

Hungering for God: A Life of Prayer & Fasting

Matthew 6:11

Do you remember a teacher, or coach, that was so special and encouraging to you? Do you remember how much they meant to you? Do you remember how you rose to their expectations of you as they coached or taught you? What type of response do we have to someone we love, respect, and deeply admire? Usually, when they express their expectations or desires, we do everything to try to meet their expectations, right?

That experience that many of us have had have shared is really a key to understanding our passage of Scripture this morning in Matthew 6:11.

We are looking at the Lord's Prayer's seven petitions, and have arrived at the middle, or fourth. The words are simple: "Give us this day our daily bread". The meaning is also simple, but the message Christ conveys in both the context of this petition to the entire prayer, and the entire prayer to the context in the Sermon on the Mount is profound. Watch what I mean.

POINT ONE: JESUS SHARES HIS EXPECTATIONS OF HIS FIRST DISCIPLES IN MATTHEW 5-7

Here are the plain truths we would all agree upon.

The Sermon of the Mount was given directly, and primarily to Christ's disciples. Look at Matthew 5:1 with me for a moment. The crowds around may have listened, and we through the inspiration of the Bible can also now hear this message. But, the first responders were intended by Jesus to be His disciples. So, Matthew 5-7 was initially communicated directly to the Twelve, His first disciples.

In Matthew 6 Jesus expresses some expectations or desires of His disciples, not commands. Notice that Jesus never commands these disciplines or choices, He just states them as assumptions that these are things they would be doing. In other words, Jesus says this is what I expect you are already doing as my disciples.

What were those expectations?

JESUS ASSUMED HIS DISCIPLES WOULD GIVE, PRAY & FAST

Notice the way Jesus introduced these three areas of spiritual discipline:

Giving to the Poor: In Matthew 6:1-4 Jesus assumes that they would be giving to the needy. It was His expectation that any disciple of His would be concerned and engaged in giving to the poor and needy. Follow along as I read His words, and notice how He describes the giving of alms or gifts to the poor.

Matthew 6:1-4 (NKJV) “Take heed that **you do not do your charitable deeds** before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 Therefore, **when you do a charitable deed**, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But **when you do a charitable deed**, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Praying: In Matthew 6:5-14 Jesus assumes that they would be praying. It was His expectation that any disciple of His would be concerned and engaged in staying closely connected to God the Father by prayer. Follow along as I read His words, and notice how He describes the praying.

Matthew 6:5-9 (NKJV) “And **when you pray**, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, **when you pray**, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. 7 And **when you pray**, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. 9 **In this manner, therefore, pray:**

Fasting: In Matthew 6:16-18 Jesus assumes that they would be fasting. It was His expectation that any disciple of His would be concerned and engaged in some form of fasting. Follow along as I read His words, and notice how He describes the fasting.

Matthew 6:16-18 (NKJV) “Moreover, **when you fast**, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 17 But you, **when you fast**, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

So basically we can say that we are looking right in the middle of this teaching lesson with His first disciples. Jesus expresses some simple disciplines that He assumed they would be already doing, just as a part of their walk with God. Then, Jesus amplifies each discipline with further teaching, correctively showing what God desires in each of these disciplines.

GIVE TO THE POOR, PRAY, & FAST

Those seem to be so unconnected, yet in the mind of God they are not. This middle petition about God supplying our needs on a daily basis, actually ties into perhaps one of the most neglected topics among all of the spiritual disciplines that believers have practiced over the centuries. So first, we can say with much confidence from the text of Scriptures that Jesus

assumed that His first disciples would be giving to the poor, praying to their father, and fasting.

Now Pause for a moment.

ARE WE GIVING, PRAYING & FASTING

We love the Lord today, don't we? We see Him as our Master, Savior, Lord, and King, right? We want to please Him, and do what he assumes and expects us to do, right?

Compassionate Giving: Jesus just assumed those first disciples would be concerned enough about the poor (even though there were so many laws in the Old Testament that mandated how the poor were to be taken care of nationally, by the harvesting rules, the responsibilities of families, the forgiving of debts, and so on: *yet Jesus assumed that disciples would have a heart of compassion that prompted them to give (secretly He added) to the poor and needy.* I think we should each pause and examine our own heart and look to see if we have this type of compassion that draws us to give secretly to the poor and needy.

Regular Praying: Jesus assumed that prayer was just a part of the fabric of every day life. So Jesus just added a pattern to those daily prayers, directed then towards God as Father, and laid out areas that would keep them in step with His plan. *I think we should each pause and examine our own heart and look to see if we have this type of need for God as our Father that draws us to pray, following the pattern Jesus clearly asked us to follow.*

Fasting: Jesus assumed that fasting was just a part of the fabric of every day life. *So Jesus just added a few reminders about directing fasting to God in secret.* I think we should each pause and examine our own heart and look to see if we have considered what type of hungering after God in fasting we should practice.

Jesus says that these are His expectations that they would be, as a part of everyday life, involved in giving to the poor and needy, praying, and fasting. Just like that He lays down His assumptions about their lives. These were His expectations, and to the extent that they loved and wanted to please Him, they would give, pray, and fast.

So, Jesus assumed His first disciples would give, pray, and fast. What an interesting set of expectations dropped right here in the middle of this great, three chapter long message from Jesus.

POINT TWO: JESUS SHARES HIS EXPECTATIONS FOR HIS FUTURE DISCIPLES IN MATTHEW 9

Now, let's move to a second truth. As we turn onward to Matthew 9 we come to a startling prediction from Christ Jesus about His disciples in the future. This passage contains what may be **the single most important words in the Bible on fasting.** And these words can change your life if you understand them!

After Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back to Heaven, His future

disciples will fast:

Matthew 9:14-17 (NKJV) Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees **fast often**, but Your disciples **do not fast**?" 15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? **But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.** 16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. 17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

Matthew 9 introduces a spiritual concept that is foreign to most believers in Christ's church today, called fasting. Now, if Jesus expected His future disciples after His ascension to fast, the question is: do we see them doing that in the New Testament? The answer is yes. Turn with me to Acts 13.

POINT THREE: THE EARLY CHURCH PRACTICED FASTING IN ACTS 13-14

As we open to Acts 13 we are more than a decade into the church after Christ's departure He promised. Jesus said when He the Bridegroom was gone they would fast. We see this portrayed in Acts 13. But what is amazing is the place that fasting had in the life of the church. Follow along with me as we read these verses:

Acts 13:1-3 (NKJV) Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 **As they ministered to the Lord and fasted**, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then, having **fasted and prayed**, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Just some observations on where we've come. The church at Antioch is the first beachhead in the invasion of the Gospel out into the pagan world. This church was the place where Barnabas mentored Paul, and this church became the missionary and discipleship hub for the Gentile world. Paul was sent out from here on his missionary journeys, and this church was so effective it is the place where the term Christian was first coined (Acts 11:26). Several observations:

We are more than a decade after the Ascension of Jesus to Heaven. As you turn to Acts 11:25 you can see the key to the success of this church, they were deeply and closely taught God's Word:

Acts 11:25-26a (NKJV) Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. 26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. **So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people.**

Next, they were very effective church, so many pagans were saved that the city took notice and gave them a name that stuck:

Acts 11:26b (NKJV) **And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.**

We are looking at one of the healthiest, most in step with the Spirit churches of the New Testament. We are looking at the place where evangelism and discipleship were deeply practiced.

So in this blueprint for an effective, missions minded, evangelistic and discipleship oriented church, what do we see as the norm? Fasting. Look back how it is just mentioned. Like Matthew 6, and like Matthew 9, it is almost assumed that people who are devoted to the Lord and involved in ministry would fast.

Fasting is hungering for God. We fast to cultivate a hunger that grows stronger and stronger, until we hunger the most for Our Great God. So, what does this fasting look like when we see it portrayed in Scriptures? Here is a brief overview of:

GRACE PROMPTED NEW TESTAMENT FASTING

First, Biblical fasting was part of SEEKING THE GUIDANCE OF THE LORD in Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord **and fasted**, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

Second, Biblical fasting was part of SENDING OUT MISSIONARIES in Acts 13:3 Then, **having fasted and prayed**, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Biblical fasting was part of APPOINTING SPIRITUAL LEADERS in Acts 14:23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, **and prayed with fasting**, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Biblical fasting was part of THE REGULAR LIFE OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY in Paul's account of his life in 2 Corinthians 11:27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, **in fastings often**, in cold and nakedness—

Biblical fasting was part of A NORMAL LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN in Matthew 6:16 “Moreover, **when you fast**, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

Biblical fasting was part of WORSHIPING THE LORD in Luke 2:36-37 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, **but served God with fastings and prayers night and day**.

Biblical fasting was part of CHRIST'S PREPARATION FOR FACING THE DEVIL'S TEMPTATIONS in Luke 4:2 being tempted for forty days by the devil. And **in those days He ate nothing**, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry.

WHEN DID YOU LAST PRACTICE A BIBLICAL FAST?

Pause and think. When was the last time you fasted? Not for medical reasons, not for weight loss, not because you were too busy to make a meal, no, when was the last time you practiced the Biblical Discipline of Fasting.

Jesus commended fasting as part of an amazing two-part set of tools: prayer & fasting. Those two go together. Jesus said some things won't happen without BOTH tools

So, may I ask you some other questions?

Would you like to revitalize your spiritual life?

Would you like to heighten your awareness of God?

Would you like to experience God in such a deep and intimate way that you find yourself absolutely satisfied and contented in a way God's Word calls perfect peace?

Today we are looking at the Lord's Prayer. As we look at it we are examining each of the seven petitions or phrases that make up this model prayer. This prayer allows us to look at each of the elements of our Christian lives. This prayer can become the vital link between our head where we know truth, and our lives where we live truth.

A PRAYERFUL, SPIRITUAL CHECKLIST

Jesus distilled down a checklist for each of us who follow Him. During the years of the space program sending astronauts to the moon, there were elaborate pre-launch checklists that had to be followed so the launch was successful.

Much like a pilot goes over his check list before take off every flight, just to make sure they have done everything needed for a safe flight, so we followers of Christ need to take a moment to be sure we are ready to fly through all of the storms of life.

Here are those seven areas Jesus left for us to check. They can be expressed as prayer requests, asking God to conform us to His plans for us. They flow like this:

FOCUS ME:

This is when I pause to reaffirm my focus on God the Father, as my All-Powerful, Always-Loving, All-Knowing, and Always Present God of the Universe. Focus my heart, my mind, my emotions, and my responses to whatever comes today through this truth. The Almighty God of the Universe, sitting upon the Throne of Heaven is my Father.

CONTROL ME:

This is when I consciously surrender to God, by inviting Him to take over my life again today. I offer to Him the priority spot in my life. He gets first place in my plans. I will seek Him before everything else. I will seek His Word to feed my soul. I will seek His Truth to guide my thoughts. I will seek His Peace to guard my anxious heart. I seek Him, and right here, before I fly out into my day, I ask Him to Control Me.

Of all the places that we can stumble, this second petition is the most strategic area. If we do not get this point, we are like a car with the drive shaft disconnected, or the transmission shot. The motor is revving, the power source is fully functional, but we are going nowhere. The connection between the engine of our life and our daily journey through life is right here.

GUIDE ME:

This is my setting for the day. Each time I face a choice, I pause and invite God to guide me, lead me, and show me what will please Him. This is staying in step with His Spirit. This is asking to be filled so I never peddle through life on flat tires. All that help from my Father comes each time I stop and ask for His filling to Guide me.

SUPPLY ME:

This transforms all my personal prayer requests into requesting from my Father what is best. I want His choices not my own, His plans not mine. This means that I can boldly know that anything my Father wants me to do, he will provide for. My Father is never late, rarely early, and always on time. He wants me to increase my faith by asking, seeking, knocking, and waiting.

CLEANSE ME:

This is when I do a quick inventory to see if there are any un-confessed and un-forsaken sins in my life. Also, I apply God's call for me to be kind and tenderhearted, forgiving everyone around me. If there is anyone I am holding a hurt, grudge, or un-forgiving spirit towards, I cry out for cleansing. There is constant torment for me from my Father (Mt. 18:) for as long as I cling to my hurt, any bitterness, and all unforgiving ways. This cry to my Father to Cleanse me is the only way the grace-empowered engine of my life will continue to run.

PROTECT ME:

This is my pause for checking my gear. My helmet is when I'm holding onto the truths of my salvation. My breastplate is maintaining the personal integrity of denying ungodliness any place in my life. My belt that holds everything together is the truth from God that I believe. This prepares me to be able to wield my shield of faith that quenches demonic darts of despair, hopelessness, and pangs of overpowering lusts. Each of those are quenched by believing truth from God. Then I make sure my feet are protected from the punctures that life can bring. Finally I check my sword, the arsenal of verses I have personally learned as lethal weapons when my prowling, roaring adversary pounces on my seeking to devour me with anxiety, fear, distraction, materialism, or lust. I ask for my Father to Protect me by taking, holding, and using everything he gave me in Christ to use through life.

EMPTY ME:

This is my conscious time of checking for those ticks of pride that creep in un-noticed as I go through the woods and fields of life. They start biting into me saying that I am important, and I am vital. My way is to be fought for, my pleasures and conveniences are more important than serving God. I must stop and look for these dangerous ways and say Empty me my Father of any pride and self-seeking. It is Your glory, not mine, that I live for today.

THIS PRAYER OVERVIEWS THE ESSENTIALS

If we step back we can see that the Lord's Prayer mirrors our spiritual lives:

At salvation, I was born again into God's family (Jn. 1:12), so now I can now truly say: *Our Father who art in Heaven, I will hallow Thy Name.*

John 1:12 (NKJV) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

When I surrender to God each day, and learn to seek Him first as I go through life (Mt. 6:33), then I can truly say: *Thy Kingdom come in my life.*

When I want to present myself back to God as His servant to do His will (Jn. 6:38), I can now truly say: *Thy will be done on earth in my life as it is done in Heaven.*

When I realize that I don't live, move, or have my being even a moment physically apart from His Omnipotence, because I need His daily sustenance (Mt. 4:4; Jn. 15:5), I can now truly say also the same about my spiritual life: *Give me this day my daily bread.*

When I hear my dying Savior hoarsely cry from the Cross 'Father forgive them' (Lk. 23:34), I can now truly say: *Forgive me my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me.*

When I realize that I have been set free (Jn. 8:31-32), I can now truly say: *Lead me away from temptations, and deliver me from the evil one.*

When I echo my Savior as He walked to the Cross (Jn. 5:23,30; 12:28), I can now truly say that is what I live for, that is what I want, and what I seek for. God gets the glory, for of You, through You, and To You is EVERYTHING! So I can now truly say: *Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.*

John 5:23, 30 (NKJV) that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. ³⁰ I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. John 12:28 (NKJV) Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again."

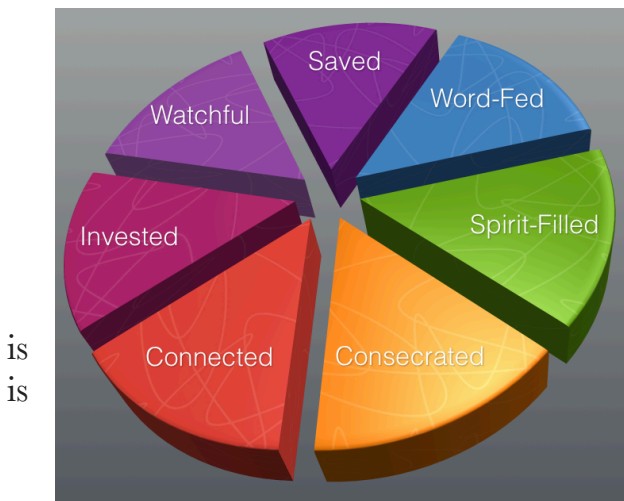
THE SIMPLE PLAN: BECOME & MAKE

So Jesus told them the Gospel truths, they told others those Gospel truths, and today those Gospel truths we were told, we are to live out and pass on.

Kind of a very simple plan.

Not a lot to remember: just pass on to others what you received.

Now, go back to our face2face graphic.



Not a lot to remember: just pass on to others what you received.

So, what were those Gospel truths they were to pass on?

Jesus said, the simple Gospel truths I taught you, that you heard me say and watched me do: that what you are to write down in the Gospels, and that what you are to teach them to observe.

So what were those truths? We can call them the:

SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY USEFUL BELIEVERS

These elements are blended, connected, and displayed from the pages of Scripture in the lives of those who followed and served the Lord.

I like to say that the lives of highly useful or effective believers are marked by ongoing right choices, which can be cultivated into spiritual habits. These are actually the 7 Gospel truths that become habits that mark the lives of those who are highly effective for God.

These are the foundational truths of Christ's ministry and are reflected throughout the Book of Acts & the Epistles.

These are the truths that sharpen us as believers, that focus our lives on what matters to God, and what opens our lives to His power and blessings. Here they are:

1. Jesus taught the disciples how to be: **Saved.**
2. Jesus taught the disciples how to be: **Word-Fed.**
3. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Stay Connected to God**
4. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Stay Surrendered.**
5. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Seek Spirit-Fullness**
6. Jesus taught the disciples how to: **Live as God's Steward.**
7. Jesus taught the disciples to: **Expect Spiritual Warfare.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER REFLECTS ALL SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY USEFUL BELIEVERS

These are the truths that sharpen us as believers.

This is the framework for a daily prayer that keeps my day focused on what matters to God.

This prayer can open our lives each time we ask, to His power and blessings.

“OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME”:

That is only possible because I'm **Saved.**

So God wants me every day through prayer to understand more about all Christ did for in through my Salvation.

So, knowing what salvation is, assured that the work of grace has begun, and knowing how to share that faith is foundational.

God each time I pray I'm asking You to: **Focus me** back upon who you are as the God of my salvation.

“THY KINGDOM COME”:

That is only possible when I'm **Consecrated**.

So God wants me every day through prayer to **Cultivating Spirit-Surrendered & Consecrated Living**: Paul capped his monumental doctrinal letter with a plea for regular, ongoing choices of surrender (Rom. 12:1-2): because we must keep presenting our bodies and seeking the renewing of our minds.

God each time I pray I'm asking You to: **Control me** as my Master.

“**THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**”:

That is only possible when I'm: **Spirit-Filled**.

The only ones that can know God's plan, and will each day for their lives are those who are Seeking Spirit-Fullness.

When Jesus described salvation it included an overflowing river of the Spirit (Jn. 7:37-39); because we can only be useful to God when we allow Him to overflow our lives.

God each time I pray I'm asking You to: **Lead me** in doing what pleases You.

“**GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD**”:

That is only possible when I'm: **Word-Fed**.

The more I understand how much I need You God, the more I will do what You told me is the only way to survive. I need to Seek Nourishment from the Scriptures.

God each time I pray I'm asking You to: **Supply me** with everything I need to do Your will.

“**FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US**”:

That is only possible when I'm: **Connected**.

Christ's teaching on the necessity and His example of personal prayer habits is a strong reminder for me to Stay Connected to God. Our prayer life always reflects how much we need, trust, and love our Lord.

God each time I pray I'm asking You to: **Cleanse me** from anything that displeases

You.

“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL”:

That is only possible when I’m: **Watchful**.

We must learn to resist Satan’s neutralizing attempts by **Expecting Spiritual Warfare**. Satan’s wants to neutralize all our attempts to be: Serving in Christ's Church, Soul-winning as a lifestyle, maintaining Simplicity prompted usefulness & and experiencing the power of Scriptural Meditation.

God each time I pray I’m asking You to: **Protect me** from getting devoured by the Devil.

“FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY: FOREVER”:

That is only possible when I’m: **Invested** in Heaven.

I need to soberly remember that we are each given a lifetime that can be invested or not invested, for the Lord.

God each time I pray I’m asking You to: **Empty me** so You get all of the credit from my life.

THE PRAYER THAT CHANGES ME

The seven simple steps, or lessons we are to live by, are found in the natural phrase divisions of this prayer:

God, **focus me** on who You are; I NEED You to help me focus;

As I see You, **control me** each day. I NEED You to bring me under Your control;

I seek You to **lead me** through all the myriads of choices life presents each day. I NEED Your leadership;

Then I will trust that You will **supply me** with whatever I need to accomplish Your will. I NEED what only YOU can supply;

Cleanse me so I stay in close touch with You and Your plan. I NEED Your cleansing;

Protect me from everything that seeks to keep me from You. I NEED Your protection;

Empty me so You get all the glory and honor for my life. I NEED You to empty me so I can be filled with You!

GOD'S PATHWAY TO ALWAYS STAYING ON OUR MISSION

When I got saved You FOCUSED Me: on Who You are as God

v.9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

God wants me to constantly remind myself of just Who it is I am talking to.

He is my Creator that knows me completely (John 1:1-3).

He is the One who holds together everything in the Universe (Col. 1:15-16).

He holds in His Hand my life's breath (Daniel 5:23).

Because of Who you are CONTROL Me: because You are God.

v. 10a Your kingdom come.

God wants to rule over every dimension of my life; and for me to surrender to that rule.

I am to seek out His rule each day, FIRST of all (Matthew 6:33).

LEAD Me: so I Do Your Will with my life.

v. 10b Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

God wants me to be like Christ.

We are most Christ-like when we have the same attitude Jesus had while on Earth.

SUPPLY Me: so I can see Your Hand in my life.

v. 11 Give us this day our daily bread.

God wants me to need Him on a daily and soon moment-by-moment basis.

He wants me to ask for what I need for today.

One of the great curses on the church is the false teaching that God wants us to be healthy, wealthy, and prosperous. The Bible actually says God wants us weak so He can be strong; poor so His riches are needed; and dependent so He can meet our needs constantly.

CLEANSE Me: so I keep Your Blessing on my life.

v. 12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

God wants me to never forget how many of my sins He has forgiven; and how impossible my debt to Him really was; so that I am never hard-hearted to others, and lose His blessings.

Ephesians 4:32 sums up our chosen attitude towards God and all others.

PROTECT Me: so I don't lose Your Power in my life.

v. 13a And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.

God wants you to seek and find His constant protection from all your spiritual enemies.

The devil prowls like a dangerous predator I Peter 5:8-9, by humility we vigilantly resist him.

You can only resist the devil by submission to God (James 4:7-10).

EMPTY Me: so You get all the credit for my life.

v. 13b For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen

God wants me to keep the spotlight of my life upon Him. Life is not about me but Him.

Look at the words again. We could distill down the whole prayer to: Our Father, Thy Name, Thy Kingdom, Thy Will: so give us, forgive us, lead us, deliver us; For Thine is EVERYTHING!

Christ's Teaching	Lord's Prayer	Seven Churches	Ephesus
<p>(Saved) Understanding Salvation: Jesus came to save (Mt. 1:21). So, knowing what salvation is, assured that the work of grace has begun, and knowing how to share that faith is foundational.</p>	<p>God, focus me on who You are; I NEED You to help me focus;</p>	<p>Ephesus, the careless church, left their first love. Christ said to them and us, "Come back to Me!"</p> <p>To Love Jesus Most (Ephesus, Rev. 2:1-7);</p> <p>Ephesus (2:1-7): Remember that Jesus is jealous of your love, so lay hold of your first love for Christ.</p>	<p>Spiritual Neutrality: v. 15 "I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Spiritual Neutrality is when we stop aggressively resisting the world. Living the Christian life is resisting the pressure of the world. The world is everything that is not focused upon glorifying God. Anything that is not glorifying Him is pushing us away from His Glory.</p>
<p>(Word-Fed) Seeking Nourishment from the Scriptures: Some of Christ's first words are about the "daily bread" we need from God's Word (Mt. 4:4); and because all our minds are being fed something, we all should be asked: "What is feeding yours?"</p>	<p>As I see You, control me each day. I NEED You to bring me under Your control;</p>	<p>Smyrna, the crowned church, suffered persecution. Christ said to them and us, "Be faithful to the end!"</p> <p>Smyrnan Christians purified by persecution, faithful at all costs to the Lord.</p> <p>Smyrna (2:8-11): Hope in Jesus through life until</p>	<p>Spiritual Self-Sufficiency: v. 17a Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—Spiritual Self-Sufficiency is when we think we are making it on our own, and don't need the Lord's power, guidance, and presence. We stop "seeking first" the</p>

		the end and trust Christ through your suffering.	Kingdom of God in our lives and thus began to slowly drift from His righteousness in our lives.
<p>(Spirit-Filled) Seeking Spirit-Filled Living: When Jesus described salvation it included an overflowing river of the Spirit (Jn. 7:37-39); because we can only be useful to God when we allow Him to overflow our lives.</p>	I seek You to lead me through all the myriads of choices life presents each day. I NEED Your leadership;	<p>Pergamos, the compromising church, tolerated evil. Christ said to them and us, "Separate yourselves!"</p> <p>To Separate from Sin (Pergamos, Rev. 2:12-17);</p> <p>Rest in the security that comes from clinging only to Jesus; and conform to Christ, not the world.</p>	<p>Spiritual Insensitivity: v. 17b and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—</p> <p>Spiritual Insensitivity is when we lose our spiritual sight, and no longer see ourselves as God's Word explains we are.</p>
<p>(Consecrated) Cultivating Spirit-Surrendered & Consecrated Living: Paul capped his monumental doctrinal letter with a plea for regular, ongoing choices of surrender (Rom. 12:1-2): because we must keep presenting our bodies and seeking the renewing of our minds.</p>	Then I will trust that You will supply me with whatever I need to accomplish Your will. I NEED what only YOU can supply;	<p>Thyatira, the corrupted church, joined the world. Christ said to them and us, "Un-Friend the world!" To Un-Friend Worldliness (Thyatira, Rev. 2:18-29); Fear the chastening love of Jesus so He will not have to discipline sin in the church.</p>	<p>Spiritual Wastefulness: v. 18a I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; Spiritual Wastefulness is when we abandon Christ as our investment counselor and start investing our time and money in "get rich quick for earth" schemes, and stop investing in Heaven.</p>
<p>(Connected) Living in Connection to God: Christ's teaching on the necessity and His example of personal prayer habits is a strong</p>	Cleanse me so I stay in close touch with You and Your plan. I NEED Your cleansing;	<p>Sardis, the feeble church, wasn't on guard. Christ said to them and us, "Wake up before it is too late!"</p> <p>To Overflow with</p>	<p>Spiritual Neglect: v. 18b and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed;</p> <p>Spiritual Neglect is</p>

<p>reminder (Mt. 6:9-13). Our prayer life always reflects how much we need, trust, and love our Lord.</p>		<p>His Spirit (Sardis, Rev. 3:1-6);</p>	<p>when we drop out of God's work force, and begin to not get dressed for work any more. Jesus often told us to dress ourselves with His character, His power, and His armor.</p>
<p>(Invested) Understanding Life as a Stewardship: Christ's parables so often pointed at an accounting, or stewardship of our lives (Mt. 25:21,23). We all need to soberly remember that we are each given a lifetime that can be invested or not invested, for the Lord.</p>	<p>Protect me from everything that seeks to keep me from You. I NEED Your protection;</p>	<p>Philadelphia, the faithful church, was pleasing to God. Christ said to them and us, "Keep on keeping on!" Philadelphia Christians, sound in doctrine, zealous in ministry, outreaching the world and deeply in love with the Lord Jesus Christ!</p>	<p>Spiritual Blindness: v. 18c and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. Spiritual Blindness is just that: blindness to things of God. We no longer see Him in His Word. We stop noticing His Hand in our lives, and don't reach up and grasp that Hand extended to us, to hold onto, and follow Him through life. We begin to stumble along, acting more and more like lost people who do not know, cannot see, and do not follow the Lord.</p>
<p>(Watchful) Expecting Spiritual Warfare: Jesus went right from Baptism to the Wilderness of Temptation (Mt. 3:16-4:10); and so do most believers. The only difference is that He was prepared. Jesus told us the way to survive is to "watch & pray" (Mt. 25:13;</p>	<p>Empty me so You get all the glory and honor for my life. I NEED You to empty me so I can be filled with You!</p>	<p>Laodicea, the foolish church, needed nothing. Christ said to them and us, "Watch out, you're making me sick; and I will vomit you out of my mouth unless you repent and see that you need Me!" To Live Crucified (Laodicea, Rev.</p>	<p>Spiritual Laxity: v. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Spiritual Laxity is when we drop our guard about un-confessed sins in our lives. We forget how horrible sin always is to Jesus. Our sin cost Christ His very life,</p>

<p>26:41). We must learn to resist Satan's neutralizing attempts at our desires to be: Serving in Christ's Church, Soul-winning as a lifestyle, maintaining Simplicity prompted usefulness & and experiencing the power of Scriptural Meditation.</p>		<p>3:14-22).</p>	<p>His intimate fellowship with the Father, and made Him feel the wrath of God in our place. Get rid of sin, don't sweep it under the rug.</p>
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SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY USEFUL BELIEVERS

These elements are blended, connected, and displayed from the pages of Scripture in the lives of those who followed and served the Lord.

I like to say that the lives of highly useful or effective believers are marked by ongoing right choices, which can be cultivated into spiritual habits. These are actually the 7 Gospel truths that become habits that mark the lives of those who are highly effective for God.

These are the foundational truths of Christ's ministry and are reflected throughout the Book of Acts & the Epistles.

These are the truths that sharpen us as believers, that focus our lives on what matters to God, and what opens our lives to His power and blessings. Here they are:

(Saved) Understanding Salvation: Jesus came to save (Mt. 1:21). So, knowing what salvation is, assured that the work of grace has begun, and knowing how to share that faith is foundational.

(Word-Fed) Seeking Nourishment from the Scriptures: Some of Christ's first words are about the "daily bread" we need from God's Word (Mt. 4:4); and because all our minds are being fed something, we all should be asked: "What is feeding yours?"

(Spirit-Filled) Seeking Spirit-Filled Living: When Jesus described salvation it included an overflowing river of the Spirit (Jn. 7:37-39); because we can only be useful to God when we allow Him to overflow our lives.

(Consecrated) Cultivating Spirit-Surrendered & Consecrated Living: Paul capped his monumental doctrinal letter with a plea for regular, ongoing choices of surrender (Rom. 12:1-2): because we must keep presenting our bodies and seeking the renewing of our minds.

(Connected) Living in Connection to God: Christ's teaching on the necessity and His example of personal prayer habits is a strong reminder (Mt. 6:9-13). Our prayer life always reflects how much we need, trust, and love our Lord.

(Invested) Understanding Life as a Stewardship: Christ's parables so often pointed at an accounting, or stewardship of our lives (Mt. 25:21,23). We all need to soberly remember that we are each given a lifetime that can be invested or not invested, for the Lord.

(Watchful) Expecting Spiritual Warfare: Jesus went right from Baptism to the Wilderness of Temptation (Mt. 3:16-4:10); and so do most believers. The only difference is that He was prepared. Jesus told us the way to survive is to "watch & pray" (Mt. 25:13; 26:41). We must learn to resist Satan's neutralizing attempts at our desires to be: Serving in Christ's

Church, Soul-winning as a lifestyle, maintaining Simplicity prompted usefulness & and experiencing the power of Scriptural Meditation.

Why should we pray? The more we examine this precious opportunity given to us by God, the more we are drawn into deeper and deeper connection to the Almighty King of the Universe.

Prayer is what Jesus modeled so clearly from the pages of the Gospels.

Prayer was what surrounded all of the major events recorded from Christ's life.

Prayer is what we are to do or we will faint Jesus said.

Pray or faint, pray or miss out, pray of

LIVE LIFE DELIBERATELY

For most of us, we struggle with really knowing what it is that we are supposed to do for the Lord. That is why the prayer that Jesus commanded in Matthew 6 is so important.

As you turn there, may I remind you of one of the simplest and yet most profound spiritual exercises that Jesus prescribed for us? The Lord's Prayer was an exercise designed to keep each of us in step with God's plan for our lives.

Remember that simple prayer that changes me?

Matthew 6:5-15 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. [b]7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. 9 In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

10 Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

13 And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.[c]

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

THE PRAYER OF A TRUE DISCIPLE

Focus me back upon who you are as God;

Control me as my Master;

Lead me in doing what pleases You;

Supply me with whatever I need to do Your will;

Cleanse & protect me from anything that displeases You;

Empty me so You get all of the credit from my life.

Please stand with me, and invite God to rule over every moment of our days through that prayer Christ left us to pray!

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

LP Sermons: 120603, 110306, 140629, 090823

At Christ's most trying hour He turned to His disciples and told them to “watch and pray”.

As we open to Luke today, I'd like to walk you through an observation Luke makes of Christ's life. More than any other of the Gospel writers, Luke notes that Jesus prayed, prayed, and prayed. In fact Luke notes that

But the greatest argument for the priority of prayer is the fact that our Lord was a Man of prayer. Luke shows more of Christ's prayers than any other of the Gospels.

Luke records seven times Christ prays: He prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21), before He chose the Twelve (Luke 6:12), when the crowds increased (Luke 5:16), before He asked the

Twelve for their confession of faith (Luke 9:18), and at His Transfiguration (Luke 9:29), at Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46), and on the Cross (Luke 23:34).

TEACH DISCIPLES WHAT CHRIST TAUGHT

We have just traced what Christ actually taught about what it meant to be a disciple. Next, we need to know: what did Jesus teach disciples they need to do, to be properly observing all that He commanded them?

BASIC-1: UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

First Jesus explains what it means to be saved. He used His very first words in public ministry (Mt. 4:17-19) to say “repent”, but here in Matthew 5:1-4 He begins to enlarge upon salvation and talks about the elements of coming to God as an absolutely helpless beggar (“poor in spirit”) with contrition or sorrow for sin (“mourn”).

Then Christ ends the sermon with those stern warnings that a decision is not enough, saying all the right things without a life-transformation is deadly. That is Mat. 7:13-29.

So Jesus opens and closes this message for “disciples” in Matthew 5-7 with the **Plan of Salvation**. So the first element disciples need to know, understand, and be taught is what it really means to be saved:

- In Mat. 4:17-19 and 5:1-5 Jesus said: repent, come helplessly seeking mercy, sorrowing over personal sinfulness, humbly to follow Him.
- In Mat. 7:13-29 Jesus said: make sure you have entered the right gate, are on the right road, and have come to obey the right Lord, or great will be your disastrous ending apart from Him.

BASIC-2: DAILY NOURISHMENT FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Next, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus explains to His disciples the vital place that the Word of God has in the life of a disciple for: nurture of our spiritual lives, protection of our spiritual lives, and directions for lives of pleasing God.

In chapter 4 Jesus stated that we need to “live” by feeding upon every part of God's Word. Then Jesus showed the way we are to use God's Word as our weapon in spiritual warfare.

Starting in Matthew 5:6 and extending all the way to Matthew 6:4 were elements of what God expects to see growing in the lives of true disciples:

1. spiritual hunger and thirst (5:6),

2. mercy (5:7), purity (5:8),
3. peacemakers (5:9),
4. bold witnesses (5:10-12),
5. filled with good works (5:13-16),
6. understanding God's Word is Divine (5:17-20),
7. with heart change (5:21-32),
8. truthful words (5:33-37),
9. love (5:38-48), and
10. generosity (6:1-4).

BASIC-3: LIVING IN CONNECTION TO GOD

Jesus then goes on to explain how central prayer is to be in the life of a believer (6:5-15). He explains the role of fasting, since He later ties that to prayer (6:16-18), and then explains the faith our Heaven Father desires that prevents anxiety (6:25-32, 34). Finally Jesus ties together self examination and confrontation (7:1-6) with the needed persistence of prayer (7:7-12).

BASIC-4: CULTIVATING SURRENDERED & CONSECRATED LIVING

Jesus ties together surrender to His will, and consecration to holiness twice. First in two individual sections on pure "eyes" (6:22-23) and surrendering to one "master" (6:24) the twin concepts of surrender and consecration are explained. Then in one verse (6:33) Jesus combines surrender into the call to "seek" God's rule over our lives; and consecration as we "seek" God's righteousness in our lives.

BASIC-5: SEEKING SPIRIT-FILLED LIVING

Jesus taught that: the Spirit of God is to energize us to a lifestyle of worship (Jn. 4:21-24); the Spirit of God gives us an overflowing life of joy (John 7:37-38); the Spirit of God reveals Christ more and more to us (John 16:13-15).

So, in just a simple look, we can see these "basics" that Jesus Christ taught to those who were His disciples. They are still the framework for us today. They also are seen enlarged and

explained, all the way through the Epistles as those closest to Christ understand the command to “make disciples” meant.

Supply me with whatever I need to do Your will;

Cleanse & protect me from anything that displeases You;

Empty me so You get all of the credit from my life.

1. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS THE VITAL CONNECTION BETWEEN SALVATION & THE REST OF LIFE

This connection was taught by Paul in Colossians 2:6. Note with them what Paul said:

Colossians 2:6 (NKJV) As you therefore **have received** Christ Jesus the Lord, **so walk** in Him,

The same way God saved us is how we are to follow Christ through life. We hear the Gospel from God's Word, we believe the truth and respond in faith, and God transforms us. That is the pathway of salvation, and the pathway of each day of our life as believers. Taking God at His Word and seeing Him at work in us. That is simple, clear, and easily explained in Scripture.

2. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS COMPLETELY TIED TO GOD'S WORD

Turn to the Romans Road, one of the simplest explanations of salvation, and look at the final stop in Romans 10:13 (see also v. 5,8,11).

Romans 10:13,17 (NKJV) For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

We are saved by hearing, and responding to the truth of the Word of God. The Gospel flows only from God's Word, and no where else. Only by believing the Gospel contained in God's Word the Bible can a person be saved.

Only by believing the Gospel contained in God's Word the Bible can a person be saved. That means:

3. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS GOD IMPLANTING HIS WORD INSIDE US

Move onward to James 1:21, from what may be the earliest book of the New Testament written by James who was the Pastor of the First Church of Jerusalem. Here is how he explained salvation to his congregation while Paul was still being trained.

James 1:21 (NKJV) Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and **receive** with meekness **the implanted word**, which is able to **save your souls**.

Again we see that receiving God's Word, believing God's Word, and acting upon God's Word are all tied to our salvation.

We hear truth from God.

We believe that truth from God.

We respond to that truth from God

God transforms us.

One of the greatest confirmations of our salvation is seeing this happen each day. That is exactly what we see the Apostles teaching as they planted and established churches in the First Century.

Now move onward to 1 Peter 1:22 to 2:3 and see how Peter describes this exact same process when he explains the relationship between salvation and our daily walk in Christ. Peter reminds us that both are tied to God's Word.

4. FOLLOWING CHRIST STARTS A LIFE OF BELIEVING & OBEYING GOD'S WORD

Peter is near the end of his life, and after walking with Jesus, serving as an Apostle for over 30 years this is his summary of salvation for all the rest of the ages of Christ's Church.

1 Peter 1:22-2:3 (NKJV) Since you have **purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit** in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, **23 having been born again**, not of corruptible seed **but through the word of God which lives and abides forever**, ²⁴because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, ²⁵But the **word of the Lord** endures forever." Now this is the **word which by the gospel was preached to you**. 2:1-3 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ²as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word**, that you may grow thereby, ³if indeed **you have tasted** that the Lord is gracious.

Note how simply and clearly Peter also links God's work of salvation in us, to His Word.

Salvation is regeneration by the Holy Spirit using God's Word: (v. 22 *purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*).

Salvation is the new birth of coming alive through the power of God's Word (v. 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God).

Salvation is eternal because the Gospel in God's Word is eternal: (v. 25 the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you).

Then Peter gives the essence of our new life in Christ.

5. THE LIFE OF FOLLOWING CHRIST IS FED BY GOD'S WORD

Born again believers are **only fed** with God's Word: (v. 2a as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word).

Born again believers can **only grow** by God's Word: (v. 2b that you may grow thereby).

Born again believers **can taste God's grace** in God's Word: (v. 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious).

So Paul, James & Peter all agree about the connection of God's Word to salvation, and the vital role that God's Word has to our continued new walk. The final link comes from the greatest authority of them all: our Jesus Christ. Please turn with me to Matthew 4:4.

Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man **shall not live** by bread alone, **but by every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus actually quotes these words in Matthew 4:4 from Deuteronomy 8:3; and lays out the vital need for our spiritual lives to be fed as consistently as our physical bodies. In Deuteronomy 8 where Jesus quotes this verse from the context is about manna, the food God sent to feed Israel's 603,000 families each day so they survived the 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness of Sinai.

Jesus says God's Word is necessary for spiritual life as vitally as bread was for their survival. So we could apply Mt. 4:4 by saying that:

6. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS HUNGERING AFTER GOD'S WORD

Jesus compared **God's Word** to food ("man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word of God"). Jesus said we are not really living if we only feed our physical bodies and not our spiritual dimension. Jesus said we need to eat every day; and our spiritual lives are to be as consistent a part of our daily plans as eating.

Jesus goes on to compare **salvation** to food. Those who eat of Him are saved. Look

onward at John 6. Jesus said He was the bread of God (Jn. 6:35), those who ate Him live forever.

Jesus says **salvation is eating and drinking Him** by faith through receiving His Word.

John 6:35 (NKJV) And Jesus said to them, “**I am the bread of life.** He who **comes** to Me shall **never hunger**, and he who **believes** in Me shall **never thirst**.”

Then He said that what we eat are His words. Look at this amazing passage.

John 6:63-68 (NKJV) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.** 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have **the words of eternal life.**”

Now turn onward to John 8:31,37,43,51 (NKJV):

v. 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you **abide in My word**, you are **My disciples indeed**. 32 And you shall **know the truth**, and the **truth shall make you free**.” [*Three elements: believers are those who abide/remain in Christ's words; believers know/experience the truth of Christ's words; believers are set free through believing/acting upon the truth of Christ's words.*]

v. 37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because **My word has no place in you**. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are **not able to listen to My word**. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because there is **no truth in him**. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. [*Three elements: Christ's word remains in true believers; true believers desire to hear Christ's words; true believers stand on the truth of Christ's words within them.*]

v. 45 But because **I tell the truth**, you do not believe Me. 46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I **tell the truth**, why do you not believe Me? 47 He **who is of God hears God's words**; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.” 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if **anyone keeps My word he shall never see death**.” [*Three elements: believers know Christ's words are true; believers hear/respond to Christ's words; believers are eternally saved by clinging to Christ as truth.*]

That is why the early church taught that hearing & believing God's Word leads us to salvation, and to partaking of Christ. As only physical food enters our body and nourishes it, to sustain our lives: *so our souls are only fed by God's Word entering into our minds.*

How did we believe on Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How did we receive Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we obey Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we follow Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we please Christ? *Through **His Word***.

How do we know Christ better and better? *Through **His Word***.

7. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS THE BEST LIFE POSSIBLE

That is the simple truth.

The place of God's Word in your mind today dictates your spiritual health.

Everything is contained in God's Word: our food and drink, our map for life, the light to guide us, the sword to protect us, the exercises to strengthen us, and the revelation of God's character to grow us.

John 7:37-38 we go through life overflowing with a life that is not our own, it is Christ's life through His Spirit overflowing us and splashing onto all the events and people of our life.

One of the most afflicted Old Testament saints was Jeremiah. He was called the weeping prophet for a purpose. Jeremiah's testimony of how he made it through a lifetime of pain, sorrow, loneliness, and discouragement is our closing thought.

Jeremiah 15:16 (NKJV) Your words were **found**, and **I ate them**, And **Your word** was to me **the joy and rejoicing of my heart**; For I am called by **Your name**, O Lord God of hosts.

TEACHING THEM WHY OUR LIFE IS ONLY FED BY GOD'S WORD

1. Connection Between Salvation & The Rest Of Life (Col. 2:6)
2. Salvation is Completely Tied to God's Word (Rom. 10:17)
3. Salvation is God Implanting His Word Inside Us (James 1:21)
4. Salvation Starts a Life of Believing & Obeying God's Word (1 Peter 1:22-23)
5. The Essence of a Believer's Life is God's Word (Mt.4:4)
6. Jesus Said, "Eat God's Word to Live" (John 6:63)
7. God's Word Becomes the Most Vital Element of the Life of the Believer (Jer. 15:16)

THE DISCIPLINE OF DISCIPLE-MAKING:

“DISCIPLES: FOLLOW CHRIST & MAKE DISCIPLES”

For us on this side of the Cross, what Christ said is so simple: ***Disciples Follow Christ & Make Disciples***. That's it. Everything else is tied to that simple statement: worshipping God, Biblical ministry, and glorifying God all flow from God's purpose to show the world that

He is a Savior, Who so loved the world that He sent His Beloved Son to be the Savior of the world.

How did they “make disciples”? What is the process that we are to follow, that they followed? That is what we find in the rest of the New Testament.

Throughout all the centuries since the Great Commission, we have had the Scripture record of what Christ did in the Four Gospels; and we have had the explanation by those closest to Him, and sent by Him, actually doing and recording what they did in obedience to His call.

DISCIPLE-MAKING IN THE EPISTLES

Here is a quick summary of what Jesus told the Apostles to do, and how they obeyed.

1. In Matthew 28:18-20 Christ explains that “making disciples” means: those who follow of Christ. Or, a truly saved church.
2. In Acts 1:8 Luke explains that “making disciples” means: those who share the Gospel. Or, a truly evangelistic church.
3. In Acts 6:4 the Apostles explain that “making disciples” means: those who are stuck to prayer. Or, a truly praying church.
4. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who surrender to God. Or, a truly consecrated church.
5. In 1 Cor. 10:31 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who want to feel the weight (glory) of God on everything they do. Or, a truly glorifying God church.
6. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who explain how to follow Christ to others. Or, a truly discipling church.
7. In 1 Peter 2:2 Peter explains that “making disciples” means: those who are actually using God's Word. Or, a truly healthy church.

So, the simple lessons we see that Christ gave, and we are to pass on are lessons about: salvation, witnessing, praying, surrendering to God, glorifying God, training others, and staying healthy through the Word of God.

I actually teach these as seven simple sessions with any believer wanting to get started in the right direction.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSONS IN THE BASICS

1. **SAVED: *Salvation, Assurance, Confession & Soul winning***: Mark the Romans Road starting in Romans 3:10; and discuss 1 John 1:9; John 10.
2. **SCRIPTURE-FED: *Devotional Bible Study Methods***: Summary, Lessons & Application from Mt. 4:4; Jer. 15:16.
3. **SPIRIT-FILLED: *Daily Spirit-Filled Living***: Galatians 5: 16-23; Ephesians 4:22-5:18; Colossians 3:1-17; Romans 8
4. **SURRENDER-ORIENTED: *Sacrifice, Surrender & Consecration***: Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1-2; Mt. 6:33; Rom 12:1-2; Gal 6:7-8.
5. **SPIRIT-WARFARE TRAINED**: Lifelong disciplines of Scripture Memory & Meditation for Spiritual Warfare: Joshua 1:8-9; Eph. 6:10-17; 1 Peter 5:6-9.
6. **STEWARDSHIP DRIVEN: *Stewardship of Time, Treasures & Talents in Christ's Church***: Mt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10.
7. **SUPPLICATION-SENSITIVE**: Lifelong Disciplines of Prayer & Following God's Will: Prov. 3:5-6; 1 Th. 5:17

DISCIPLESHIP LESSONS

Assurance **Salvation**, Confession & Soul winning Romans 3:10 Road mark and discuss 1 John 1:9; John 10

Devotional **Bible Study** Summary, Lessons & Application Mt. 4:4; Jer words found

Daily **Spirit-Filled Living**: Galatians 5:16-; Ephesians 4:22-5:18; Colossians 3:1-17; Romans 8

Sacrifice, **Surrender**, Consecration Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1-2; Mt. 6:33 Seeking; Rom 12:1-2; Gal 6:7-8 Sowing

Lifelong discipline of **Scripture Memory & Meditation** Joshua 1:8-9;

Stewardship of Time, Treasures & Talents in Christ's Church: Mt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 3; 2 Cor. 5

Lifelong Disciplines of Prayer, Finding God's Will & Spiritual Warfare Eph 6; Prov. 3:5-6

CHRIST THE CENTER OF SALVATION:

come to me to have life; remission of sins in His Name

Luke 24:46-48 Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached **in His name** to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things.

John 5:40 (NKJV) But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

Jn 14.6

CHRIST THE CENTER OF DEVOTIONS:

they speak of Me jn 5.39; feed on Bread come down;

Luke 24:27, 32, 44-45 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. 32 And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” 44 Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

John 6:63 (NKJV) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

CHRIST THE CENTER OF PRAYERS:

John 14:13 (NKJV) And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

CHRIST THE CENTER OF EVANGELIZATION:

Mark 16:15 (NKJV) And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV) And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen

How did they “make disciples”? What is the process that we are to follow, that they followed? That is what we find in the rest of the New Testament.

Throughout all the centuries since the Great Commission, we have had the Scripture record of what Christ did in the Four Gospels; and we have had the explanation by those closest to Him, and sent by Him, actually doing and recording what they did in obedience to His call.

So, the simple lessons we see that Christ gave, and we are to pass on are lessons about: salvation, witnessing, praying, surrendering to God, glorifying God, training others, and staying healthy through the Word of God.

I actually teach these as seven simple sessions with any believer wanting to get started in the right direction.

BE SURE TODAY

If you are religious, and morally good, you still may not be genuinely born-again. It is possible to have emotional and intellectual faith. If you have fears and doubts in your heart and mind, about your salvation, that is not God’s will.

Why not stop everything today, and make sure you don’t miss Heaven by 18 inches?

There is no formula given in God's Word that each person must recite or follow. God looks at our hearts and knows the true desire of our hearts. He has said that no one that comes by faith seeking Christ's sacrifice for their sins will ever be denied.

So if that is your heart’s desire, if you want the sacrifice of Jesus to take the penalty of your sins, if you want His complete cleansing and forgiveness—He is here today waiting to respond to your call.

Here is a prayer you can pray, a prayer that calls on the Lord expressing your desire to transfer your trust to Christ alone for your eternal salvation.

This prayer¹ can be the link that will connect you to God. And if you pray it in faith, God will receive you. Please bow with me.

¹ Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, pp. 141-143.

The best known verse from the Bible in America is John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

But the way Jesus explained what that verse meant is in the relatively unknown verses that precede it. Here is what Jesus said—just before John 3:16.

¹⁴“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

What does the Brazen Serpent point at? The great similarity between their condition 3500 years ago and ours today!

1. We share a similar deadly infection. ALL sinners WILL DIE.
2. We share a similar offer of a cure. Christ IS the ONLY CURE
3. We share a similar choice. GOD’S WAY is the only way.

Looking at the Bronze serpent was such a wonderful portrait of our salvation. Think of these powerful truths:

1. SALVATION IS SO SIMPLE. The simplicity of the remedy—the bitten had only to look up in faith, LOOK AT JESUS
2. SALVATION IS SO IMMEDIATELY POWERFUL. The antidote for the snake venom is amazing in its immediateness and its completeness. ASK JESUS TO SAVE YOU
3. SALVATION IS SO EXCLUSIVE. The bronze serpent was the only and also the all-sufficient remedy for the deadly wound of the serpent.

Christ's blood has the power to allow us to experience Him daily: The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16). In the Greek, the word "communion" is koinonia, or fellowship. "It is the blood that unites us into perfect fellowship. In the book of Acts, this is seen by the use of the term 'brethren' over forty times. 'It describes those who share a common heritage, like citizens of the same country, though it

carries the additional force of brethren born of the same Spirit, when applied to Christians.' [Acts 1:16; 6:3; 9:17; etc.] In brief, disciples must have devoted Christian friends to follow, and this can only be facilitated by being together over a period of time."[\[4\]](#)