

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Colossians 1:10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...

John 15:7-8 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ^sThis is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Prayer: Thank Jesus that He has called you to be “attached” to Him, to receive life and power to live for Him. Jesus asks you to remain in Him so that you can live a life of love and joy. Are there Bible studies, times of personal study, and prayer that you participate in to help you remain in Jesus?

□ Day #1--Monday, May, 11th Read: *2 Timothy 3:16; Psalm 1:2; Luke 11:27-28.*

This week we focus on “Study.” The reading, studying, and applying of God’s word is a significant way we are to grow as disciples of Jesus for the purpose of living faithful lives of love and servanthood. A life of love and servanthood is the “fruit” that Jesus cited in yesterday’s gospel lesson.

The Bible is known by many names, “Holy Scripture,” “The Word of God,” and of course, “The Good Book.” The Bible is meant to be read, but more so it is meant to be lived. There are any people who know a lot about the Bible, fewer still live the Bible. This week, I encourage you to set a goal to read the Bible, pray, and meditate on God’s word. You can decide how much time. However, a good suggested time is 30 minutes a day that can be set aside to read a passage of scripture, think, reflect, and meditate on that passage, and then to ask the Holy Spirit to help you apply the truth that has been revealed to you. Do you feel that you can’t do thirty minutes? Start with five minutes and build up. It is important that you begin and let the power of scripture transform your life!

Reflect: Commit to a specific period of time during the day to be alone, read the Bible, and reflect upon the words you read. How can you apply those words during the day?

Pray: *Open your word to me living God. May I be more than a hearer, empower me to apply what you have revealed to me in my life. Amen.*

□ Day #2--Tuesday, May, 12th Read: *Romans 12:2; Matthew 4:3-4.*

Do you identify with these words of Francois Fenolin?:

Woe to those weak and timid souls who are divided between God and their world!
They want and they do not want. They are torn by desire and remorse at the same time...They have a horror of evil and a shame of good. They have the pains of virtue without tasting its sweet consolations. O how wretched they are.

We all struggle with the problem of “double mindedness.” A double minded life is characterized by ambivalence. We are just not sure where we stand. It is exemplified in Augustine’s famous request of God, “Lord, give me chastity, but not yet.” When we live a life of double mindedness we desire intimacy with God, yet spend little time cultivating that intimacy. We desire to be giving people, but

we do not share our resources. We want to be servants, but we want others to RECOGNIZE our sacrifices and our “servant-heart.” The daily reading and applying of God’s word transforms our minds and our hearts. The Bible helps us to learn how to live like Jesus lived. The purpose of scripture, writes John Ortberg, “is not to help us get a 100 score on the heavenly entrance exam. It is to help us become equipped for good works.” Another way of saying this is, reading and applying God’s word is God’s way of changing us from being “double-minded” to a “single-minded” focus: living the way Jesus would live if Jesus were me. Again, this is the goal of discipleship.

Reflect: God’s word helps me to become like Jesus.

Pray: *Ask God to help you apply a scriptural truth that you have read today.*

Day #3--Wednesday, May, 13th Read: *Ezra 7:10; Psalm 77:12.*

We need to read the Bible “meditatively” as well as to study the Bible intellectually. Your goals should be to study God’s word with “the head”, doing research with study tools such as a concordance, biblical encyclopedia, or biblical dictionary as well as to take time to simply “reflect” on a passage of scripture letting a passage or verse speak to a particular situation in your life. Of course, this is not an either/or situation. We can intellectually study the Bible and have our lives transformed AND meditatively read the Bible with head and heart and have its truths change our hearts and minds. Remember, in both instances the goal is transformation—not just information.

Reflect: I need to study diligently and reflect faithfully on God’s word.

Pray: *Change me Father, through the in-depth study of your word and through my personal reflection on your word. May you use both to make me like your Son my Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Day #4--Thursday, May, 14th Read: *Psalm 46:10; Psalm 27:1.*

Today, we look at the suggestions of Dr. John Ortberg, author of *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*. He outlines a five-step process:

1. Ask God to Meet you in Scripture. Ask God to speak to you and EXPECT He will. As you read, certain ideas may strike you. You may feel a “prompt” to take some action such as a change in attitude.
2. Read the Bible in a Repentant Spirit. Read the Bible with a willingness to surrender everything. Resolve that you will be obedient to scripture.
3. Meditate on a Fairly Brief Passage or Narrative. Immerse yourself in a short passage, maybe a few verses. Read it slowly, let the words sink deep into your soul. If you are reading a story, use your imagination and place yourself in the story. The goal is not to get through scripture, but to get the scriptures through us.
4. Take One Thought or Verse with You Through the Day. Choose one verse and think about it throughout your day. Ortberg uses the example of Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God!” For a day, let your mind continually return to these words.
5. Allow This Thought to Become Part of Your Memory. Memorize small passages of scripture. It is amazing that as we memorize scripture, God will bring them to our attention when we face situations in which we need comfort, discipline, or direction.

Reflect: Read the scriptures using the five-step process above.

Pray: *Holy Spirit, shape me through your word. May I discern your direction, your comfort, and your presence through what you reveal to me through the scriptures. Amen.*

□ Day #5--Friday, May 15th Read: *Colossians 2:6-7.*

Today, we look at the words of E. Stanley Jones regarding the habit of daily Bible reading. It is interesting how he uses the word, “habit.” We all have habits. Perhaps our spiritual disciplines can be considered “spiritual habits?”

The best man that ever lived on our planet illustrated this receptivity and response rhythm. No one was so utterly dependent on God and no one was more personally disciplined in his habits.

He did three things by habit: (1) “He stood up to read as was his custom”—he read the Word of God by habit. (2) “He went out into the mountain to pray as was his custom”—he prayed by habit. (3) “He taught them again as was his custom”—he passed on to others by habit what he had and what he had found.

These simple habits were the foundation habits of his life. They are just as up-to-date as tomorrow morning. No converted person can live without those habits at work vitally in his life.

Reflect: I can develop a “habit” of reading and applying God’s word in my life.

Pray: *Jesus, I have many habits. I ask you today to help me develop the habit of spending time with you, reading your word, and living that word in my life. I need you. I want to be like you and glorify my Father in my life. Amen.*

□ Day #6--Saturday, May 16th Read Again: *John 5:39; Luke 11:28; Psalm 119:105.*

What does Martin Luther say about the Bible? Remember the “Small Catechism”? In the Small Catechism, Luther sums up what we have been focusing on this week:

The Bible is the Word of God...The Bible is the Word of God because these men wrote it by inspiration of God...”By inspiration of God” means that God the Holy Ghost moved the holy men to write, and put into their minds, the very thoughts which they expressed and the very words which they wrote....God gave us the Bible to make us “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,” and to train us in holy living...We should diligently and reverently read and study the Bible, listen attentively when it is read and explained, believe it, and live according to it.

Reflect: God uses His word to help me become like His Son.

Prayer: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Lord, bring me closer to you through the words of the Bible that I may be faithful to you and love my neighbor. Amen.*