other Christians that we disagree with. You know, there are a lot of things that pastors do, other pastors do, and some of them on TV, I think some of that kind of stuff's a little goofy, but do you know what? They're Christians. They're in the body of Christ, and it is not my job to condemn or to criticize them to unbelievers. It is my job to pray for them and to support them.

The seventh reason why we need the fellowship habit, why we need the habit of small groups, is

7. I am obligated to **SERVE** every other Christian.

If I'm a Christian, if I'm in the family of God, the Bible says that God expects me to serve every other Christian in the family of God. Here's what it says—1 Peter 4:10.

"God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to make a lot of money." That's not what that says. "Be sure to use them to help each other." Circle that.

God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other.

1 PETER 4:10 (TLB)

In your small group, each of you has contacts that could help other people in your group. Each of you has relationships that could help other people in your group. Each of you has talents and abilities that could help each other. The Bible says it like this in 1 Corinthians 12:

There are different kinds of service to God . . . All of you together are the one body of Christ, and each of you is a separate and necessary part of it.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:5, 27 (TLB)

Underline that: “a necessary part of it.” We need each other, and so we’re obligated to use our gifts.

You see, I have a gift of teaching. If I don’t use my gifts, you get cheated. You have gifts, too, and if you don’t use your gifts, I get cheated, and other people do.

On the next page, notice here’s a list of some of the “one anothers” of fellowship. Fifty-eight times in the Bible, the phrase “one another” is used. I’m not going to go through all of these, but the Bible tells us that we are to serve each other, to accept each other, to forgive each other. We are to greet each other, we’re to bear one another’s burdens. We’re to be devoted to each other. We’re to honor each other, to teach each other. The Bible says we are to submit to each other. We’re to encourage each other. This is what it means to be a small group. We are to practice the “one anothers.” You cannot practice the “one anothers” in a large service on the weekend at your church. You can only practice the “one anothers” in a small group.

THE “ONE ANOTHERS” OF FELLOWSHIP

PARTIAL LIST

- Serve one another Galatians 5:13
- Accept one another Romans 15:7
- Forgive one another Colossians 3:13
- Greet one another Romans 16:16
- Bear one another’s burdens Galatians 6:2
- Be devoted to one another Romans 12:10
- Honor one another Romans 12:10
- Teach one another Romans 15:14
- Submit to one another Ephesians 5:21
- Encourage one another 1 Thessalonians 5:11

TEACHING TIP:

From here through “What Is the Purpose of Our Small Groups” should take about 10 minutes.

HOW CAN A LARGE CHURCH MAINTAIN CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS?

Now, the Bible teaches this:

Every member needs to be a part of a **SMALL GROUP**.

That’s how a large church can maintain close friendship. You can’t be friends with 60 people or 600 or 6,000 or 60,000, but you can be friends with a few. Every member of Saddleback Church and every member of any other church needs to be a part of a small group. You know, in your body, your body isn’t made up of one giant cell. You’re made up of literally millions of little cells, and the life of the body is in the cell. You are in the life of Saddleback Church right now if you’re part of Saddleback. If you’re meeting in a small group in another church, you’re in the life of the body of your church.

We see this comparison between large group worship and small group fellowship in Acts 5:42. This was the model of the very first church. Notice it says:

[They met] day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house.

ACTS 5:42 (NIV)

Circle those two phrases, “temple courts” and “house to house.” Now, temple courts. They didn’t actually meet in the temple for worship because it was against the law to go into the temple for worship. Only the priests got to go in the temple itself, but you could worship around it, and there were many courts around the temple, which is a biblical basis for not everybody meeting in the same place. It was one church in Jerusalem, but they met in different courts, just like at Saddleback Church we have multiple campuses, multiple venues, multiple church sites—all a part of our church. We just meet in different locations, whether it’s overseas or whether it’s in America.

We meet in the temple courts for worship. We meet from house to house for fellowship. This was the biblical basis.

Notice there in your outline two types of church meetings:

TWO TYPES OF CHURCH MEETINGS

- Large Group: Celebration
- Small Group: Fellowship

In Romans 16:5 we have just one of many examples in the Bible of a small group fellowship in a home. It says:

Greet the church that meets in their home.

ROMANS 16:5 (CEV)

The advantage of meeting in a home is it's geographically expandable. We have homes everywhere. It's good stewardship of money. You're not having to build buildings. It can multiply and yet it maintains that personal feeling and contact.

See also Acts 2:26, 8:3, 16:40, and 20:20; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15.

At Saddleback, we believe our church must grow both **LARGER** and **SMALLER** at the same time.

We grow larger through worship, and we grow smaller through fellowship. We grow larger through the weekend services. We grow smaller through the proliferation of small groups. At Saddleback Church, we have well over 7,000 small groups. In fact, we're the only church that I know of in America that has more people in Bible study than on the weekend. Far more people are in our 7,000 small groups than can show up at all of our campuses on the weekend. We wouldn't be able to hold everybody if they all came on the weekend. They wouldn't fit. By using small groups in homes and restaurants and offices and parks and coffee bars and places like that, the church meets in small groups all over Southern California, and now it meets all around the world.

Let's wrap this section up by talking about the purpose of our small groups.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR SMALL GROUPS?

The Fellowship of the Believers

Acts 2:42-47 is the description of the very first church in Jerusalem, and as much as possible, we want our church to be like that church in Jerusalem. We want to be a New Testament church.

In that passage, it tells us that when they met in the homes, when they met in their small groups, they did five things. I wanted you to see the whole passage, but instead of reading it here, I want to break it down for you below. These are the five purposes of the church. This is why we call ourselves a purpose driven church. We're driven by the same five purposes that were found in the New Testament church. We find these in here. We want your small group, I want your small group to do all five of these purposes.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

ACTS 2:42-47 (NIV)

What are they? Number one. Write these down.

1. **GROW** (Maturity)

The Bible tells us in verse 42:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching...

VERSE 42

The first thing they did is they studied the apostles' teaching. What is the apostles' teaching? It's this right here. It's the Bible. The Bible was written, the New Testament, by the apostles. When it says they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, it means this. They studied the Bible. That's the first thing we do. We grow to maturity through studying the Bible.

2. **BELONG** (Membership)

The second thing it says, they not only devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, they devoted themselves to the fellowship.

... and to the fellowship...

VERSE 42

We're not just to grow; we're called to belong. We're called to grow to maturity. We're called to belong to the membership. We're not just believers; we're belongers. We grow through the fellowship. Circle the word "the." The fellowship. Fellowship is not just something we do. Fellowship is something we are.

How did they fellowship together? Look at verse 46:

They... ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

VERSE 46

I love that part. We're purpose driven eaters. You should bring food, and you should serve it together. When you have small groups, sometimes you should have dinner together. It says they ate together with glad hearts and sincere hearts. The Bible also tells us that we ought to get in the habit of this. Romans 12:13:

Get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.

ROMANS 12:13 (TLB)

This is the ministry of hospitality. We grow and we belong.

3. **WORSHIP** (Magnification)

We worship to magnify God, to bring honor to him. The Bible says, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul." The Bible says, "Let us come into his house to worship." The Bible says, "Let us magnify his name and exalt his name together." It says in Acts 2:42 that they devoted themselves,

... to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

VERSE 42

Now, that breaking of bread, it's not just talking about eating. It's actually talking about Communion. That's why we give our small groups permission to take Communion together in the home, because in the first 300 years of the church, Communion was always in the home. It wasn't in a large situation. Why? Because there were no church buildings for the first 300 years of the church. Most of the church meetings were in homes. After they left Jerusalem, there weren't temple courts anymore, so they worshiped in their small group. They had Communion. They prayed. The Bible says in verse 47,

... praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

VERSE 47

4. **SERVE** (Ministry)

We serve each other in our groups. We grow in our groups, we belong in our groups, we worship in our groups, and we serve in our small groups. We do ministry. The Bible tells us that they were generous with each other. Verse 45 says:

They gave to anyone as he had need.

VERSE 45

In our small groups, it's good to help each other out. If you need to borrow something from me, I'll loan it to you. If I need to borrow something from you, you can loan it to me. If we need to paint something, we can do it together. We can help each other out. We can serve each other, and we can serve our community together.

You know, the highest form of fellowship—there's the fellowship of sharing, then there's the fellowship of studying, then there's the fellowship of serving together, and then there's the fellowship of sacrificing. Sharing, studying, serving, and sacrificing. When you serve together, when you get a project that your small group does together, it's going to draw you together more than you've ever done before.

5. **SHARE** (Mission)

That is sharing the Gospel. We use our groups as a mission agency. We call this local PEACE, we call it global PEACE, we call it personal PEACE, where we send groups out on mission for the Lord. The Bible says as a result of the small groups in the New Testament, verse 47:

*And the Lord added to their number daily those
who were being saved.*

VERSE 47

Has anybody been saved because of your small group? A husband? A wife? A brother or sister? A relative? These are all the things that we can do. We use our small group to pray for the unbelievers, to share with them, to do events together. I know a small group that bought some season tickets to football games. They bought two more than they had in their group, and each time they went to a football game, they took a non-Christian couple with them, and then they would have fun at the football game and then say, "Hey, this was fun with this group." "Well, the same group meets on Thursday night at Joe and Mary's house. You can come." They've won all kinds of people to Christ through that.

Being a part of God's family, this fourth habit of fellowship, it's the greatest privilege you'll ever receive.

TEACHING TIP:

This would be a good place to have a live or video testimony on the impact someone has seen a small group make in their life. Talking about how they initially got into a group would be helpful to those in the class who are not yet in a group.

We're in the final sprint of Class 201. In this class we've been talking to you about what we call the habits for spiritual growth. Throughout the centuries they've been called the devotional practices, spiritual disciplines, and a lot of other names, but when it comes down to what they really are, they're things that you develop as habits. They're things that you have to develop some self-discipline on.

TEACHING TIP:

This section on “How to Start and Maintain Good Habits” should take only 5 minutes. You’re moving quickly through this, giving them some final ideas before the closing time of commitment.

As we close I’d like to quickly walk through:

How to Start and Maintain Good Habits

Second Timothy 1:7 says this

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity,
but of power, love, and self-discipline.*

2 TIMOTHY 1:7 (NLT)

You have a right to have power, love, and self-discipline in your life because the Holy Spirit lives in you. God didn’t make you to be out of control. The Bible says that when we’re controlled by the Holy Spirit, he gives us self-control. What does that self-control or that discipline do? It helps us develop the habits that allow us to grow to full maturity.

Now, I want you to look at these steps on how you develop a good habit. These steps will not only help you in the four habits we’ve talked about in this class, but any other habit that you want to develop in your life, because all habits are developed the same way. You might write these down.

GETTING STARTED

Step One: **DESIRE**

You must start with a strong desire. You must be internally motivated. External motivations don't last. If you start only half-heartedly, you will never make it to the success point.

As you start, you say, "I really desire to grow up. I really desire to be spiritually mature. I desire to become like Christ over my lifetime." Step one is desire.

Step Two: **DECISION**

Decision is when you actually do something about a desire. You made a decision when you decided to come to Class 201. I want to challenge you to make the decision to commit to these habits right now.

Begin right now! Don't wait. Don't procrastinate. You don't slide into a new habit. "One of these days," never arrives. You must have a starting point. It's easier to break a bad habit today than it will be tomorrow.

You say, "I'm serious. I'm going to develop the habit of daily Bible reading, daily prayer"—we call that a quiet time—"weekly tithe and weekly small group." You must have a starting point, and it's easier to break a bad habit today than it will be tomorrow. I love that verse in Ecclesiastes 11:4 that says this:

If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.

ECCLESIASTES 11:4 (TLB)

So, we start with desire and then we make the decision.

Step Three: **DECLARATION**

What does that mean? It means you:

Announce your intentions publicly. Make a covenant or resolution. The power of a vow is awesome. It is particularly powerful if you put your commitment in writing.

In just a minute, I'm going to show you the 201 Maturity Covenant. The power of a vow or the power of a covenant is amazingly awesome. The concept of a covenant is actually taught in both the New Testament and the Old Testament. In fact, there is the old covenant and the new covenant, which we call the Old Testament and the New Testament.

In places like Nehemiah, the Bible tells us that the people made a spiritual covenant together and they all signed their names to it. Nehemiah and Ezra and the other leaders signed their names, and they made a public covenant together. I'm going to challenge you to do that in just a minute. It's particularly powerful if you make your covenant in writing. There's something real about putting it down. The Bible says this in Psalms 76:11:

Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill them.

PSALM 76:11 (NIV)

Desire, decision, declaration. I'm going to make these habits permanent in my life for the rest of my life.

Step Four: **DETERMINATION**

You've got to keep at it. In order to develop a habit, you must:

Never allow an exception until the new habit is securely rooted in your life. Each lapse will be fatal. A single slip unwinds many turns at first. Continuity and success at the start is essential. Never be swayed by "just this once." The act of yielding weakens the will and reinforces your lack of self-control. It takes three weeks to become comfortable with a new habit and it takes another three to four weeks (doing it daily) for it to become a part of your life.

You're going to need to have a daily time with God and a weekly tithe to God and a weekly team for God every week for at least the next six weeks, until it develops as a habit in your life. A single slip unwinds many turns. It's like rolling up a ball of twine. If you drop the ball, you don't just drop it; the whole bunch of things come down.

Continuity and success are really at the start of making a habit permanent in your life. The very act of yielding to something weakens the will, reinforces your lack of self-control.

It takes 7 to 21 repetitions to learn something new.

These habits we've just taught you, you've heard them, but now you've got to practice them.

Step Five: DO IT!

Whenever you feel the slightest urge or prompting to practice this new habit—DO IT THEN! Don't wait. Seize every opportunity to reinforce your habit. Those feelings will not last, so whenever you feel inclined to perform your habit, do so!

For instance, if you're going to have a quiet time and all of a sudden you have a desire to do it in the middle of the day and you've already done it that morning, do it again. It's okay. Don't wait. If you do that and you reinforce it, and you feed the good, then as you feed that inclination you end up building the habit deeper and deeper in your life.

Step Six: DOUBLE-UP

Get a spiritual partner who will support you and encourage you. Find someone who is willing to hold you accountable and check up on you, especially in the early days before the new habit is firmly rooted in your life.

A spiritual partner is someone who will support you and encourage you in the habit of a daily time with God, a weekly tithe for God, and a weekly team for God. You might find somebody in your small group who will support you, encourage you.

The Bible says this in Hebrews 10:24:

And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities.

HEBREWS 10:24 (AMPC)

We looked at this verse before—Ecclesiastes 4:9-10:

Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10 (GNT)

Finally we have step seven, the most important one of all:

Step Seven: **DEPEND ON GOD**

Rely on God's power to help you establish the habit. Remember, Satan does not want you to develop habits that help you grow spiritually and make you like Christ, so he will do all he can to tempt you, cause you to slip, or discourage you. Pray!

You've got to realize Satan is going to fight you tooth and nail. He'll do all he can to tempt you, to cause you to slip up, to discourage you. Pray and ask people to pray for you. Look again at 2 Timothy 1:7:

For the Spirit that God has given us . . . fills us with power, love, and self-control.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7 (GNT)

If you're thinking, "I'm not sure I can do this," join the club! We need God's strength to develop godly habits and character. And he is willing to give us his strength!

Look at Philippians 2:13:

*For it is God who is at work within you, giving you
the will and the power to achieve his purpose.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 (PHILLIPS)

Notice that. Circle “the will and the power.” He gives you the willingness—“I want to do it”—and then he gives you the power to do it. He says, “That comes from me.”

TEACHING TIP:

The teaching of this final moment of commitment should take only about 5 minutes. And as we noted at the beginning of the study, it’s the most important 5 minutes of the class!

We have one last thing to do as we finish the class. It’s really the most important thing that we do. We’re going to commit together to these habits. So for just a moment, would you put your papers down and look at me.

Don’t miss the importance of this commitment. Commitment to these habits will change your life, and that will change everything. I am absolutely convinced that you will be a different person by your commitment to these habits—you will make better decisions and grow in character—because that’s what spending time with Jesus does for us. I’m confident that there are some marriages in this room that will be saved because you’re committing to these habits. Your marriage might be fine now, but years down the road you’ll hit a rough spot and these habits will prepare you for what is coming. I know without a doubt that your children will be different people than they would have been because you’ve developed these habits. Being with Christ will change you, and that will change them. Not that you’re going to become perfect, but even a 1% difference in direction makes a big difference over 10, 20 years.

With that in mind, grab this 201 covenant card, and let’s make this commitment together. Let’s say it out loud together as a prayer:

Father,

“Having committed myself to membership in my church family, and being in agreement with the Maturity Covenant, I now commit to practice the habits essential for spiritual maturity with

My Time: Spending Daily Time with God in personal Bible reading and having a personal prayer life—Consistently talking with God.

My Finances: Offering a tithe regularly to God—Giving the first 10 percent of my income.

My Relationships: Connecting with the family of God—Fellowshipping with other believers in a small group.

I know I’m not meant to keep these commitments on my own, so I ask for your strength. Give me the will, give me the power to achieve your purposes in my life. I pray this is Jesus’ name,

Amen.”

Congratulations! You’ve finished the class. Now, what’s your next step? This class is part of the four purpose classes in the Life Development course series—Class 101: Discovering Church Membership; Class 201: Discovering Spiritual Maturity; Class 301: Discovering My Ministry; Class 401: Discovering My Life Mission. These four classes build on each other. You commit to lifelong growth by staying in a small group and by attending classes and seminars we offer at Saddleback. You can use the Spiritual Health Assessment and Spiritual Health Planner that are at the back of your notebook to help you develop a plan to bring God’s five purposes into your life and into balance.

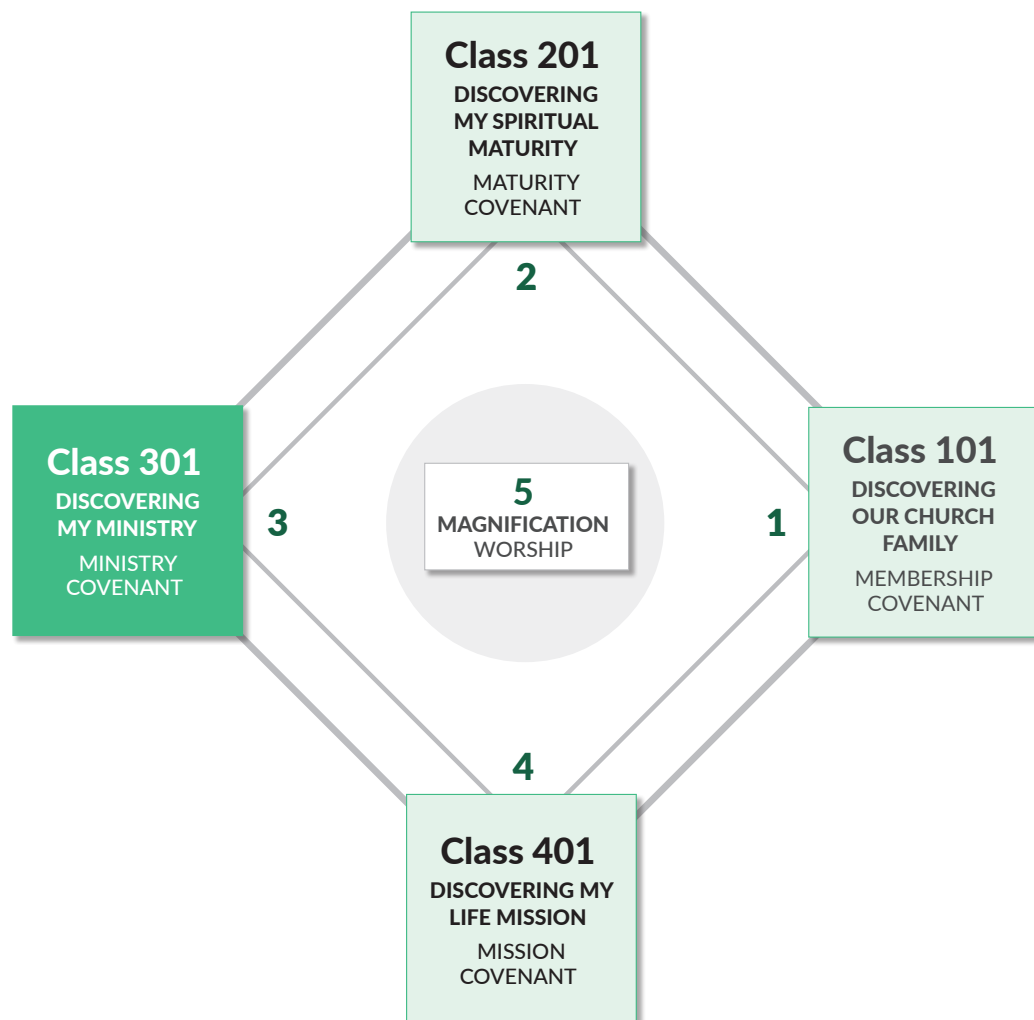
Now, I want to encourage you to keep this notebook in a prominent place so you can review this material from time to time as a personal refresher course in spiritual growth. Let me give you a little true confession. Some of this material I wrote over 40 years ago. I wrote the material on spiritual quiet time when I was 18 years old, and yet I find that even in coming back and teaching it to you, it reinforces and refreshes in me the basic essentials to basic Christian growth.

Thanks for joining me in these sessions. I want you to know that I’ll be praying for you, and I hope you pray for me. God bless you.

WHAT ARE MY NEXT STEPS?

The Purpose Driven Life Development Process

Commit to lifelong growth by joining a small group and attending classes and seminars offered at Saddleback Church.



Answer Key

ANSWER KEY

INTRODUCTION

Overview of Spiritual Maturity

Spiritual maturity is BEING LIKE JESUS.

Understanding Discipleship

1. Mature believers are called DISCIPLES.
2. I cannot be a disciple without being DISCIPLINED.
3. The more disciplined I become, the more God can USE ME.
4. The mark of a disciple is CROSS-BEARING.
5. How often am I to do this? DAILY
6. What is involved in “cross-bearing?” WHATEVER IT TAKES to give Christ first place in my life!

Four Habits of a Disciple

Develop HABITS.

Class Goal

I will COMMIT to the habits necessary for spiritual maturity.

HABIT ONE: DAILY TIME IN GOD'S WORD

Six Ways to Get a Grasp of the Bible

1. Hear God's Word
We forget 95% of what we hear after 72 hours!
2. Read God's Word
How often should I read God's Word? DAILY

If I read approximately 15 minutes a day, I can read through the entire Bible in one year.

3. Study God's Word

The difference between reading and studying the Bible is that you TAKE NOTES when you study.

The secret of effective Bible study is knowing how to ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.

4. Memorize God's Word

Three keys to memorizing: REVIEW; REVIEW; REVIEW.

We remember what is IMPORTANT TO US.

5. Meditate on God's Word

Meditation is FOCUSED THINKING about a Bible verse that speaks to you, in order to apply its truth in your own life.

6. Apply God's Word

Most applications will focus on one of the three RELATIONSHIPS: with GOD, with MYSELF, with OTHERS.

Four Marks of a Good Application Action

1. It's PERSONAL.
2. It's PRACTICAL.
3. It's POSSIBLE.
4. It's PROVABLE.

HABIT TWO: PRAYER-TALKING WITH GOD

How to Revitalize Your Prayer Life

Approach Prayer with the Right Attitude.

Be REAL.

- Don't try to impress GOD.
- Don't try to impress OTHERS.

Be RELAXED.

Be REVEALING.

Use the Model Jesus Gave Us

The Six Parts of Prayer

1. Praise: I begin by EXPRESSING MY LOVE FOR GOD.

KEY: GOD'S CHARACTER is the basis for our boldness in making requests in prayer.

2. Purpose: I commit myself TO DOING GOD'S WILL.
3. Provision: I ask God to MEET MY DAILY NEEDS.

- What needs can I pray about? ALL OF THEM!

KEY: BE SPECIFIC.

4. Pardon: I ask God to FORGIVE MY SINS.

Four Steps to Forgiveness

Step 1: Ask the Holy Spirit to REVEAL every sin.

Step 2: Confess each sin SPECIFICALLY.

Step 3: Make RESTITUTION to others when necessary.

Step 4: By faith, ACCEPT God's forgiveness.

5. People: I pray for OTHER PEOPLE.
6. Protection: I ask for PROTECTION and DIRECTION.

A Daily Quiet Time with God through Prayer and Bible Reading

Definition of a Quiet Time

The Importance of a Daily Quiet Time

1. We were CREATED to have fellowship with God.
2. Jesus DIED to make a relationship with God possible.
3. Personal time alone with God was Jesus' SOURCE OF STRENGTH.
4. Every person who has been effective in SERVICE for God developed this habit.
5. You cannot be a HEALTHY Christian without it!

The Purpose of a Daily Quiet Time

1. To give DEVOTION to God.
2. To get DIRECTION from God.
3. To gain DELIGHT in God.

Fact: The better I get to know Christ, the more I LOVE HIM.

4. To grow MORE like Christ.

How to Begin a Daily Quiet Time

- The best time is when you are AT YOUR BEST.
- Whatever time you set, BE CONSISTENT.

- Begin with the right attitude.
REVERENCE
EXPECTANCY
OBEDIENCE

15 Minutes with God

1. RELAX 1 minute
2. READ 4 minutes
3. REFLECT 4 minutes
4. RECORD 2 minutes
5. REQUEST 4 minutes

How to Overcome the Problems with Your Quiet Time

Never judge your quiet time by your FEELINGS.

What if I miss a day?

Don't GET ON A GUILT TRIP.

Don't BECOME LEGALISTIC.

Don't GIVE UP.

It takes THREE weeks for you to become familiar with a new task. Then it takes another THREE weeks before it becomes a comfortable habit.

HABIT THREE: TITHING—GIVING BACK TO GOD

Why God Wants Me to Give: Seven Benefits of Tithing

1. Giving makes me MORE LIKE GOD.
2. Giving draws me CLOSER TO GOD.

3. Giving is the antidote to MATERIALISM.
4. Giving strengthens MY FAITH.
5. Giving is an investment in ETERNITY.
6. Giving blesses me IN RETURN.
7. Giving MAKES ME HAPPY.

What the Bible Teaches about Tithing

What is Tithing?

“Tithe” means “a TENTH part.”

A “tithe” is giving the FIRST 10% of my income.

An “offering” is anything I give IN ADDITION TO my tithe.

Why Should I Tithe?

1. Because God COMMANDS IT.
2. Because Jesus COMMENDS IT.
3. Tithing demonstrates that God has FIRST PLACE IN MY LIFE.
4. Tithing reminds me that EVERYTHING I HAVE was given to me by God!
5. Tithing expresses my GRATITUDE TO GOD.
6. God says that refusing to tithe is STEALING from him.
7. Tithing gives God a chance to prove HE EXISTS and wants to bless you!
8. Tithing proves that I LOVE GOD.

What Should I Tithe?

The FIRST part of what I earn,
not the LEFTOVERS.

Where Should I Tithe?

Where I WORSHIP.

When Should I Tithe?

WHEN I WORSHIP.

Giving with the Right Attitude

Give WILLINGLY.

Give CHEERFULLY.

Give SACRIFICIALLY.

Give EXPECTANTLY.

**HABIT FOUR: FELLOWSHIP—
ENJOYING GOD’S FAMILY****Why is Fellowship So Important?**

1. I BELONG in God’s family with other believers.
2. I need ENCOURAGEMENT to grow spiritually.
3. I need ACCOUNTABILITY to grow spiritually.
4. Christ is PRESENT when we fellowship together.
5. There is POWER when people pray together.
6. Fellowship is a WITNESS to the world.
7. I am obligated to SERVE every other Christian.

**How Can a Large Church
Maintain Close Friendships?**

Every member needs to be a part of a SMALL GROUP.

At Saddleback, we believe our church must grow both LARGER and SMALLER at the same time.

**What is the Purpose of Our
Small Groups?**

1. GROW (Maturity)
2. BELONG (Membership)
3. WORSHIP (Magnification)
4. SERVE (Ministry)
5. SHARE (Mission)

**HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN
GOOD HABITS**

Step One: DESIRE

Step Two: DECISION

Step Three: DECLARATION

Step Four: DETERMINATION

It takes 7 to 21 repetitions to learn something new.

Step Five: DO IT!

Step Six: DOUBLE-UP.

Step Seven: DEPEND ON GOD.