

Week One: Meditation

Set aside 10 minutes at least 2 or 3 times this week to meditate.

- The most important aspect of meditation is quiet. You need quiet to hear God.
- No specific position for sitting etc. is required. Just find what will be a comfortable position for ten minutes.
- Meditation is about being present in the current moment.
- Concentrate on your breathing. Feel your breath come in and out. You may want to visualize your breath as it enters and exits your body.
- If you're having thoughts that distract you from focusing on your breathing, just acknowledge the thought and then let it go.
- God's name, Yahweh, is the sound of breath. You may want to breathe God's name. Yah - Breathe in. Weh - Breathe out.
- Palms Up/Palms Down. In this method, you hold your hands out palms down and ask God to help you let go of something (ex. anger, anxiety, or other burdens). Open your hands to let the burden go. You then hold your hands out palms up and tell God, "I am ready to receive from you now." (Ex. Give me peace, instead of fear. Give me forgiveness instead of anger. Or just be open to what God has to give.)
- You may want to meditate on scripture by focusing on individual words or meanings within a short verse. Or by visualizing a story or a place or image from scripture.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree that the curse of our age is superficiality or shallowness? If you tend to agree what are indications in our culture that illustrate this? If you tend to disagree what are indications in our culture that illustrate this?
2. What do you think is the purpose of having spiritual habits?
3. What do you see as obstacles for you to establish some of these spiritual habits in your life?
4. How do you understand the balance between what only God can do in your life and what effort is required on your part?
5. What are you most hoping to gain from this experience?

Scripture Readings for Week 1

- Wednesday – The glory of meditation – [Exodus 24:15-18](#)
- Thursday – The friendship of meditation – [Exodus 33:11](#)
- Friday – The terror of meditation – [Exodus 20:18-19](#)
- Saturday – The object of meditation – [Psalms 1:1-3](#)
- Sunday – The comfort of meditation – [1 Kings 19:9-18](#)
- Monday – The insights of meditation – [Acts 10:9-20](#)
- Tuesday – The ecstasy of meditation – [2 Corinthians 12:1-4](#)

Week Two: Prayer

Prayer is a very individual practice, so there is no one right time or place or way to pray. **This week set aside a daily time that works for you to spend time in prayer. There is no set time length, but make it a time without distractions that you can spend with God.**

If you're not sure where to start a prayer book or prayer app may help guide you.

You can use the Lord's Prayer as an outline for prayer as well. Some of the things included in the Lord's Prayer are:

- Praise and thanksgiving to God
- Praying over the gap between our world and God's kingdom and how to bring them closer together
- Praying for your needs and the needs of others
- Praying for forgiveness. When you're praying for forgiveness, be specific in confessing what you're done and why you need forgiveness. You can also ask for help doing better with specific things.
- Praying forgiveness for others. If there is someone you're having an issue with, it can help change the way you think and feel about them if you pray for them.
- Praying for help with temptation
- Praying for protection and deliverance

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

You can pray continually/without ceasing throughout the day by looking for opportunities to pray. It might be you encounter someone in need of prayer. It might be you hear a siren. It could be recognizing things you're grateful for and giving thanks for them in the moment. You don't have to stop what you're doing or spend a long time in prayer, just find moments to briefly lift something up to God or give thanks. When you've done this for a while, you will find yourself doing it more automatically and seeing things through that lens of prayer.

Remember to set aside some time to listen. Prayer is not a one sided conversation, so include a time to ask what you can do for God or for God's guidance.

Discussion Questions

Our group discussion was about our experiences as we practiced meditation during the previous week.

- How was your experience of meditation this week?
- What was the hardest part about the practice of meditation?
- What did you find fulfilling about practicing meditation?

- Did you find anything threatening about meditation?
- What do you think is the value of a habit of meditation?
- Is this a practice you think you might incorporate into your life?

Scripture Readings for Week 2

- Wednesday – The pattern of prayer – [Matthew 6:5-15](#)
- Thursday – The prayer of worship – [Psalms 103](#)
- Friday – The prayer of repentance – [Psalms 51](#)
- Saturday – The prayer of thanksgiving – [Psalms 150](#)
- Sunday – The prayer of guidance – [Matthew 26:36-46](#)
- Monday – The prayer of faith – [James 5:13-18](#)
- Tuesday – The prayer of command – [Mark 9:14-29](#)

WEEK THREE: FASTING

This week's challenge is to fast 2 times. John Wesley would fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, but pick what times and days work for you.

The point of fasting is to use the time when you aren't doing something to instead pray, make a space of listening to God, study scripture, or do other things that bring you closer to God. Fasting comes from a natural impulse. Have you ever been so focused in work or a task that you accidentally missed lunch? Or been grieving and found you have no appetite? Fasting is focusing on doing God's will or grieving over our sin.

- If you're fasting from food, every time you feel hungry you can take that as a reminder to pray.
- If you do a food fast the easiest way is to go from lunch to lunch. You can follow John Wesley's example and take tea around 3 PM and then fast until lunch the next day.
- If you have a medical condition like diabetes or you're on medications, you should not fast from food. Check with your doctor if you're not sure, and always prioritize your health first.

There are also other ways to fast, not just through giving up food. You can choose to give up other things that take a lot of space in your life or create distance between you and God. Some examples are social media, screens, and television.

Other benefits to fasting are the confidence it gives you that you are in control of yourself and your desires. This can also strengthen your will and discipline to help you resist all kinds of temptations.

Fasting was only required on one day in the Old Testament, the day of atonement: Yom Kippur. However, there are many examples of fasting in the Bible from Daniel and Esther to Paul and Jesus. Jesus talks about fasting for the right motives, not to impress the people around you, but out of love for God.

“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” - Matthew 6:16-18

In Isaiah 58: 3-8 the Lord also says that fasting needs to be done for the right motives.

‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’

“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves?

Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

If fasting is done while not following God's commands or loving God and neighbor then it becomes an empty gesture.

As you practice fasting this week, find the thing that makes sense to give up in your life and look for ways to use the time you gain or the sacrifice you make in giving that thing up to grow closer to God.

Discussion Questions

Our group discussion was about our experiences as we practiced prayer during the previous week.

- How was your experience with prayer this week?
- Was this week different than your usual habit of prayer?
- How was your practice of morning prayer?
- How was your practice of “praying without ceasing?”
- How was your practice of evening prayer?
- What should we do when we don't feel like praying?

Scripture Readings for Week 3

- Wednesday - [Matthew 6:16-18](#)
- Thursday – [Daniel 10:3](#)
- Friday – [Acts 13:2](#)
- Saturday – [Nehemiah 1:4](#)
- Sunday – [Isaiah 58:6](#)
- Monday – [Ezra 8:21-23](#)
- Tuesday – [Esther 4:16](#)

WEEK FOUR: STUDY

Study includes Bible study, but also paying attention to the world around you and what's going on in your life, as well as thinking deeply. As we study, remember that we need humility to grow. If we're sure that we're always right or aren't open to new ideas, we keep ourselves from growing.

This week our challenge is to do some the things below:

- Read our Bibles (use footnotes, commentaries and other resources to think more deeply about meaning and context)
- Read a book that will offer something meaningful (could be fiction or non-fiction)
- Look at the things around you. Look for sources of wonder and beauty in the world.
- Intentionally think about good, positive, and Godly things.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. - Romans 12:2

What we think about has an effect on how we feel and what we do. Our thoughts become actions, our actions become habits, our habits determine our character, and our character determines our destiny. We can transform ourselves by transforming the way we think through:

Repetition. What you think about over and over is reinforced, whether positive or negative.

Concentration. Intentionally concentrate on good things. This doesn't mean ignoring everything negative, but not dwelling on the bad.

Comprehension. Understanding why we're feeling or reacting a certain way, or working to understand the complexities of a situation, can give us more insight and discernment.

Reflection. Take time to think about the things that happened during your day or something you've read or the Bible study you're doing.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, - 2 Timothy 3:16

Reading the Bible is an important part of the habit of study. The goal isn't just to increase your knowledge of the Bible, but to be transformed.

Some ways to think more deeply as you study the Bible include using commentaries that help provide context and interpretation. Some good authors for this include N.T. Wright and William Barclay. Our church also has a resource library with commentaries and if you are looking for commentaries on a specific book or subject you can **email Pastor Don** for help.

Some ways to read deeply include:

- Reading one book of the Bible all the way through.
- If it's a short book you might re-read it daily for a week or longer.
- Read the gospels separately.
- Read just the words in red.
- A chapter a day in a book like Proverbs with 31 chapters.
- Don't just read but reflect on what you're reading. What is its meaning, context and application for your life?
- Ask yourself questions about how what Jesus teaches clashes with what our culture teaches. Think about ways to live out what Jesus taught in our current time.

The study of life and the world around us is also an important component of the habit of study. Take time to look for goodness, beauty and wonder. There is something new and wonderful to be discovered every day.

Discussion Questions

Our group discussion was about our experiences as we practiced fasting during the previous week.

- What did you fast this week and why?
- How was your experience of the practice of fasting?
- What was the hardest part?
- What did you replace in the time of what you were fasting?
- Were there any positives for you in this experience?
- Is this something you would encourage others to do?

Scripture Readings for Week 4

- Wednesday – The Call to Study – [Proverbs 1:1-9, 23:12,23](#)
- Thursday – The Source of Truth – [James 1:5, Hebrews 4:11, 2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)
- Friday – What to Study – [Philippians 4:8-9, Colossians 3:1-17](#)
- Saturday – The Value of Study – [Luke 10:38-42](#)
- Sunday – Active Study – [Ezra 7:10, James 1:19-25](#)
- Monday – Study in Evangelism – [Acts 17:1-3, 17:10-12, 19:8-10](#)
- Tuesday – Study by Observation – [Proverbs 24:30-34](#)