

CLOSER TO GOD

Exploring Spiritual Practices



Small Group Booklet
March - April 2017

CLOSER



TO GOD:

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES



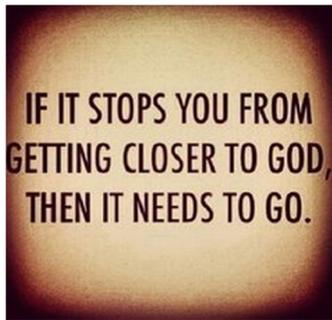
We live in a world where people struggle to put religious knowledge into practice: presidents speak of Jesus without expecting to live the values of Jesus; parents encourage their children to “be good” when they themselves are not; and more often than not we ourselves know the teachings of Jesus better than we practice them!

The season of Lent offers the followers of Jesus an opportunity to change this. **Lent** is a 40 day period of preparation before Easter, where we take stock of our lives and immerse ourselves in spiritual practices in order to draw closer to God. While we should try to live close to God every day, it is helpful to have special periods set aside for spiritual reflection on the way we live our lives. During Lent we actively reflect on the story of Jesus and how his story changes the story of our own lives. The moment we open our hearts to God, our stories find a place within God’s story.

We all need opportunities to place God at the centre of our lives, and often we need these opportunities over and over again. These are called “Spiritual Practices”- or “Disciplines”. The purpose of Spiritual Disciplines/Practices is to help us discover our place in God’s daily

activities. When we create spiritual moments with God, Grace steps in and changes us to reflect on the dream God has for our lives. *“A spiritual Discipline is an intentional directed action by which we do what we can do in order to receive from God the ability (power) to do what we cannot do by direct effort.”* (A year with God: Richard Foster). We are not only saved by Grace (in a moment), but we also live by Grace (every day). **So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16 ESV).**

We can discover an abundant life close to God. This is rooted in the practice of making a time and space to meet with God every day. It is here that we can replace bad habits with spiritually mature ones. When we put our spiritual practices in place they change the way we live – and help us to change the world we live in!



This study will focus on some of the ancient spiritual disciplines that have kept the Spirit of Jesus alive in the hearts of Christians through the past 2000 years. We shall use the stories of people in the Bible as examples of how a person’s life can change by knowing and living close to God. Their example and dedication offers us space to reflect on our part in God’s story and how to become more Christ-centered.

However, entrenching new habits is never easy and you might lose hope as you seek to make them part of your life. To help you stay focused ask someone (a family member, friend, small group member) to hold you accountable over the next few weeks. No one can do it alone. True life change happens in community. Pray often. God can’t wait to spend more time with you!

God Bless You!
Pete & Nadja

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



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This section is for self-study – not part of a small group session.



CONFESSION AND FASTING

ADAM & EVE (Genesis 3: 1-13) ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, and as such is traditionally a day of fasting. The previous year's palm crosses are burned to make the "blessing ashes" used to make a cross on the congregant's foreheads. This speaks of the ending of the spiritual journey of the preceding year, and the prayer of repentance and healing symbolized by ashes and oil.



This day is the start of the 40 days that represent Jesus time in the desert, where he endured temptation by Satan and prepared for his ministry. Christians traditionally spend this time in repentance, fasting and prayer as preparation for Easter.

We live in a world where we know what is right, and are tempted to do what is wrong. However, instead of forcing us to be obedient, God allows us freedom to choose between right and wrong. The biblical account of Adam and Eve illustrates this: they had to choose either to obey God - or to disobey God. Sadly, even though they lived in paradise and knew that eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil was wrong, they chose to ignore God. And having done wrong – they hid from God. They didn't take responsibility, made excuses, blamed others and avoided admitting the truth. *Sound familiar?* As is so well captured in the parable of Adam and Eve, human beings of every generation want to avoid God when we have sinned. It feels better to hide, rather than be confronted by God. The human desire to choose to live life without God's values separates us from God. The amazing thing is that God comes in search of us! God overcomes this act of rebellion through Jesus, who teaches of a Grace-filled second chance to choose to live the way God intended.

No sin is too big for God to forgive. Jesus's death on the cross makes it possible for us to ask for forgiveness *and* to be forgiven. We receive God's Grace (forgiveness and healing) as we admit our deepest weaknesses and darkest shame. God delights in forgiving us! God is always there for us - God knew us before we were born and will love us through eternity.

How do we ensure that the distance between us and God does not get too big?

We need to take time in prayer every day for reflection. We need to examine our conscience, repent and be determined to sin no more. We can focus on one particular failure, or on the general direction of our life during the day. It is good to get into the habit of confessing our sin immediately, and so choosing to change the direction of our lives.

A useful spiritual practice to use when we want to reinforce spiritual confession and change of heart is **fasting**. It is the discipline of choosing to do without a particular food: this can range from skipping a meal, to cutting out something we love eating - such as chocolate or sugar in our coffee. The idea is to use the craving for the food as a reminder to pray. We want to replace our hunger for food with hunger for God. Fasting humbles our souls and helps us see our weaknesses with more clarity. The Bible records stories of people fasting when in mourning, in repentance, or in seeking blessings, answers and guidance. Fasting forces us to look away from own desires to the desires of God. *Note: Fasting is not a bribe to get God to do something my way – it is rather a moment when I am open to discovering life according to God’s way.* Many people choose the spiritual practice of fasting during the period of Lent as a reminder of the 40 day journey to Easter.

New habit for the week:

Fasting is a personal choice and there are various ways to do it. We would like to encourage you to choose a form of fasting for the rest of the week: be it skipping a meal, or giving up a beloved part of your diet. Use this moment of abstinence as an opportunity for prayer.

Verses for reflection and meditation:

Genesis 3:8-13, I Timothy 2:5, I John 1:8-2:1, Luke 12:2-3, Joel 2:12, John 15:1-5.

WEEK 1: PRAYER AND STUDY

NEHEMIAH

(Nehemiah 1: 1-11)



Prayer is, in its simplest form, a conversation with God. Some of us see prayer as a duty, a confession session, or a place of asking God for blessing. Have we ever thought that we might hear God speaking to us? The closest way to get to the heart of God is to pray – often, with others, or alone.

Richard Foster writes: ***“We will never have pure enough motives, or be good enough, or know enough in order to pray rightly. We simply must set all these things aside and begin praying. In fact, it is in the very act of prayer itself – the intimate, ongoing interaction with God – that these matters are cared for in due time”.***

God is our source of spiritual sustenance. The more we pray the more our thoughts are shaped by God's thoughts. Prayer changes us and our view of the world around us. We never pray alone, because the Spirit of God prays with us (**Romans 8:26-27**). If we are not sure what to pray, then use the prayer that Jesus gave us: the Lord's Prayer. (**Matthew 6:9-13**) It's simple – just pray!

Nehemiah never did anything without praying. His prayers were simple and direct petitions. It was not just a spiritual daily ritual for him; it was a way of life that shaped and strengthened his heart to face what lay ahead. He was honest to God about his feelings and wasn't scared to reveal his heart. God listens to us even if what we are praying about is "wrong". God can handle all our loud moans and selfish groans. He sees and knows everything already.

Note: prayer is not an alarm clock to remind God of things that God has forgotten – or does not know! God knows the need and pain of our world. However, as we pray we encounter the heartbeat of God, and we grow in our compassion and in our capacity to be part of the healing of our world.

Nehemiah was the trusted cupbearer to Babylonian King Artaxerxes in the city of Susa, east of the Tigris River. He heard God's call to rebuild Jerusalem's wall, and gained permission to take up this challenge in 445BC. Remembered in the Bible as a great leader, he always prayed for God's help in all he did and succeeded greatly because of this.

Reading the Bible is part of our prayerful reflection. The Bible is God's book, his message of love to us and the basis of all the Spiritual Disciplines. Bible Study is the **"intentional process of engaging the mind with the written and spoken Word of God, and the world God has created; in such a way that the mind takes on an order conforming to the order upon which it concentrates"**. (Richard Foster)

If you don't have time to **pray & read scriptures**, you're busier than **God** intended you to be.

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The more we read the Bible, the more we become like God as we get to know him better. This is not an unthinking skimming of the words: rather reading the Bible requires both an analytical examination of the text, as well as asking the Holy Spirit to reveal new insight to us so that we can grow in love for God and other people.

There are various ways to study the Bible:

1. **Observation.** What is the Bible saying? *Look at the terms used and repetitions. Ask questions: Who, What, Where? And When?*
2. **Interpretation.** What does it mean? *Look at the culture of the writer, cross reference it and read up more using commentaries and Bible Dictionaries.*

3. **Application.** How can I change? *How does this truth affect my relationship with God, others, and myself?*

Do not get intimidated by your own lack of knowledge – the most important thing is that you read the Bible and try to apply it to your life. This is a lifelong journey of discovery. Exploring the Bible is the best way to get to know God and grow in your spiritual maturity.

Small Group Activity:

Read Nehemiah Chapter 1:1-11 The Prayer.

Use the Bible study technique above and then answer the following questions:

- What is the basic story and lesson(s) in these verses?
- Why was this story included in the Bible? Is it still relevant, does it have meaning today? Explain.
- How can I apply what I have learned into my life today?
 - *Please ask someone in the group to hold you accountable to your promise.*
- Will what we have learned today influence the group? Will we do things differently? Please explain.

Prayer: We introduce a Prayer Labyrinth.

A labyrinth is not a maze or a puzzle to be solved but a path of meaning to be experienced. Its path is circular and convoluted, but it has no dead ends. A labyrinth has one entrance — one way in and one way out. When we trace the path, we go around short curves and long curves; sometimes we are out on the edge, sometimes we circle around the center. When we travel the path inward, we carry our burdens with us. When we meditate or pray in the centre, we ask for grace, forgiveness, and understanding. When we follow the path outward, we are lighter, more joyful, and ready again to take on our life's challenges.



- **Please use the prayer labyrinth (p.8) to pray in silence (use your finger or the back of a pen and start at the bottom and work your way to the middle; then follow your way out again).**

Bible: We introduce a Bible memory verse

- **Choose a verse that was meaningful to you and re-read it often. Re-write it on paper. Study it. Memorize it.**

New habit for the week:

Use one/both of the activities above to meditate with God each day.



Verses for reflection and meditation:

Nehemiah 1:5-11, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Romans 8:22-27, 1 Timothy 2:1-8, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

WEEK 2: SOLITUDE AND MEDITATION

JOSHUA

(Joshua 1:6-9)

How often have we not heard someone say: “I am too busy to exercise, read, and visit friends – and especially to sit quietly? Silence and solitude are rare commodities in today’s life. We frantically fill our days with activities and then collapse exhausted at the end of the day. Even retired people have been heard to say “I am so busy that I do not know how I ever found time to work”. There is always something else that needs to be done – a never-ending “to-do” list. We often act without thinking, jumping from one thing to the next on our list.

Jesus shows us that we cannot continue this indefinitely. He took time out to seek quietness and rest: **But now even more the reports about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. (Luke 5:15-16 ESV)** Jesus left the crowds behind to pray. This means we purposefully have to withdraw from others to create open empty spaces in our souls so that we can be found by God.



The Bible's archeology shows that Joshua lived between 1355-1245BC. He assisted Moses in the leadership of God's people out of Egypt to their promised land. Like Moses he faithfully asked God's direction in all the challenges he faced. God told Joshua to be courageous and strong, to adhere to the law and meditate on it daily.

If Jesus needed solitude, how much more do we need to stop and ask God for guidance before we act? "It is dangerous to make big decisions without thinking about it. Unless God is in our plans, we work in vain. **“Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain”.** (Psalm 127:1 ESV)

Joshua 1:8 tells of God's command that Joshua be a leader who was willing to meditate day and night. Joshua became a great leader because he learned to take the time to be still before God. Through

the example of Joshua we see that we need to think through our plans and prepare with God, constantly making sure that we are going in the right direction. It is impossible to be the leader God wants us to be without spending time with the one that leads us.

Jesus also models this by starting his ministry with 40 days alone in the desert. He spent time with God before he set out into the world. We need to plan this "thinking and praying" time into our diaries as it will not happen by chance. **There are various ways to meditate, but we suggest the following steps for at least 15 minutes a day in the coming week:**



- Find a quiet room in your house / a space outside: somewhere without distractions.
- Write down those thoughts that are distracting you from sitting in silence. Put them aside for later.
- Breathe deeply: in (4 counts), hold (4 counts), breath out (4 counts). Relax.

- Set your mind on God. Pray for insight and for knowledge of God's presence in the silence.
- Rest in God. Just sit in silence.

If you need to, set an alarm to indicate when your time is finished.

If you want to meditate on God's word choose a verse to read (repeatedly), write it down, say it out loud, sing it and then pray it. Other ways to meditate with God could be to colour-in, go for a walk or just sit in relaxed silence. The aim and purpose of meditation is to spend time with God.

Small Group Activity:

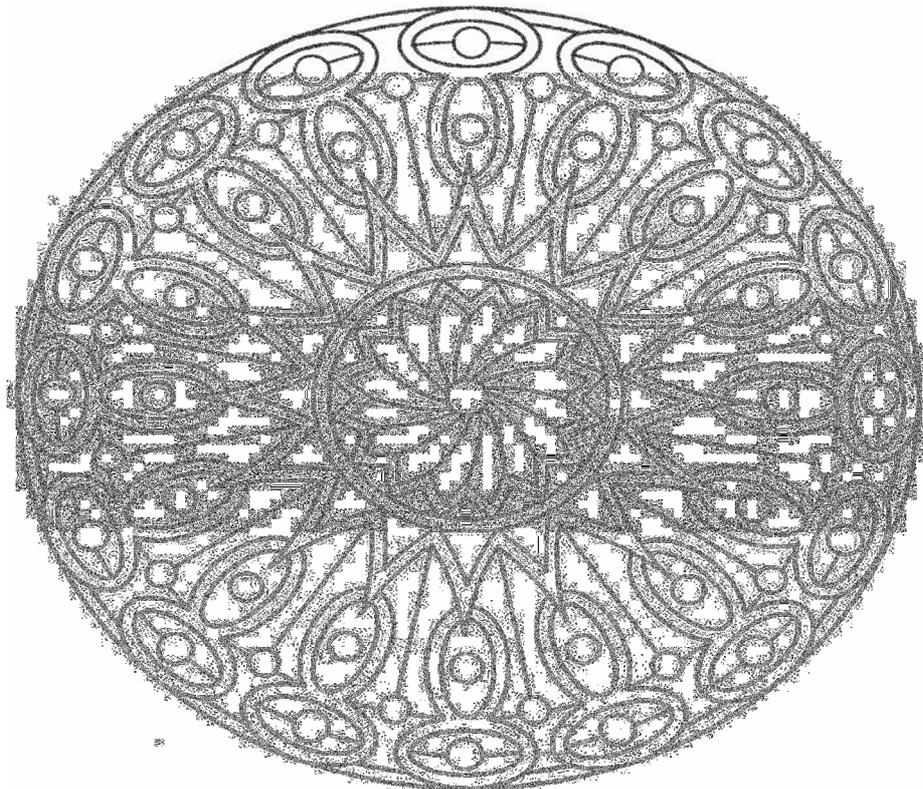
Catch up on the last week's activities and news: *Ask how the last week has been. Has it been easy to carve time into your day to pray and do some Bible study? Discuss.*

Set time aside (15 minutes) to meditate in silence, using any method the group feels comfortable with. You could meditate by:

- Looking at an object (candle, flower, a cross).
- By colouring-in the mandala below (please remember colour pencils).
- Meditate on the following verse: **Joshua 1:9 "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."**

Once you have completed the exercise, please share your experiences.

The Mandala: The ancient spiritual practice of using a mandala is common in many different religious traditions – ranging from Buddhist meditation practices, to the Celtic cross, to Gothic Rose Windows.



New habit for the week:

Meditate alone for 15 minutes a day for the rest of the week, using any one of the above techniques.

Verses for reflection and meditation:

Mark 6:31, Joshua 1:7 & 8, Psalm 63:5-8, 2 Corinthians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

WEEK 3: SIMPLICITY AND SUBMISSION

PAUL

(Acts 16: 6-15)



Simplicity is a central teaching in our Christian faith. It is defined as the stripping away of luxury and pretention in order to focus one's life on obeying the call of God. Jesus encouraged his disciples to live a simple lifestyle that focused on Him rather than the materialistic things of this world. ***“He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts” (Mark 6:8 ESV).***

One spiritual teacher wrote that “The more we have, the less we own” (**Meister Eckhart**). This speaks to the fact that our possessions own us. It becomes a vicious circle that we cannot escape as we struggle to distinguish between what we have, what we want, and what we actually need.

We can simplify our lives by getting rid of our possessions. *Do you have items in your house that you never use? Can we honestly answer to how many outfits we really need?* We could just be happy with what we have, and thus refrain from buying luxuries and indulgences that in most cases we don't need or can't afford. We can also simplify our lives by choosing to reduce our exposure to the people and or situations that cause us stress. Simplification can mean spending more time with our family and less at work; spending less time with people who are negative and more time with people who encourage us. Simplicity can be choosing to take “time out” from social media or from the endless television series, in order to quietly read a book. God says that we only need him; the rest will be added as we need it. It is for this reason that Paul was able to sing praises to God despite being in prison (**Acts 16:25**). He didn't need anything else in order to praise God.

Submission is yielding the direction of our lives to the guidance of God. We often struggle to do this as we believe doing so will lead to a life devoid of happiness and joy. This ignores the fact that God created us, with our gifts, skills and good desires: therefore we are designed to do the things we enjoy the most. Contentment is not getting what we want; it is doing what God wants. God is neither a slave-master, nor a remote-controller. God wants what is best for us, and as we submit to God's plans, we realize with great joy what it feels like to finally be aligned with our true purpose. **(Matthew 6:9-10)**

Paul always submitted to God first, casting his concerns on him. He walked in the Grace of God every day. We read that they tried to visit both Asia and Bithynia but **“the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them” (Acts 16:7)**. Paul's central teaching was that God's glory is revealed when we submit to God's plans. Paul heard the call of God to cross into Macedonia, and when he obeyed he discovered success and joy. Paul went to Philippi and was content to worship alongside a river, speak to what would be culturally described as “spiritually inferior” woman, and go to prison – in order to obey the call of God. Despite his hardships, and despite the “thorn in his side” **(2 Cor. 12:7)**, his ministry thrived because of his obvious trust in God. Like Paul, when we overcome adversity and give things up that control us, God's glory shines through. Like Paul, we too can walk with the power of the Holy Spirit in submission with God. When we do, he strengthens us and empowers us to do what needs to be done.

Questions for reflection: Do you know your role in God's story? Is there anything in your life is distracting you from God? Are you clinging to what you know rather than discovering that an adventurous God-filled life? God is calling you as you are! His plans for you are much bigger and more wondrous than you can ever imagine.

Small Group Activity:

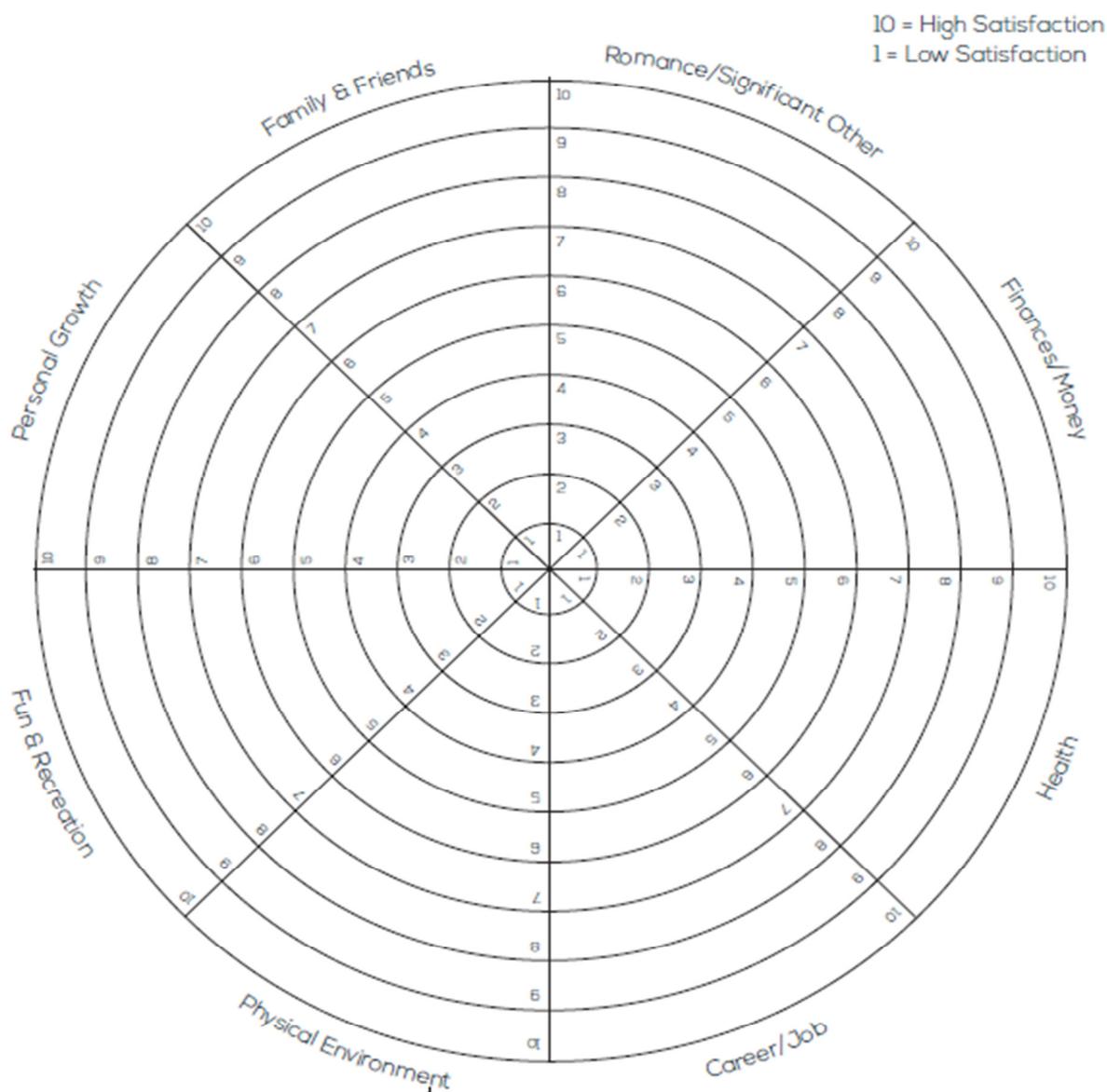
For Discussion: Did you manage to spend time alone with God last week? Share your stories.

The Wheel of Life: This is a useful tool often used in coaching and goal-setting exercises. It helps us to create balance in our lives. Depending on our stage in life we focus on different things (family, finance, romance), and there are periods where a certain area takes precedence because of circumstance. We do however need to strive to live a balanced God-filled life. Have a look at the wheel of life below. Where in your wheel of life has the balance been lost? Is there an area that consumes all your time and energy at the expense of all else. *Where has God been pushed aside in your life?*

Paul the Apostle took the Christian Gospel to Asia Minor and Europe between the mid-30s – mid 50s AD. God used Paul with all his limitations and weaknesses to be the founding theologian of the Christian Church. Paul chose to submit to God and so became one of the most important figures in the story of Christianity.

If you feel you have submitted an area to God – give yourself a score of 10. If you feel that you are mostly in control and that God is absent in an area – give yourself a score of 0. Be as honest as you can so that you can make realistic decisions to affect change. When you have scored all the areas, join the dots. This will form a wheel that will show which areas need more thought.

- Identify the area(s) that you need to focus on.
- If you feel comfortable ask the group to assist you with possible ideas on how to increase your submission to God in this area(s).



New habit for the week:

Do something every day for 15 minutes that simplifies your life, or increases your submission to God. Ideas could be to:

- Clean up an area in your house and donate the items you don't need to the church.
- Spend quality time with your family or close friends.
- Make a shopping list of the items you need and only buy the items on the list.

- Spend time in prayer asking God to help you submit those areas that need his presence to Him.
- Study the Bible: look for verses in the Bible that will support you in the area you struggle with and internalize them.

Verses for reflection and meditation:

2 Corinthians 12:7, Luke 9:23, 1 Peter 4:1-6, 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, Mark 8:34, Philippians 2:4.

WEEK 4: DISCERNMENT AND GUIDANCE

TIMOTHY

(Acts 16:1-3; Philippians 2: 19-24; 2 Timothy 1: 1-5)



God not only breathed life into us, but is in us and with us as we tackle our daily lives. God wants us to know what is right in any given situation, and God doesn't want us to fret and worry about it. We need discernment to make decisions of conscience every day. We also need guidance for the big questions: *What is my role in God's story? Am I living out my gifts and passions? Where is God in the goals I have set myself?*

Discernment is the ability to decide between right and wrong. We can only acquire discernment by walking closely with God and growing in our knowledge of God's ways. Our moral compass should be honed to ensure that we stay in God's will. We learn through the Bible, by observing others, and through learning from the mistakes that are made - by our own or others mistakes.

Guidance is the wisdom offered by other people. God often provides guidance conveyed and experienced through other people. We need to listen to people that have the character of God and the wisdom to guide us in how to discern the direction we need to take. Just as Paul offered guidance and mentorship to Timothy, so Christians today need to be spiritual teachers for each other.

Love is the cornerstone of any kind of guidance that God gives (God is love). We are all on a journey to get closer to God and thus to learn to love better. Paul taught Timothy that if he was in doubt he was to go back to the doctrine taught to him from an early age (**1 Timothy 1: 1-5**). Paul was Timothy's teacher. *Who are the spiritual influencers in your life? Do they reflect the fruits of the spirit?*

We also learn by our mistakes. Painful lessons normally open the door to new opportunities. By taking into account previous experiences (our own and others) we can avoid destructive choices. God is our counselor and we need to know him well enough to trust his voice.

Timothy was born of a Jewish mother and a Greek father. He became like a son to Paul and benefitted greatly from his teachings. (1 Corinthians 4:17). Despite his youthfulness, Paul trusted him with great responsibilities. Timothy's success was because he was willing to discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and be open to Paul's guidance.

How can you make sure that you are making the correct decision? The Methodist Church has a tradition in choosing right from wrong (This is sometimes called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral).

1. First look to what the **Bible** says on the issue, for it is primary in any reflection relating to God.
2. Then seek to understand what Christians throughout history have said. Here, we would be looking at our **tradition**, and the way people before us have done things.
3. Next, use **reason** to interpret the Bible, understand tradition, and infer implications where these things may be silent. God gave us our minds, so let us use them.
4. Finally, think of the question in terms of our and others **experiences** as followers of Jesus.

Small Group Activity:

For Discussion: Have some of your goals changed since you completed the life-wheel last week? Has it changed your life in any way? Why or why not?

Is there anyone at a cross-roads with regards to an important decision that would not mind sharing it with the group? Please help that person discern what the possible solution would be for him/her using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral above.

The person is not obliged to take the advice, but it would be great if he/she could give the group feedback with regards to how he/she experienced the process.

(If there is more than one person willing to share you are welcome to).

Please pray for the person and the problem during the coming week.

New habit for the week:

- Use the process above to work through decisions you face this coming week.
- If you do not have a spiritual mentor, think about getting one.

Verses for reflection and meditation:

Romans 12:2, 2 Timothy 3:10, Ephesians 6:10-17 Psalms 51:6, 1 Timothy 6:11-16, Psalm 73:23-24.

WEEK 5: SERVICE

PHILIP

(Acts 6: 1-7; 8:5-40; 21:8-9)



The Apostles commissioned seven men to supervise the church's ministry to the poor. Philip was one of these Deacons. God loves each and every one of us and just like the disciples and the early church calls us (His church today) to serve as Christ-centered people.

Service is going beyond our own needs to care for the needs of others. This is neither

glamorous nor very comfortable. But if we follow Jesus example, we respond to the love we received from God by serving the people of God. We serve because we love God. Serving changes us from selfish, ego-centered people to become loving Christ-centered servants of God. We help others from a vulnerable humble position without boasting or wanting praise. It shouldn't just be something we do once a week (a tick on our "to do" list) – it should be a way of living.

Philip was chosen to serve food to people. The Apostles saw in him a gift of service and affirmed this in their appointment of him - this is generally considered to be the beginning of the church office of Deacon. This was hard arduous work, but was an important sign of the love of God for the widows and other poor people in the Jerusalem community.

Philip was one of the organizers that was chosen by the disciples to distributed food to the early church. (Acts 6:1-7). His obedience to God led him to preach in Samaria (Acts 8:5) and pray with an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27) and offer hospitality for Luke and Paul (Acts 21:8-9). Here was a man with a servant heart!

Simple, consistent practices of service can make a huge difference in our community and world. *Do you burn for love of God? Does everything you do have significance because you are doing it for God?*

We serve God with our:

- Tithes: financially supporting the work of God.
- Talents: offering our skills.
- Time: giving time to help others.

What service are you doing as an individual and/or as a group?



Small Group Activity:

Here are some ideas on how to be of service:

- Make generic event cards to distribute as the need arises (get well, birthday).
- Bake biscuits or any other treats to handout to those in need or at your local police station.
- Go on a prayer walk in your neighbourhood – pray for the area and people.
- Make a list of things that need fixing in the group and see who you could help out in the week (lawn mower, washing line, bulb change).
- Go out and clean up the trash in your area or park close by.
- Create hygiene kits to distribute at traffic lights (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and cloth).
- Collect and pack school supplies and distribute to disadvantaged schools in your area.
- Instead of meeting go visit an retirement home and visit or read with the people there.
- Collect un-used make up, cosmetics and package it to take to a centre for abused woman.



New habit for the week:

For the rest of the week we challenge ourselves to:

- **Serve at home (wash the dishes whilst praying).**
- **Serve at work or school (look for opportunities to serve others).**

- **Serve at church:**

We have the following Centres that always need volunteers. Please contact the church (011 462 2333) to speak to one of these people to volunteer your time and talents.

David (davidh@bmc.org.za): 2nd Chance Ministry (Alpha in Prison).

Bonnie (bonnieb@bmc.org.za): Children's Church.

Maabo (maabom@bmc.org.za): Missions.

Carol (carolr@bmc.org.za): Sunday Services.

Mandie (mandiea@bmc.org.za): Courses and Events (registrations etc.).

Nadja (nadjaa@bmc.org.za): Small group Facilitators.

Verses for reflection and meditation:

Mark 9:35, 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17, Colossians 1:24-25, Colossians 3:22-2, John 13:14-15.

CELEBRATION AND WORSHIP

CHILDREN

(Matthew 21: 12-17)

PALM SUNDAY



The children came into the temple and shouted for joy “Hosanna to the Son of David”.

Worshipping Jesus is not a private event. Their love for Jesus compelled the children to shout aloud their praise. We can learn from these children in our own worship – in fact in **Matthew 18: 3** we are challenged by Jesus to become like little children in our love and exuberance for God.

Let us be reminded of the joy and wonder of a child's response in worship of God. This is a response from a heart that is not clouded by cynicism and disillusionment. This is a response that shouts for joy, skips from happiness and smiles for the sheer gratitude of being loved. Perhaps this Easter we can discover afresh a heart-felt, worshipful response to the wondrous love of God that was shown in Jesus.

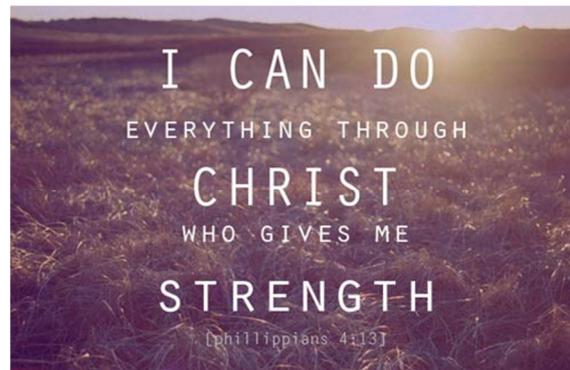
Our whole life is a process of learning how to love. We hope that the past few weeks have taught you new ways to draw closer to God. May you continue to practice these good habits and live out his love to others as we enter into Holy Week.

New habit for the week:

Spend Holy week attending the services at BMC and try and celebrate God's love for you in some way every day!

Verses for reflection and meditation:

Luke 2:36-38, John 4:23, Isaiah 29:13-14, John 4:24, Genesis 24:26, Joshua 5:14.



Resources:

www.dictionary.com

Google Images

www.biblegateway.com

Lucado Life Lessons Study Bible

Serendipity Bible

Life Application Study Bible

Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline – Richard J. Foster (southwarkerbaptist.org)

A year with God – Living Out the Spiritual Disciplines – Richard J Foster & Julia E Roller (Harper One).

This book was produced and printed by the Grace of God, and with contributions from: Pete Grassow – Editor, Nadja Atkinson - Writer, Kerry Wetton – Cover design, Carol Roodt – Proofreader and Shakes Mashinini – Printer.

**Bryanston Methodist Church
MARCH – APRIL 2017**



