

CITY on a
HILL
C H U R C H

Disciple Guide

“Building a personal plan to better know, enjoy & follow Jesus in every area of life.”

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What Is A Disciple?

Exploring how we can know, enjoy and follow Jesus in every area of life.

Disciples – The life of a disciple is the life of a learner. As Christians, we desire to constantly attune our ears to the words of our teacher and loving leader – Jesus. As He teaches us through His Word (the Bible), He transforms us in the world. He transforms our minds, our desires, our wills, our relationships, and our ultimate reason for living for our good and His glory! He has even given us his Spirit to teach us all that is true about Him and enable us to live out his commands.

At City on a Hill Church **we define a disciple of Jesus as someone who increasingly knows, enjoys and follows Jesus in every area of life.** Our hope and prayer is that this guide will serve you as you consider what it looks like to practically grow as a disciple of Jesus and help others do the same. In fact, one of the commands He gave us is to help others find and follow Him as well. This is what we call **“discipleship” – helping others to increasingly know, enjoy & follow Jesus in every area of life.** He doesn’t command this as a malevolent dictator desiring to trample on more people with his tyrannical rule as some may think. He commands this as a benevolent father who desires his children to know and trust His loving ways for their enjoyment. So as followers/disciples of Jesus, each of us are called to help others find and follow Jesus here in Boston and among every people group on the planet (Matthew 28:19-20).

We also see in the Bible (Acts 2:42-47) that disciples are most effectively made and developed through the context of what we call a **“community group” – a group of 6-15 people committed to knowing, loving and following Jesus together in all of life.** Why? Because through the community group these essential 3 disciple-making environments take place:

- 1) **Life on Life** - where there is visibility, accessibility and loving accountability.
- 2) **Life in Community** - where there is unconditional care, support and truth for each other.
- 3) **Life on Mission** - where they learn how to share the gospel and make disciples in all of life.

Our hope and prayer is that this guide will help you **increasingly know, enjoy and follow Jesus in every area of life and help others do the same.** In this guide, you will prayerfully work through questions to help you grow in the following 4 marks of being a disciple of Jesus:

1. **Gospel Centered** [1 Corinthians 15:1-11]
2. **Bible Driven** [Colossians 3:16]
3. **Prayer Dependent** [1 Thessalonians 5:17]
4. **Follow Focused** [Matthew 28:18-20]

The questions that follow aren’t exhaustive, but they are essential to help you grow as a disciple of Jesus so that the life of Jesus in you might be multiplied in the world around you. So let’s get started!

MARK #1

**GOSPEL
CENTERED**

1. Gospel Centered

What Does It Mean To Be “Gospel-Centered”?

As Christians, it’s easy for us to drift into a surface-level spiritual life that hinders our relationships with God and others. We often live lives marked by busyness, over commitment, overworking, and a lack of self-care. On the outside we might be seen as someone who is passionate about Jesus and making disciples, but beneath the surface we often find an anxious soul that struggles to say no, a soul that is easily controlled by other people’s opinions, a defensive soul that strives to cover up its weaknesses and that doesn’t know what to do with all its anger, sadness, and fear. Ultimately, we find a soul that doesn’t know how to be vulnerable and trust God and others fully.

Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19 teaches us that if we were created to know the love of Christ intimately and be filled with all the fullness of God (i.e., to grow & mature to the image of Jesus), then we must be willing to go beneath the surface and be “strengthened with power through the Spirit in our inner being.” According to Paul, we desperately need the gospel to make its way from our heads to our hearts—into the core of our inner being—to the places that remain untouched and unaffected by Jesus, to the places where we need to be healed and transformed. This is why we must learn what it means to be gospel-centered in every area of life – so that we can deeply experience the love of Christ for our good and God’s glory. **But how do you do that? What does it mean to be gospel-centered in all of life?**

Gospel – is the good news that addresses the most serious problem that we face as human beings – God is holy and just, and we are not. As people, we have fallen short of God’s design and standard for us as His creation. This is known as sin, and our sin has separated us from a relationship with God where life, joy and peace abound. However, God has done for us what we couldn’t possibly do for ourselves. He made a way to repair this divide. As God Himself, Jesus took on our sin as if they were his own, and received the judgement of death that we deserved for our wrong doing. Jesus died in our place canceling our entire record of sins. In power, Jesus rose from the dead 3 days later to extend love, forgiveness and his own life’s record of sinlessness to any person who simply believes this message. This is the power of God’s kingdom that has entered history to renew the whole world. This is indeed good news!

Centered – The gospel-centered *life* is a life where a Christian experiences a growing personal reliance on the gospel that protects them from depending on their own religious performance and being seduced and overwhelmed by idols. It’s a life driven by a love for Jesus because of his love for us and his work on our behalf. Gospel-centeredness is focused on Jesus, his finished work, His present work and his future work by asking the question – How does the gospel apply to this or that particular situation, problem or desire of the heart. And then always finding our answer in the work of Christ for our hope. That means the approval, identity, comfort, security and strength we are seeking for from this life is finally found in the person and work of Jesus. As a disciple this is our calling and joy to pursue the gospel-centered life, not just by ourselves for ourselves, but for God’s glory and others good as well. So where should we begin?

1. Take The Enneagram Type Assessment

At City on a Hill Church, we found the *Enneagram Spiritual Formation Plan* to be an effective vehicle for driving the gospel into the deep places of the heart. To be clear, there is no power in the *Enneagram Spiritual Formation Plan* itself. The Enneagram is just a tool. It's a personality test to measure how you do tasks and helps you discover underlying thoughts and emotions in how you relate to God, others and yourself. All the power for salvation and transformation lies in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16; 16:25). The Enneagram is helpful because it has the ability to serve the gospel. The Enneagram is a vehicle the Holy Spirit can use to drive the gospel in the uncharted terrains of our souls so that we can be strengthened with power in our inner being to know and grow in the love of Jesus. [Take a moment to click this link and complete The Wagner Enneagram Personality Style Scales \(WEPSS\) to discover your Enneagram type.](#) It costs \$10 and it's totally worth it. If you are tight on money, let us know! We'll cover the cost for you!

2. Read, Match & Apply The *Enneagram Spiritual Formation Plan*

Match the results from the WEPSS Enneagram Assessment with your specific personality in the *Enneagram Spiritual Formation Plan* (<https://saturatetheworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Enneagram-Spiritual-Formation-Plan.pdf>) The plan includes a brief introduction to your personality, your strengths and weaknesses, the lies you tend to believe and the truth you need to hear, specific spiritual disciplines, a key Bible memory verse and a tailored gospel expression for your personality. We work through these plans together in our community groups and DNA groups to help us be more fluent in speaking the gospel to each other's hearts, so that we can grow up in every way into Christ and be healthy disciples who are making healthy disciples (Eph. 4:15). Once you've read and reflected, take a moment to answer and apply the following questions to your heart and life:

- What resonates with you?
- What doesn't seem like a good fit?
- How do you see evidence of the sin you are prone to seek?
- How does the gospel apply truth and grace to you in those areas?
- How will you seek to believe & live differently in light of the truth and grace of the gospel?

3. Discuss Results With Your Community Group.

Talk over what you learned with your community group or DNA group (. Help your community group understand how you're wired and how they can regularly point you to the gospel.

4. Listen and Learn To Others Share Their Results

Ask others to share. Regularly refer to and revisit these plans as you walk through community group life together. This is a great tool to help better understand and care for others in the gospel.

Gospel Centered – Questions to Guide Your Growth

Below each question, use the space provided to work out your growth plan.

- 1. How would you diagnose your spiritual health as a disciple of Jesus over the past 3-6 months and why?** (To help you answer, maybe consider the following questions: What is going well when reflecting on your relationship with God? What is challenging, frustrating or where is there a recurring area of sin? How is your time spent with / dependence on / joy in / and obedience to – God? How are you doing in relying on the truth and grace of the gospel in your everyday life)
- 2. What lies are you currently tempted to believe?** (About yourself? About God? About your life?) **Where in life are you tempted to look for hope, satisfaction, peace, approval, success, power, and comfort apart from Jesus? Why do you think that is?**
- 3. How do you think the gospel of Jesus speaks truth and grace to those specific lies/idols?** (What does Jesus promise and provide in the gospel that the lies and idols cannot? What is the gospel in the face of your failures, your idols and even the power to change?)
- 4. What is your intentional plan to better believe and life in the grace and truth of the gospel this next year?** (How will you intentionally grow closer to Jesus, and grow further from idols? How will you involve your community group or DNA Group to help you better believe and life in the grace and truth of the gospel? Where do you need further help in this?)

See: John 3:16-17; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 1:16; Galatians 1:8; 1 Peter 1:12

MARK #2:

**BIBLE
DRIVEN**

2. Bible Driven

What Does It Mean To Be “Bible-Driven”?

Several years ago, a friend told me he was interested in reading the bible but struggled to do so. He felt like he should read the Bible, but he had no desire to and often struggled to get understand it or anything out of it. He’d rather read the news, check sports scores, or look up stock prices. So, what could he do?

We can all probably relate to this. Many think the solution lies in trying harder, committing to a certain time every day, or asking for accountability. These can help, but by themselves, they miss the main way God wants to motivate us. [James 2:17](#) says that “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” So whenever I lack good works, like reading the Bible, my problem is not mostly laziness or lack of discipline. My problem is a lack of faith. **I am not trusting what God has promised about his Word (the Bible) and the power it has to positively impact my life!**

So, I gave my friend a list of what God promises to do for us through the Bible. I encouraged him to pray over these promises for a few minutes each day, asking God to use these promises to strengthen his faith and change his heart. He said he would.

A few weeks later, I asked how it was going. “Unbelievable,” he said. He told me that by meditating on these promises he now *wanted* to read God’s word, he *looked forward* to reading God’s word, and he was *carving out extra time* to read God’s word. That’s what God did for my friend. And that’s what God will do for us, if we learn, remember, and trust what he has promised.

This is what the Bible-Driven life is all about – being compelled by the powerful truth of God’s Word. Therefore, as we read it and apply it, we will see it radically impact our lives.

Four Great Promises

If you are considering reading the bible for the first time or have struggled to read the Bible, take some time alone with God. Ask him to strengthen your faith in what he says about his Word. And then think and pray over promises like these.

1. God’s word will revive your soul.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. ([Psalm 19:7](#)) God’s heart-reviving work flows through the pipeline of his word – the bible.. So, no matter how unspiritual you feel, when you prayerfully read God’s word, in time you will experience God changing your heart. When your heart feels dull and Bible reading seems boring, remember that his word revives the soul.

2. God's word will light your path.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (**Psalm 119:105**) Because of sin and Satan's lies, our path is dark. We can't see the sharp turns, steep drop-offs, or quicksand pits. But God promises that reading his word is like shining a flashlight on a dark path. His voice shows us things we cannot see, and leads us where to walk. When the future is unclear and you don't know what to do next, remember that his word lights our paths.

3. God's word will free you from sin.

"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (**John 8:31-32**) Our sins are like individual chains wrapped around us and locked. In ourselves, we are powerless against them. But Jesus promises that when we abide in his word, praying over it and meditating on it, locks will spring open and chains will fall away. When you fall back into an old pattern of sin or discover a besetting sin that was hidden in your heart, remember his word can set you free.

4. God's word will strengthen your faith.

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (**Romans 10:17**) Too often our faith feels like a flat tire, but God promises to use his word to fill us with faith. This means that reading God's word is like fastening a pump to that tire, and pumping in air. It won't be flat for long. When your relationship with God feels flat or he seems far away, remember that his word strengthens and nourishes our faith.

Getting Started

Pray over these promises (and dozens of others). Ask God to help you see their truth, believe their truth, and feel their truth. He will change your heart so that reading God's word will no longer be something you *have* to do, but something you *want* to do. Once you have anchored your heart with promises from God, here are some simple suggestions to help you begin reading the Bible more.

- 1. Choose a strategic time.** There's wisdom in starting the day in God's word, so you can head into the day with life, light, power, and faith. I usually spend 30 mins before going to sleep.
- 2. Choose an undistracted, quiet place.** I have a desk in my room that I sit at to read God's work. Then I journal notes from my what God is showing me through His Word.
- 3. Use a fairly literal version of the Bible** like the English Standard Version.

4. Use a Bible reading plan that will tell you what to read every day, and take you through the whole Bible systematically. ([Click here to see several options](#)). I am currently reading 2 chapters a day from the book of Luke. That's a great place to get started if you are looking for a book to begin!

5. Begin by asking God to incline your heart to his word ([Psalm 119:36](#)), and to open your eyes to see his glory ([Psalm 119:18](#)).

6. Expect God to show you powerful truths: revealing his glory, convicting you of sin, teaching you his truth, satisfying you with his presence, filling you with worship, calling you to obedience and assuring you of his love. I keep a journal and pen in my desk to take notes on what God is revealing to me in His Word.

7. Thank God – When you are finished for the day, thank him for what he gave you through his word, and think about sharing what you received with someone else.

Get All You Can

You may already be reading God's word consistently. But maybe you could receive *even more* from God's word by spending *even more* time in God's word. King David says this about the words of God: "More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb" ([Psalm 19:10](#)).

Much fine gold would be worth millions of dollars, and honey is deliciously satisfying. Imagine having a book that, the more you read, the more gold and honey you receive? Think of it: every ten extra minutes of reading is worth more than money can buy and tastes sweeter than the finest desserts. What an amazing book! You'd want to read it as much as you can.

But the Bible is even better than that book, because the more you read the Bible, the more you get of God himself — and God is infinitely more valuable than gold, and far more satisfying than honey.

So, think of how you spent your time over the last year. Are there schedule changes you can make, or time wasters you can avoid, so that you can read more of God's word? Don't cheat yourself. God's word gives more value than gold or Amazon, and more satisfaction than honey or whatever your cravings are. Get all you can this year - be a Bible-Driven disciple of Jesus.

***Article written by Steve Fuller – Pastor and writer with Desiring God ministry

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/read-the-bible-more-this-year#four-great-promises>

Some edits were made from the original article.

Bible Driven – Questions to Guide Your Growth

Use the space provided below each question to work out your growth plan.

1. What is your intentional plan for reading God’s Word this year?

You might start with a plan to read a chapter a day. You may consider using an intentional Bible reading plan that covers all of Scripture over a certain period of time. [Click here](#) to choose from over 15 Bible Reading Plans to help you better read, understand and apply God’s Word. At City on a Hill, we recommend using the “5 Looks” Bible Study method in the appendix to journal what God reveals to you. If you’d like to check out additional Bible Study approaches you can find those in the appendix as well. So let’s get to it! What’s your plan to grow in God’s Word?

- How many days a week will you try to read God’s Word?
- What time each day will you try to read God’s Word?
- What strategic, quiet and undistracted place will you try to read God’s Word?
- How many minutes will you plan on reading?
- What book do you plan to read through first?
- How many chapters/sections do you plan to read a day?
- What bible study method will you use to help you understand God’s Word?

2. What is your intentional plan to memorize/internalize God’s Word?

As you read, look for verses, paragraphs, or even chapters that seem particularly significant and applicable to your life. Then commit them to memory. Again, maybe you can start by memorizing a verse a week, and then eventually can take on more. We recommend the “Fighter Verses” app to help you better select and memorize scripture faster.

- What 3 verses would you like to memorize that you haven’t already? Check out the verses below as a place to get started:
 - **John 3:16** – For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son, so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
 - **Romans 6:23** – The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - **Romans 5:8** – God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - **Mark 10:45** – The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
 - **Romans 8:1** – There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
 - **Romans 8:32** – He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?
 - **2 Corinthians 5:21** – For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
 - **1 John 4:10** – In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
 - **Revelation 5:9** – Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

MARK #3:

**PRAYER
DEPENDENT**

3. Prayer Dependent

What Does It Mean To Be “Prayer Dependent”?

How’s your prayer life?

It’s a simple question, but it can be tough to answer. Literally it sounds like, “How has your talking to God been lately?” Emotionally it might feel like, “Sum up your relationship with God at this point in your life.” Bible reading, by comparison, is clearer and more “objective.” How many pages? How far along in your plan? Which books have you been reading? What have you learned? Prayer doesn’t fit into an Excel sheet quite as easily.

God means for your life — married or unmarried, student or employee, young or old — to run on the power of prayer. Prayer fuels the engine of your heart and mind. It’s not coffee, or Chipotle, or social media buzz; it’s prayer. You need God in and through prayer more than you need anything else. **We will not do anything of any real and lasting value without God, which means we will not do anything of any real and lasting value without prayer.**

And yet you probably feel as insecure about your prayer life as you feel about anything. **Prayer might be, at the same time, the most pivotal and most puzzling activity in the Christian life.** It is the lifeline and life-mystery for believers. We know we need to pray, but we know we don’t pray enough. And we’re not always sure we’re even doing it right when we do pray. Should I even be asking God for this? Should I *still* be asking God for this? Do I even know what I need?

Conscious, Personal Communion

The Bible refuses to give us one small, simple picture or pattern for prayer. Jesus never intended for his model prayer (what we call “the Lord’s Prayer”) to be our *only* guide or counsel for prayer. It is a great place to start, but God’s word gives us so much more material for our prayer lives.

Prayer is objectively real — a real God, real communication, real work, real answers. But it also comes in a million shapes and forms. Prayer happens in seconds — short moments in the cracks of our day — and it can happen for hours at a time, even throughout a whole night.

Prayer is conscious, personal communication with the God of the universe. A better question than “How’s your prayer life?” might be, **“Have you been enjoying conscious communication with God — over his word, in your daily needs, throughout your day?”** Has your relationship with him been real — not a box to check, not just a hurried place for help, not a vague abstract idea hovering over your head and life? Has your faith been tying you to him in your heart? Have you been leaning on him, and not yourself?

So how is *your* prayer life? If you (like me) are not happy or content with your answer, here are seven ways to grow in your time alone with our God.

1. Pick a time and place.

You can pray anytime and anywhere. Jesus met a woman beside a well who thought we all had to go to a particular place to pray and worship, as God’s people had prayed in the Old Testament ([John 4:20](#)). But Jesus says to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. . . . The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” ([John 4:21–23](#)). No longer in a place, but in the Spirit ([Ephesians 6:18](#)).

The freedom to pray anywhere, though, often leads to praying nowhere. We should absolutely pray spontaneously whenever and wherever prayers arise in our hearts — during a break at work, before a test, in line with our groceries. But our lives are fueled by prayer, so we shouldn’t leave it up to spontaneity (we wouldn’t do that with fuel for our cars). Pick a consistent time and place when you can be alone. It might be in the morning at home, or during a long commute, or over your lunch break, or at a convenient time in the evening. The times and places can be different for different people — one of the stunning blessings Jesus bought — but it should still be consistent for you. And Jesus is clear that it should be consistently alone ([Matthew 6:6](#)) — not exclusively, but consistently.

2. Listen before you speak.

For some people, setting aside time to be alone with God is intimidating. In fact, for many today, any time alone at all — no friends, no television, no phones — is unnerving. We are speaking to almighty God here. He already knows everything we need and everything we are going to say. So what can we even say?

One important thing to learn early on about prayer is that it truly is a conversation. Just as God *really* does speak to us in his word, he is also *really* listening when we pray. It may just feel like journaling out loud at times, but there is always someone on the other side of prayer. Jesus promises, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened” ([Matthew 7:7–8](#)). A real Giver, a real Guide, a real Host.

On any given day, God may choose to move or “speak” in some unexpected way through his Spirit — bringing something to our mind, altering some circumstance, saying something through a friend. But God has told us how he speaks, the *only* truly trustworthy way we hear his voice. “All *Scripture* is breathed out by God” ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)). Read something from the Bible (even just a verse) before you pray. Those words from God are “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” ([Hebrews 4:12](#)).

John Piper writes,

Oh, how precious is the Bible. It is the very word of God. In it God speaks in the twenty-first century. This is the very voice of God. By this voice, he speaks with absolute truth and personal force. By this voice, he reveals his all-surpassing beauty. By this voice, he reveals the deepest secrets of our hearts. No voice anywhere anytime can reach as deep or lift as high or carry as far as the voice of God that we hear in the Bible. ([“The Morning I Heard the Voice of God”](#))

When you sit down to pray, let God speak first. Let him have the first word. Put his living and active words into your ears, and let them shape and inspire what you say back to him. If you learn something new about him and his ways, tell him. If the verses raise questions, ask him. Eventually, you can move on to today’s burdens, but begin by worshiping him over and through his word. Enjoy the relationship. With reverence and awe, be a son or a daughter, and listen well.

3. Prioritize the spiritual over the circumstantial.

Often when people ask how they can pray for me, I immediately try to assess if I have any unusual needs right now (like, this minute). If I don’t, I start to think about people close to me that do. “Pray for my co-worker whose dad passed away last week.” Or, “Pray for my grandmother who’s back in the hospital, again.” It’s not wrong by any means (*we should* be praying for these things, and asking others to pray, too). But if we take that mentality into prayer, we may only ever pray for physical or circumstantial needs. Physical needs are important, but they pale in comparison to our spiritual-emotional and eternal needs.

Paul says, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). Does that mean we will never have to worry about or spend time on our physical needs — food, work, cancer? Absolutely not. “Give us this day our daily bread” ([Matthew 6:11](#)). It means life is *mainly* about unseen realities. At the end of each day, what matters most happens at the spiritual and emotional level, not the physical and circumstantial.

That reality should be lived out in our prayer lives. **We should spend as much time praying for our souls, for the salvation of our loved ones, for the spread of the gospel, and for the establishment of God’s glory and his kingdom as we pray about anything.** Those prayers shouldn’t be tacked on to the end of our “real” needs. They are our deepest and most enduring needs.

4. Don’t be afraid to stop and pray now.

Prayer should be prioritized and scheduled, but the beauty of our newfound freedom and mercy in Christ is that prayer can happen anywhere. It should start alone with God in your

prayer closet, but it never needs to stay there. It must not stay there. Bring prayer into the cracks of your day. And I don't just mean before meals. When you feel the impulse to pray, seize it. Take it as the prompting of the Spirit (Satan certainly won't encourage you to pray).

A few years ago, I saw a friend in passing. We caught up for a few minutes. At the end, I asked him if he would pray for something I had shared with him, assuming he would just take that request home with him. To my surprise, he responded, "Sure! Can we pray right now?" It felt awkward the first time, but I learned an important lesson. One way to ensure you *do pray* for someone and their need is to pray right there in the moment. It only takes a minute or two, and more than meeting a need, it draws you both Godward in the middle of a day. It can be a brief and unexpected (and needed) meeting with the Almighty.

5. Identify your prayer circles.

When I say "prayer circles," I'm not talking about circles of people that pray in a group, but concentric circles of people in your life. When it comes to praying for the needs around you, you will have to prioritize some people over others (at least consistently). Otherwise, you will do nothing but pray.

I pray outward in circles, beginning with my own soul, then for my wife, then for our families, then for our small group and our church, then for our nation, and lastly for the nations, especially the unreached in the world. I don't hit every ring every time, but the circles lead me as I pray each morning.

The rings should not keep us from praying for the random stranger we met yesterday. They're just meant to keep the consistent people in our life consistently before us in prayer. If prayer is the most important thing we can do for someone, shouldn't we structure our schedules to do that for the most important people in our lives? Try praying through your circles. And be willing to pray for someone or something that doesn't quite fit.

6. Ask whatever you wish — literally anything.

If we're honest, many of us lack courage and imagination in our prayer lives. We have a tiny little box of routine things we're willing to ask God for, and we take on everything else — our questions, our frustrations, our dreams — on our own. We assume God's not interested in or doesn't have time for the small details of our day. And we can't even imagine him conquering global crises like 27 million in slavery and millions more enslaved to sin and headed to hell. And so we settle for middle-of-the-road mediocre requests. We wait to pray about something until it becomes "serious enough" for God to care about, and we don't pray for something unless we expect him to do something in the next 24 hours. And so we deprive ourselves of his mercy and power in massive areas of our life and world.

Do we have enough courage to pray that God would save the 136 *million* men and women in the Shaikh people group in Bangladesh? 0.00% Christian. Is that too big for God? “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” (Genesis 18:14). Do we have enough imagination to ask God to end sex-trafficking in India? We pray to a God “who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20). Jesus says, “If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain” — the sex-trafficking slave trade or an unreached people group of 120 million in Japan — “‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20). Will we believe Jesus and pray for big things? Do we have enough faith to think God cares about another Monday morning at work or with the kids? God cares about everything in your heart and life, down to the very smallest things. Paul says, “Do not be anxious about *anything*” — your random conversation with that friend, your sleep tonight, this month’s budget — “but in *everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). Anything and everything, every day. Don’t be afraid to pray big prayers, and small ones.

7. Be willing to ask one more time.

Jesus knew we would lose heart in prayer, specifically that we would pray for things for long enough that we would start to question if God was listening or might ever answer. But he didn’t want us to lose heart or give up. He wanted us to keep asking, keep pleading, keep praying. He tells his disciples a story about a widow seeking justice from a judge, “who neither feared God nor respected man.” She pled and pled with him. Luke writes, For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, “Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?” (Luke 18:4–8)

The widow was rewarded for her persistence by an unrighteous judge. How much more will God listen to his precious sons and daughters who ask and ask and ask? If the unrighteous judge could not ignore her, how much more will our heavenly Father hear us?

Don’t think now about praying for that need or desire for decades. Just focus on today. If God has given you a burden or a desire for another day, and you really believe that burden or desire might be from him, be willing to ask him one more time — one more prayer for relief, for reconciliation, for provision, for a breakthrough, for salvation. He’s still listening. Are we still believing? Jesus says, “Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matthew 7:9–11)

He won’t give you a stone. He won’t give you a serpent. He loves you. He knows what’s best for you. And he’s listening. Don’t be afraid to ask, again.

* Article by Marhsall Segal – Staff Writer, DesingGod.org

Prayer Dependent – Questions to Guide Your Growth in Prayer

Use the space provided below each question to work out your growth plan.

1. What is your intentional plan to pray?

What will be your place and when will be your time simply to be with the Father? Concentrated prayer at a specific time is the best fuel for continual prayer all the time. Simply setting aside this time and place will substantially change your life as a disciple of Jesus.

- **What time and place will you try to pray each day?**
- **How much time will you try to set aside each day to pray intentionally?**
- **What is your “Prayer Plan”:** Our lead Pastor at City on a Hill Church uses the following prayer plan for each day of the week:
 - Monday: My Heart – pray for my own life, hopes, struggles and walk with Jesus
 - Tuesday: The Church - pray for members, visitors, challenges & God’s vision for CoaH
 - Wednesday: Community Group – pray for the CG I lead and for those I coach
 - Thursday: The Community – pray for the neighborhood and our community partners
 - Friday: Salvation – pray for those who have not yet believed and trusted in Jesus
 - Saturday: Family – pray for those in my immediate and extended family
 - Sunday: CoaH Network & Missionaries – pray for those serving Jesus here and afar
- **How will you specifically pray for your CG each week?** Those in our CG (dependence and joy in Christ), leadership (based on the Word, unique insight on how to care for the members, gospel care for each person in the group), mission (that we would feel the need for it, seek out opportunities, etc.), unbelievers (to come to our group, feel comfortable with the family culture built, to ask questions and come to faith in Jesus)
- See Appendix 3 for another 7 Day “Prayer Plan”

2. What is your intentional plan to fast?

Once a week or once every few weeks, instead of eating breakfast, lunch, or dinner, spend that hour praying and reading God’s Word. Once you’ve grown accustomed to this practice, plan to fast for two meals in one day, and then for an entire twenty-four-hour period. If you have any health concerns or are pregnant, please seek council with your doctor to ensure this is a healthy time for you to practice this spiritual discipline. **See Appendix 4 for more information on how to fast.**

- How often will you try to fast each month?
- What date this month will you fast?
- What do you want to specifically pray for during this fast?

MARK #4:

FOLLOW

FOCUSED

4. Follow Focused

What Does It Mean To Be “Follow Focused”?

Obedience brings far deeper pleasure than sin, both now and in the long run. The blessing is not merely the absence of punishment, but the presence of favor. Obedience is not simply something we do for God, but something we do *with* God, as a way to experience more of him. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for *it is God who works in you*, both to will and to work *for his good pleasure*” (Philippians 2:12–13). This is what it means to be, “Follow Focused” – to follow God’s design for our joy and goodness which coincide with His glory. To follow Him, rather than our own desires in every area of life is the “follow-focused” life.

We indeed work in obedience, often very hard, and over many years, but our hope is not in ourselves, but in God working in our obeying. All our efforts at obedience will be in vain unless we have the grace of God at work in us (1 Corinthians 15:10). We genuinely and desperately need him to lead us not into temptation but to deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:13). If we are to obey from the heart, God must move, which means every act of obedience, however ordinary in our eyes, is an astonishing blessing.

When Moses brought God’s demands to Pharaoh’s throne instead of cowering in fear and insecurity, God had given him a blessing. When Joshua marched around the high walls of Jericho instead of running from the battle or fighting his own way, God was moving in the walking and waiting. When Hannah, desiring a son, poured out her soul to the Lord instead of stewing in bitterness and longing, God not only heard her prayers, but blessed her in her praying. When Jeremiah preached repentance and endured hostility for forty years, with little fruit, instead of giving up and ignoring God’s call, a whole host of blessings had fallen along the way, sustaining and fulfilling him through incredible hardship. When the apostle Paul suffered being imprisoned unjustly, beaten regularly and ruthlessly, and even being stoned to the point of death, the blessing of allegiance to Christ was worth everything he suffered.

Each knew the pain and shame of giving in to temptation, and each enjoyed the unparalleled gift of obedience — of doing what God had called them to do, against extraordinary odds (in them and around them), because God was with them and for them.

Obedience Was His Sustenance

Jesus did not sin in any way, shape, or form. He never tasted the bitterness of disobedience. But he gives us more than an example of obedience; he shows us the deep and abiding joy of obeying God. He obeyed the Father not only because it was *right*, but because it was *more satisfying*.

Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who *for the joy that was set before him* endured the cross. (Hebrews 12:1–2)

When Jesus rejected every weight and sin, he did so gladly — not reluctantly. He did deny temptation, but based on his pursuit of joy, it was not “self-denial” as many typically think of it. He did what he had to in order to secure greater joy.

In John 4, when his disciples had noticed Jesus hadn’t eaten anything, and said, “Rabbi, eat” (John 4:31), he replied, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work” (John 4:32–34). He craved holiness even more than calories. Obedience was his sustenance. And by his Spirit, he sustains us with the same. He says, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, *that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full*” (John 15:10–11).

If we want to abide with God and experience the very joy of God, we obey God. If we really want the fullest happiness, we keep his commandments “from the heart” (Romans 6:17).

Far Sweeter Than Forgiveness

Forgiveness alone is not the sweetest gift God gives sinners. It is far better when he not only forgives our iniquity, but replaces it with Spirit-empowered conformity to Christ. Until obedience smells sweet to our hearts, we may find relief or comfort in the gospel, but we forfeit a greater blessing than relief.

When we climb out of bed to meet with God in his word and prayer instead of claiming thirty extra minutes of sleep, God has given us a blessing already. When we refuse to indulge an illicit sexual desire by looking, clicking, or touching, a gift has fallen from heaven. When we confess sin to someone, instead of hiding for another week, God has moved in us and for us. When we do not dishonor our brothers or sisters behind their back, but instead bless them and pray for them, God has delivered us from temptation with a fresh experience of his grace.

If we have done what God has told us to do, with the right heart, God has done it in us, and through us, and for us. In the moments we have obeyed him, he has blessed us.

Follow Focused – Questions to Guide Your Growth in Obedience

Below each question, use the space provided to work out your growth plan

1. **What area/s of your life do you find it difficult to obey/follow Jesus?**

2. **Who can you share this with that will love you, help you and hold you accountable in those areas?**

3. **Where do you sense God currently directing you to follow Him in obedience?**
 - God is always leading us to better follow Him in areas of our lives. Where do you sense Him leading you? Do you need to reconcile a strained relationship? Confess a sin struggle to a trusted friend? Turn away from a secret sin habit? Get your finances in order? Stop or Start a relationship? Share the gospel with a family member, friend, co-worker or neighbor? Seek guidance or separate from an unhealthy relationship? Etc.

4. **How will I follow Jesus in my giving and serving the church and the mission of the gospel?**
 - One of the most effective ways to fuel affection for God is to give your resources in obedience to God. This starts with giving to the church, though it may extend above and beyond this, as well. Giving intentionally, generously, sacrificially, and cheerfully fuels selfless love for God that overcomes selfish desires for the things of this world. At City on a Hill we expect all members to make at least some financial contribution. The standard that we shoot for is 10% of our income to the ministry of the local church, but this number is more or less realistic for different people at different times.
 - **Giving:** How will you give regularly & financially at City on a Hill Church? _____
 - **Serving:** How will you regularly serve at City on a Hill Church? _____

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

“The 5 Looks” – Bible Study Method

1. Look at the Passage – What jumps out at you?

What interests / surprises / frustrates /or confuses you when reading this passage? What is happening?

2. Look at the People – What do you learn about People from this passage?

Who are the people involved in this passage and what are they doing? What mistakes are they making? What are they learning? How are they responding to God?

3. Look at God – What do you learn about God from this passage?

What are you learning about the character of God? What were the people in the passage being taught about God? Does God do anything or say anything?

4. Look for the Gospel – How does this passage reveal the gospel and our need for it?

Does this passage foreshadow Jesus’ coming, show us our need for Him, or point to Him in another way?

5. Look at your Life – How does this passage connect to your life?

Look at your life and ask how this passage can make a difference in your life right now. Is there a Sin to Avoid? A promise to keep. An example to follow. A commands to obey?

Appendix 2

7 Additional Bible Study Approaches

OIA Method

These are the building blocks for all Bible study methods that provide a basic framework to interpret Scripture and is easily built upon as one grows in their skill of interpreting.

1. Observation – What does it say?

- What do you see in the text? This can feel like just stating the obvious but it is important that you see everything and don't miss important details that are helpful for interpretation. You want to look for key words, repeated words, and pay attention to context.

2. Interpretation – What does it mean?

- Seek to identify the main point of the passage as it relates to the original audience. Ask questions of "why". Why does the author say this and not something else? Why is this important? Try to summarize the big picture of the passage in 1-2 sentences.

3. Application – How does it relate to me?

- Begin to think about how this passage should make a difference in our lives. There should be practical and tangible responses that we develop that are specifically stated or that we can imply from a right interpretation of a passage. Application can also lead to times of prayer and worship as a group.

The Swedish Method*

This method is a easy and accessible method to study a passage. It is helpful for "beginners" and it's based on 3 simple images.

1. The Lightbulb – What shines from the passage you are studying?
 - What stands out? What surprises you or seems really important? Just try to find things in the passage that catch you eye.
2. The Question Mark – What things raise a question for you?
 - Anything confusing, troubling, or difficult that you want to ask about. If you could ask God one question about this passage, what would it be? Then try to answer these questions.
3. The Arrow – What difference does this passage make in your life?
 - What does God want us to learn about how we live our lives? Does the passage openly say or imply that we should respond in a certain way? What lessons does God have for us to learn?

The Five “C’s”*

A method that is a bit more elaborate developed by Jon Neilson for college students that is very helpful for studying New Testament books of the Bible.

1. Creep – As you “stalk” the passage what do you see?
 - Hopefully you don’t have experience doing this in person. But, the concept of stalking applied to Scripture is helpful in gaining a good grasp of knowing the details of a passage well.
2. Context – Who is this written by and to and at what part of history?
 - What is the historical context and literary context? Who wrote this and to whom was it written? Who is involved in the passage?
3. Christ – How does this passage related to Christ?
 - If this story is part of the larger story of redemption than how does this passage relate to Jesus? How does it illuminate God’s plan? What do we learn about Jesus?
4. Crux – What is the big idea of the passage?
 - What is the crucial part of this passage?
5. Call – What specifically does the passage call you to do?
 - Get real, get specific. How does this passage make a difference in your life tomorrow?

ROAD** Method

A simple acronym developed to help you study. You are encouraged to journal using this method.

- R (Read) - Pray for understanding, then read through the text slowly and deliberately. If you have time, read the text twice.
- O (Observe) - Observe the details of the text and try to understand what the author is saying. For example, pay attention to things like: facts (Who? What? When? Where? Why?), repetition, contrast, cause and effect, definitions, explanations, questions, quotations, commands, prohibitions, warnings, promises, etc.
- A (Apply) - Answer two questions: What do I hear God saying in this text? What am I going to do about it?
- D (Depend) - Pray for continued understanding, trust, and obedience. Ask God’s Spirit to help you apply these truths to your life right now. As the Spirit leads, feel free to praise God, confess and repent of sin, embrace God’s grace, etc.

The Four Questions** Method

*The Four Questions is a common method used by Community Groups when they approach the Bible, though they're also effective individually—helping you study God's word on your own in a way that doesn't devolve into only looking for a personal application. When we study God's Word, we want to know God, not just retain ideas or improve morally. These questions help us do just that.**Note: it may be difficult to answer all four questions for every passage. That's OK.*

1. **Who is God?** - When we study God's word, we always want to start with God himself. Write in your journal what you see in the passage about God and his character.
2. **What has he done?** - God's character is often expressed in his actions. What do we see God intending and doing in the passage? Write it down in your journal.
3. **Who are we?** - The Bible reveals the people were made in God's image, and so our identity is rooted in and derived from who God is. We also learn that people have rebelled against God, and so we are identified that way too. Write in your journal what we learn about people as rebels against God, but even more importantly, write about what we learn about what people are made to be as image bearers of God.
4. **What are we to do?** - How does this passage call us to trust God to empower us to change in response to who he has created us to be and to how he is changing us into the image of Jesus? Write it down in your journal. Note: some Christians would call this the "application", but because it is rooted in God's character and actions first and foremost, rather than in our morality or self-righteousness, we try to avoid that word and it's Christian sub-cultural implications.

Lectio Divina** Method

Lectio Divina is a Latin term that means "divine reading", and it is a way to reflectively, contemplatively and prayerfully soak in God's word. It is especially helpful for Wisdom, Poetic and Prophetic Biblical genres. It works in four phases:

1. Read - Read the passage slowly, listening for God's voice in his Word.
2. Reflect - Read the passage again, listening for a specific phrase of verse that stands out to you in the reading. Write that phrase or verse in your journal.
3. Respond - Read the passage again, asking God to speak to you his meaning in the highlighted phrase or verse. Write in your journal why you believe that phrase or verse is significant to you right now.
4. Rest - Read the passage one more time, asking God to help you to trust him to keep his promises, to be who he says he is, and to help you to change in response to his Word.

Community Discussion Template** Method

When you gather with your community, here is a discussion template to help you get the most out of your time together. It may be helpful to have each person write out answers to these questions in their journals before you get together. Don't forget to begin your time together in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to illuminate God's Word.

- What is God telling you this week through his word?
- What are you going to do about it?
- What is going on in your life right now where you are seeing God most clearly or feel most in need of his help most acutely?
- How can we pray for you?

After discussing these things, choose a passage from the last week's reading and use of one of the frameworks to dig into it together.

End your time in prayer, thanking God for his faithfulness, provision and presence as you've gathered around his self-revealing Word.

NOTE

* Found in Bible Study by Jon Nielson

**Found on Journey Church Website at www.thejourney.org

Appendix 3

THE 7 BOLDEST PRAYERS YOU CAN PRAY

A 7 Day Prayer Plan

- 1. Delight:** Do whatever it takes, Lord, to give me delight in you as the greatest treasure of my heart.
 - “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4)
 - “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

- 2. Desires:** Do whatever it takes, Lord, to align the desires of my heart with yours.
 - “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9–10)

- 3. Dependence:** Do whatever it takes, Lord, to increase my awareness of my dependence on you in everything so that I will live continually by faith.
 - “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

- 4. Discernment:** Do whatever it takes, Lord, to teach me to discern good from evil through the rigorous exercise of constant practice.
 - “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:14)

- 5. Desperation:** Do whatever it takes, Lord, to keep me desperate for you because I tend to wander when I stop feeling my need for you.
 - “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.” (Psalm 119:67)

- 6. Discipline:** Do whatever it takes, Lord, to discipline me for my good that I may share your holiness and bear the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
 - “He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:10–11)

- 7. Diligence:** Do whatever it takes, Lord, to increase my resolve to do your will with all diligence.
 - “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:15–16)

Appendix 4

Fasting

What is It? And how do it do it?

Chances are you are among the massive majority of Christians who rarely or never fast. It's not because we haven't read our Bibles or sat under faithful preaching or heard about the power of fasting, or even that we don't genuinely want to do it. We just never actually get around to putting down the fork.

Part of it may be that we live in a society in which food is so ubiquitous that we eat not only when we don't need to, but sometimes even when we don't want to. We eat to share a meal with others, to build or grow relationships (good reasons), or just as a distraction from responsibility.

And of course, there are our own cravings and aches for comfort that keep us from the discomfort of fasting.

Not So Fast

Fasting is voluntarily going without food — or any other regularly enjoyed, good gift from God — for the sake of some spiritual purpose. It is markedly counter-cultural in our consumerist society, like abstaining from sex until marriage.

If we are to learn the lost art of fasting and enjoy its fruit, it will not come with our ear to the ground of society, but with Bibles open. Then, the concern will not be whether we fast, but when. Jesus assumes his followers will fast, and even promises it will happen. He doesn't say "if," but "when you fast" ([Matthew 6:16](#)). And he doesn't say his followers might fast, but "they will" ([Matthew 9:15](#)).

We fast in this life because we believe in the life to come. We don't have to get it all here and now, because we have a promise that we will have it all in the coming age. We fast from what we can see and taste, because we have tasted and seen the goodness of the invisible and infinite God — and are desperately hungry for more of him.

Radical, Temporary Measure

Fasting is for this world, for stretching our hearts to get fresh air beyond the pain and trouble around us. And it is for the battle against the sin and weakness inside us. We express our discontent with our sinful selves and our longing for more of Christ.

When Jesus returns, fasting will be done. It's a temporary measure, for this life and age, to enrich our joy in Jesus and prepare our hearts for the next — for seeing him face to face. When

he returns, he will not call a fast, but throw a feast; then all holy abstinence will have served its glorious purpose and be seen by all for the stunning gift it was.

Until then, we will fast.

How to Start Fasting

Fasting is hard. It sounds much easier in concept than it proves to be in practice. It can be surprising how on-edge we feel when we miss a meal. Many an idealistic new fast-er has decided to miss a meal and only found our belly drove us to make up for it long before the next mealtime came.

Fasting sounds so simple, and yet the world, our flesh, and the devil conspire to introduce all sorts of complications that keep it from happening. In view of helping you start down the slow path to good fasting, here are six simple pieces of advice. These suggestions might seem pedantic, but the hope is that such basic counsel can serve those who are new at fasting or have never seriously tried it.

1. Start small.

Don't go from no fasting to attempting a weeklong. Start with one meal; maybe fast one meal a week for several weeks. Then try two meals, and work your way up to a daylong fast. Perhaps eventually try a two-day juice fast.

A juice fast means abstaining from all food and beverage, except for juice and water. Allowing yourself juice provides nutrients and sugar for the body to keep you operating, while also still feeling the effects from going without solid food. It's *not* recommended that you abstain from water during a fast of any length.

2. Plan what you'll do instead of eating.

Fasting isn't merely an act of self-deprivation, but a spiritual discipline for seeking more of God's fullness. Which means we should have a plan for *what positive pursuit to undertake* in the time it normally takes to eat. We spend a good portion of our day with food in front of us. One significant part of fasting is the time it creates for prayer and meditation on God's word or some act of love for others.

Before diving headlong into a fast, craft a simple plan. Connect it to your purpose for the fast. Each fast should have a specific spiritual purpose. Identify what that is and design a focus to replace the time you would have spent eating. Without a purpose and plan, it's not Christian fasting; it's just going hungry.

3. Consider how it will affect others.

Fasting is no license to be unloving. It would be sad to lack concern and care for others around us because of this expression of heightened focus on God. Love for God and for neighbor go together. Good fasting mingles horizontal concern with the vertical. If anything, others should even feel more loved and cared for when we're fasting.

So as you plan your fast, consider how it will affect others. If you have regular lunches with colleagues or dinners with family or roommates, assess how your abstaining will affect them, and let them know ahead of time, instead of just being a no-show, or springing it on them in the moment that you will not be eating.

Also, consider this backdoor inspiration for fasting: If you make a daily or weekly practice of eating with a particular group of friends or family, and those plans are interrupted by someone's travel or vacation or atypical circumstances, consider that as an opportunity to fast, rather than eating alone.

4. Try different kinds of fasting.

The typical form of fasting is personal, private, and partial, but we find a variety of forms in the Bible: personal and communal, private and public, congregational and national, regular and occasional, absolute and partial.

In particular, consider fasting together with your family, small group, or church. Do you share together in some special need for God's wisdom and guidance? Is there an unusual difficulty in the church, or society, for which you need God's intervention? Do you want to keep the second coming of Christ in view? Plead with special earnestness for God's help by linking arms with other believers to fast together.

5. Fast from something other than food.

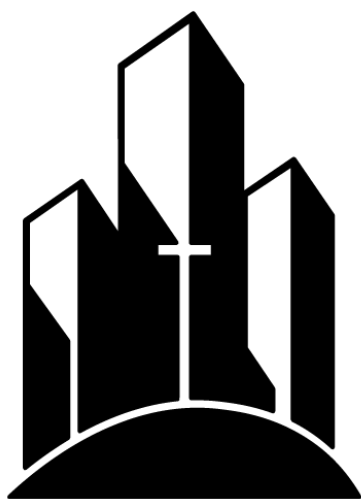
Fasting from food is not necessarily for everyone. Some health conditions keep even the most devout from the traditional course. However, fasting is not limited to abstaining from food. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, "Fasting should really be made to include abstinence from anything which is legitimate in and of itself for the sake of some special spiritual purpose."

If the better part of wisdom for you, in your health condition, is not to go without food, consider fasting from television, computer, social media, or some other regular enjoyment that would bend your heart toward greater enjoyment of Jesus. Paul even talks about married couples fasting from sex "for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer" ([1 Corinthians 7:5](#)).

6. Don't think of white elephants.

When your empty stomach starts to growl and begins sending your brain every “feed me” signal it can, don't be content to let your mind dwell on the fact that you haven't eaten. If you make it through with an iron will that says *no* to your stomach, but doesn't turn your mind's eye elsewhere, it says more about your love for food than your love for God.

Christian fasting turns its attention to Jesus or some great cause of his in the world. Christian fasting seeks to take the pains of hunger and transpose them into the key of some eternal anthem, whether it's fighting against some sin, or pleading for someone's salvation, or for the cause of the unborn, or longing for a greater taste of Jesus.



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