

PERSONAL LIFE DISCIPLINES

1. Prayer: Direct communication with God

- Include time in your daily schedule for prayer, preferably in the morning
What conditions for answered prayer are found in the passages below?

- 1John 3:21-24 _____
- 1John 5:14-15 _____
- James 4:1-3 _____
- John 15:7-8 _____
- 1Pet 3:7 _____
- Matt 21:21-22 _____

2. Listening: Waiting in God's presence to hear from Him

One of the most important lessons in life that you and I can learn is how to listen to God. In our complex and hectic lives, nothing is more urgent, nothing more necessary, and nothing more rewarding than hearing what God has to say to us — both as bodies of believers and as individual people. Include time in your monthly schedule to get away for an extended period to reflect and open up with God about your failings, challenges, and the direction of your life.

- Read *John 10:1-5*
Make a list of observations from this passage relative to listening
- Listening to God through prayer
 - Ask God for wisdom (*James 1:5-6*)
 - Ask God for insight (*Ps 139:23-24*)
 - The Holy Spirit will intercede (*Rom 8:26-27*)
- Listening to God Through the Bible (*Psalms 119:105*)
Do you have a plan for systematic reading of the Bible?
How is it going? What is hindering you and what are you doing about it?
- Meditation on the Scriptures (*Psalms 1:1-2*)
Not an emptying of the mind but rather an opening of the mind in the context of scripture permitting illumination by the Spirit.
 - Ask questions, such as *who, what, where, why* and *how*.
 - Continue to repeat the verse in your mind or out loud.
 - Use the verse to talk with God. Ponder each word for personal application.
 - Try to put the verse into your own words.
How can you discern the source of thoughts and ideas?

3. Bible Study: The systematic personal study of the Scriptures

What is your plan for systematic study of the Bible?
How is it going? What is hindering you?

4. **Bible Memorization:** Implanting God's truth where it will do the most good
 - Read [Psalm 119:11](#). *Is this important to you? Why?*
What is your Bible memorization plan?
5. **Fasting:** Humbling ourselves before God without distraction

Fasting involves the abstinence from food or drink, either total or partial, observed by either individuals or communities for varying lengths of time. The practice predates both Christian and Jewish history. Fasting was practiced by the NT church in seeking God's direction but is not taught, encouraged or commanded in any of the NT letters. Fasting may have benefit, not in getting God's attention, but of God getting our attention.
6. **Simplicity:** Removing from our lives the things that hold us back

Those of us who have many possessions or few can all be possessed by what we have—or don't have. While Christians should live simply, the focus should not be on getting rid of what we have, but rather upon seeking "a life of joyful unconcern for possessions" (Richard J. Foster).

 - Read [Phil 4:19](#). *Do you believe this promise? Why or why not?*
 - Read [1Tim 6:6-8](#). *What does it take for you to be content?*
 - Read [Heb 12:1-2](#). *What is holding you back from complete surrender to Christ?*
7. **Stewardship:** Faithful use and distribution of God's blessings

All we have is from God and we are required to use it according to His will.

 - Read [1Pet 4:10](#). *What is your gift and how are you using it?*
 - Read [Prov 3:9-10](#). *What does this say and how will you respond?*
 - Read [Eph 5:15-16](#). *Are you focused on the role God gave you? Explain.*
8. **Obedience:** The faithful response to God's Word and the guidance of His Spirit

By definition, a follower of Jesus will walk as Jesus walked. It is foolish to think that you can follow Jesus and not be obedient to Him.

 - Read [John 14:23](#). *What does obedience look like according to this verse? What are the benefits?*
 - Read [1John 2:3-6](#). *How does your life measure up? Do you walk as Christ walked?*
 - Read [Rom 16:19](#). *What is your reputation at home, at church, at work?*
9. **Evangelism:** Engaged in sharing the grace of Christ

If we are not actively involved in the work of evangelism the church will diminish and fail to carry on from generation to generation.

 - Read [2Cor 5:18-20](#). *What is the role of an ambassador? Explain.*
 - Read [Luke 19:10](#). *As an ambassador how are you carrying on the work of Christ?*
10. **Ministry:** The exercising of our spiritual gifts for the benefit of the Body

The church of Jesus Christ is being built by the Spirit of God by means of good works done by Christians as each does his part ([Eph 4:16](#)).

 - Read [Eph 2:10](#). *What are the consequences of neglecting or ignoring God's plan for us?*
 - Read [1Pet 4:10-11](#). *What is the special gift that you are to use for serving others?*
 - Read [Rom 12:6-8](#). *What have you experienced in exercising the gift given to you?*
 - Read [Acts 9:36-39](#). *Describe what Dorcas did and how it impacted others.*

11. **Thanksgiving:** The expression of gratitude for the grace of God

- Read Eph 5:20. *How often should we be thankful?*
 - *What does "all things" include?*
 - *Why is it hard to be thankful for all things?*
- Make a list of ten things that you are grateful for
- Read Phil 4:6. List reasons why we should be thankful in prayer
 - *Should we only be thankful for what God has done in the past?*
 - *Should we also be thankful for what God is doing and will do in the future?*

12. **Celebration:** Rejoicing always in the grace of God

- Read John 15:11. *Is God's joy in you? Explain. Is it showing?*
- Read Gal 5:22. *What causes us to lose joy? Explain.*
- Read Phil 4:4. *When should we rejoice? Why?*

13. **Worship:** Vital and real honoring of God

"To worship is to experience reality, to touch Life. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community" (Richard J. Foster).

- Read John 4:24. *What do you think Jesus meant by this?*
- Read Heb 10:24-25. *What's missing when we don't show up for church?*
- Read Heb 13:15. *What is your mind focused on when you sing songs in church?*

14. **Confession:** Accountability through openness and transparency

We each need to be able to both receive and extend grace to our fellow believers. We all fall short and need those we trust to help us back on the narrow way.

- Read Jas 5:16. *What guidelines would you suggest for applying this verse?*
- Read 1Tim 2:5. *What is the role of a priest? How does this apply to confession?*
- Read 1John 1:9. *What causes us to resist the confession of our sin?*

15. **Submission:** Learning to serve with others

- Read Eph 5:21. *What is this verse saying and why?*
- Read Mk 8:34. *What does this verse mean? Why is doing this hard?*
- Read 1Pet 2:13-14. *What human institutions does this include and have you complied?*

16. **Hospitality:** Actively seeking the fellowship of others

"The quality or disposition of receiving and treating guests and strangers in a warm, friendly, generous way" (dictionary.com).

- Read Heb 13:2. *At church do you gravitate to strangers or retreat to those you already know?*
- Read 1Pet 4:9. *Does hospitality come naturally to you or do you complain that it is required?*
- Read Matt 25:34-40. *What evidence is there that you are hospitable?*
- Read Luke 14:12-14. *What is your response to this passage?*

17. **Discipleship:** The high priority of building disciples

“...bringing a person to the point where the necessary disciplines of Christian living have been built into him so the lifelong process of maturing can reasonably be expected to continue in his own Christian experience” (Gary W. Kuhne).

- Read [2Tim 2:2](#). *Are you prepared to take such faithful disciples under your wing?*
- Read [1Thess 2:7-8](#). *How would you define the commitment of Paul?*
Do you have the same commitment?

18. **Fellowship:** The mutual sharing of our lives together as the Body of Christ

- Read [1John 1:6-7](#). *What is the basis of our fellowship with one another?*
Describe how fellowship has helped you?

19. **Forgiveness:** The extension of grace to others

Forgiveness is the act of pardoning an offender. In the Bible, the Greek word translated “forgiveness” literally means “to let go,” as when a person does not demand payment for a debt. We forgive others when we let go of resentment and give up any claim to be compensated for the hurt or loss we have suffered.

- Read [Matt 18:21-22](#). *Do you find this easy to accept? Explain.*
- Read [Eph 4:32](#). *To what extent has God forgiven you? Have you done the same to others?*
- Read [Matt 6:14-15](#). *What are the implications if we are unwilling to forgive others?*

APPENDIX

Prayer: Direct communication with God

What conditions for answered prayer are found in the passages below?

- **1John 3:21-24** If we keep His commandments and do what is pleasing to Him.
- **1John 5:14-15** If we ask according to His will.
- **James 4:1-3** If we ask with the right motives.
- **John 15:7-8** If we abide in Jesus.
- **1Pet 3:7** If husbands treat their wives with understanding and honor.
- **Matt 21:21-22** If you ask in faith without doubt.

Listening: Waiting in God's presence to hear from Him

- Read **John 10:1-5** *Make a list of observations from this passage relative to listening*
 - We should be able to hear and recognize God's voice to us.
 - He calls us personally and gives us guidance
 - We should follow His leading because we know His voice
 - We should flee from the voice of strangers

How can you discern the source of thoughts and ideas?

- Characteristics of Satan's messages to us
 - Will usually seek the fleshly gratification of basic human lusts
 - Will distort the teachings of Scripture
 - Will usually offer an easy solution to difficult problems, thus avoiding pain and discomfort, rather than directly facing the problem
 - Will result in separating you from God and other people
 - Will result in frustration, dismay, and worry
- Characteristics of God's messages to us
 - Consistent with the Word of God
 - Usually in conflict with the mainstream of conventional human wisdom
 - Will clash with fleshly gratification and basic human lusts
 - Will challenge one's faith to rise to a new level
 - Will call for personal courage to do what God has said to do, or to change in one's life what God has said to change
 - Will result in inner peace, a positive attitude, personal intimacy, confidence, purification and passion to obey

Stewardship: Faithful use and distribution of God's blessings

- Read **Prov 3:9-10**. *What does this say and how will you respond?*

You should acknowledge God because He is the source of your blessings. In context, it meant giving the first ten percent of your produce to the Lord. Applying it to today, giving Him honor means to give generously to God's work as He leads before other obligations and needs so that He will continue to bless you.

Obedience: The faithful response to God's Word and the guidance of His Spirit

- Read **John 14:23**. *What does obedience look like according to this verse? What are the benefits?*
Obedience is measured by faithful conformity to His Word. In doing so we will experience God's love and presence.

Evangelism: Engaged in sharing the grace of Christ

- **Read [2Cor 5:18-20](#). *What is the role of an ambassador? Explain.***

As ambassadors we are to issue God's word offering His appeal for people to be reconciled to Him.

Ministry: The exercising of our spiritual gifts for the benefit of the Body

- **Read [Eph 2:10](#). *What are the consequences of neglecting or ignoring God's plan for us?***

If we ignore or neglect the ministry gift God has given us we may find ourselves estranged from God and missing out on His blessing. Others will not experience what we would have contributed if we fail to use our gift. Walking with God requires obedience.

- **Read [Acts 9:36-39](#). *Describe what Dorcas did and how it impacted others.***

Deeds of kindness and charity were attributed to Dorcas. She made tunics and garments which she apparently gave to widows in need. She must have impacted many since all the widows were weeping at her loss.

Thanksgiving: The expression of gratitude for the grace of God

- **Read [Eph 5:20](#). *How often should we be thankful?***

- *What does "all things" include?*

- *Why is it hard to be thankful for all things?*

We should be thankful always for all things. All things includes 'all things' that come our way, even those things or circumstances we don't like, are inconvenient, or even harmful. It's hard sometimes to be thankful but we must understand that we are in God's loving hands His will is perfect and we need to trust Him. "All things work together for good" ([Rom 8:28](#)).

Celebration: Rejoicing always in the grace of God

- **Read [Gal 5:22](#). *What causes us to lose joy? Explain.***

We lose joy when we go rogue and fail to allow the Holy Spirit to direct our lives. He is our source of joy and other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit.

- **Read [Phil 4:4](#). *When should we rejoice? Why?***

We should rejoice always because we are in God's hands and the recipient of His blessings.

Worship: Vital and real honoring of God

- **Read [John 4:24](#). *What do you think Jesus meant by this?***

"God is an independent, incorporeal, personal Being" (William Hendriksen) and should be worshipped consistent with who He is. True worship comes from our inmost being of heart and mind in accordance with God's truth. The object of worship and the method are all-important.

- **Read [Heb 10:24-25](#). *What's missing when we don't show up for church?***

When we don't attend church we miss the encouragement, challenge and accountability of other believers. We also miss the act of corporate worship of our God and the teaching of His Word. Spiritual growth is important and is always considered in the context of community.

Confession: Accountability through openness and transparency

- **Read [Jas 5:16](#). *What guidelines would you suggest for applying this verse?***

It seems prudent that confessions of ones sins be limited to a trusted friend who can provide spiritual guidance and accountability. Public confession of sin should be limited to public sin that affects everyone in the assembly.

- **Read [1Tim 2:5](#).** *Where does this verse leave room for a priest as mediator? Explain.*
This verse clearly identifies Jesus as the only true mediator between God and mankind. His position is unique because He alone can testify that our sins are covered by His blood. Other believers can only counsel and encourage our repentance whether they be clergy or not.
- **Read [1John 1:9](#).** *What causes us to resist the confession of our sin?*
Pride and shame often prevent us from confessing our sins. We deceive ourselves when we try to ignore our guilt and pretend that we are without sin.

Submission: Learning to serve with others

- **Read [Eph 5:21](#).** *What is this verse saying and why?*
We are not independent but are under the authority of Christ. We are not independent but live in community with other believers who encourage and admonish us in the Spirit of Christ. To ignore the input of other believers demonstrates pride and arrogance and anyone who does so should be afraid of the consequences.
- **Read [Mk 8:34](#).** *What does this verse mean? Why is doing this hard?*
If we wish to walk with Christ then we must submit our lives to Him completely. Denying self is hard because of our sin nature but is essential if we are to grow spiritually and have victory in our life.
- **Read [1Pet 2:13-14](#).** *What human institutions does this include and have you complied?*
All institutions of authority established by mankind are included in this command and it is confirmed by Paul as well ([Rom 13:1](#)). There is no contrary teaching but there are examples of believers defying governmental authority when it was in direct contradiction to God's instructions ([Acts 4:18-20](#); [5:27-32](#)). Any believer should carefully discern whether the situation is significant enough to defy authority because there is always a price to pay for disobedience.

Discipleship: The high priority of building disciples

- **Read [1Thess 2:1-12](#).** *How would you define the commitment of Paul?*
Paul's commitment to the Thessalonians was complete. He gave of himself acting as a concerned parent in providing instruction, encouragement, and admonition. His ultimate commitment was to God who had commissioned him with the ministry of the gospel. With his commitment he faced hardship and opposition but that did not stop him.

Fellowship: The mutual sharing of our lives together as the Body of Christ

- **Read [1John 1:6-7](#).** *What is the basis of our fellowship with one another?*
Our fellowship with one another is based on our fellowship with Christ.

Forgiveness: The extension of grace to others

- **Read [Matt 6:14-15](#).** *What are the implications if we are unwilling to forgive others?*
If we are unwilling to forgive others then most likely we don't have the love of God within us and we may be lost. Bitterness and resentment are the result of not being willing to forgive and have no place in the life of a believer. We are to put off such things and put on those qualities that are Christ-like ([Col 3:12-14](#)). "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" ([1John 4:8](#)).