

immersed in scripture_

DAILY DEVOTIONS



Week 2 - Day 1 - The Beauty of Scripture

Having weighed the costs and benefits, and committed ourselves to being everyday disciples of Jesus (see “Counting the Cost”), we will now explore how we can become healthy disciples. One essential way is by saturating ourselves in Scripture. Through Scripture, we get to know God, hear His voice and His heart, learn how God works, appreciate His promises, live God’s way, and receive God’s guidance. This Plan focuses on the importance and purpose of Scripture in building disciples of Jesus.

Please note that this Plan offers more than a daily reflection on Scripture. It is designed to forge everyday disciples who are aware of God’s presence and hear God’s voice throughout the day. Please try to build the lunchtime meditations and evening reflections into your routine, as well as the morning devotions. Before each session, pause to be aware of God’s love and presence.

MORNING

Scripture: Psalm 19:7-12

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. ⁹The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. ¹⁰They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. ¹¹By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. ¹²But who can discern their own errors?

Devotion

When David wrote this song, most of the Bible had not yet been written. But God’s people did have His Law (the first five books of the Bible) and a growing body of sacred writings that may have included Joshua, Judges, and some of Samuel’s writings. David is reflecting on this written revelation from God when he says that it is perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, firm, righteous, precious, and so sweet.

That’s a resounding commendation from David. It’s obvious that he intensely loved what God revealed about Himself and His desires for His people in Scripture. And David only had a fraction of what we have in our Bible. What a privilege we have in being able to read Scripture and to know for sure what God is like and how He wants us to live. No wonder studying Scripture has such a vital role for those who are disciples of Jesus. As David says, it refreshes the soul, it makes wise the simple, it gives joy to the heart and light to the eyes, and it warns us when we are blindly walking into trouble.

Everyday disciples of Jesus will make the study of God’s Word a high priority because the benefits are deeply significant. God’s truth is sweeter than honey. According to David, it’s pleasurable and enjoyable as well as being incredibly helpful and revealing. I’m not sure if you have experienced the joy of Scripture yet, but there is only one way to find it. Saturate yourself in Scripture and let God do His work in you through His Word.

Prayer

Lord, You have not chosen to reveal Yourself in vague ideas or feelings, but through Your written Word. We are so privileged. It's encouraging to know that David loved the part of Your revelation he had received, and I pray that I too will grow in my respect for, trust in, love for, and enjoyment of Your Word. Please keep opening my heart to Your truth. May I be refreshed and renewed and changed as I daily study Scripture. Give me a sweet tooth for Your Word.

Today's Bible Focus

"God's revelation in Scripture is perfect, refreshing the soul."

LUNCHTIME (or when you can make a moment during the day)

1. Meditate for a short time on today's Bible Focus. Let it seep into your heart.
2. Look and see what is happening around you from God's perspective and listen to see whether God is whispering anything to you.
3. Pray for any not-yet Christians God has placed on your heart.

EVENING

1. *Remember:* Repeat today's Bible Focus.
2. *Reflect:* Reflect on the day and thank God for what He has said and done.
3. *Repent:* Check where you have neglected or disobeyed God during the day and ask for forgiveness and freedom.
4. *Release:* Name any concerns or fears on your mind and release them to Jesus.

Week 2 – Day 2 - A Free Buffet

MORNING

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-2, 10-11

¹“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.²Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare... ¹⁰As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Devotion

This prophetic Scripture from Isaiah does not refer directly to Scripture, but it does focus on the Word of God (55:11) and its power and that’s why we’re studying it. Isaiah is prophesying that in the future, the Jewish exiles would do it tough. Separated from their precious homeland, they would be physically and spiritually hungry and thirsty (55:1). But in this prophecy, God assures these future exiles that His promise of a return to Israel would be fulfilled without them having to lift a finger. They only had to eat His Word, believe His truth, and see God accomplish everything He promised.

This broken and thirsty future generation could be certain that God’s Word is incredibly powerful. They could be absolutely confident that no matter what their circumstances, once God Word goes out, everything will happen as He says. They would not have to try to solve the problems themselves, but could rest in what God said and see God do exactly as He promised.

Can you see the parallel for us? As we long for spiritual change in our broken world, God calls us to drink deeply of his promises and to rest in Him. We are not to try to solve the problems ourselves, but we are to listen to God through His Word and align ourselves with what He says. Isaiah pictures it as famished people “eating” God’s word (55:2) and finding the most wonderful satisfaction in His revelation. I love that metaphor. Reading Scripture is feasting on the truth and promises of God. So come thirsty people. God is offering a free buffet feast for you in His Word! “Eat what is good and you will delight in the richest of fare” (55:2).

Prayer

Your Scripture is filled with promises and encouragements and truths that I need to discover and hold on to. I’m sorry when I feel that I know what is best and try to solve problems without listening to You. I am hungry and thirsty for Your living truth. I need to know what You want and what You are going to do. Transform my heart and perspective as I feast freely on Your Word.

Today’s Bible Focus

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters – they’re free.”

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EVENING

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Week 2 - Day 3 - Saturated in Scripture

MORNING

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-10

¹ Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' [Deut. 8:3]." ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶ "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone' [Ps. 91:11-12]." ⁷ Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test' [Deut. 6:16]." ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ⁹ "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only' [Deut.6:13]."

Devotion

In this Scripture, we find Jesus at both his weakest and strongest. He is physically weak after fasting for forty days, but He is spiritually powerful as He faces all that Satan can throw at Him. Satan tempts Jesus with ways to avoid His costly ministry and death – using miracles for His own benefit (4:3), showing off His power (4:6), and taking a shortcut to building His kingdom (4:9). Jesus parries each temptation with a quote from the Bible. He doesn't try to defend Himself against Satan with His own thoughts or abilities. He intentionally goes back to God's truth and quotes it to Satan. This tells us two things about Jesus.

First, Jesus was very familiar with Scripture. Like many Jewish men of His time, Jesus would have learned great slabs of Scripture off by heart, but I suspect Jesus went further than others. If at 12 years of age, He amazed the teachers in Jerusalem with his knowledge (Luke 2:47), imagine what He would have known and understood by the age of 30 as He commenced His public ministry. Jesus obviously was saturated with Scripture. His mind was full of God's truth.

Second, Jesus relied on Scripture. This came out clearly when He was under temptation. As Satan tried to manipulate and break Him (even quoting Scripture back to Him), Jesus just focused on God's revealed truth. He trusted and relied on God's Word. The wilderness temptation was not just a battle of wills for Jesus. He had a whole body of truth that He believed in and held on to.

Jesus is the gold standard for us. If knowledge of and reliance on Scripture was so important and beneficial for the Son of God, it certainly is vital for us. Everyday disciples of Jesus must be saturated in Scripture.

Prayer

Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path." My path is often shadowy and difficult, and I desperately need a good torch, especially when Satan uses the darkness to attack. As I study Scripture, may Your Word shine powerfully, guiding me to truth, growing my wisdom, and protecting me from temptation. Please help me to know and love Your Word like Jesus, so that it saturates my life.

Today's Bible Focus

“Jesus answered Satan, ‘It is written...’”

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EVENING

1. *Remember:* Repeat today’s Bible Focus.
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Week 2 - Day 4 - God's Word Cuts Deep

MORNING

Scripture: Hebrews 4:12-13

¹²For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Devotion

The Bible is a very old group of 66 books that were written over a period of 1500 years. The whole Bible was finalized in its present form by AD 400. I don't imagine that you are reading many other books that are more than 1600 years old. But, despite its age, the Bible is in no way out of date. As God's revelation to us, the Bible is incredibly helpful. We learn about the nature of God. We learn about God's dealings with people. We learn about the grace of God revealed in the gospel. God has so much to teach us through His Scripture.

But when the Holy Spirit breathes through the revelation of the Bible, it moves beyond truths for us to understand, learn and practice. It becomes "alive and active" (4:12). It turns into a razor-sharp sword, slicing deep into our hearts and minds. It exposes hidden truths about our motivations and secret passions. It cuts us open to expose both the good and the bad.

This might seem dangerous and frightening to you. We like to protect ourselves by not allowing people to know too much about our inner workings. But God already knows everything about you (4:13), and He deeply loves you and wants the very best for you. He has a vision of who you can become, and He knows that this will require cutting and uncovering to bring healing. So God uses His Scripture to do this deep work in our hearts and minds.

So as you read the Bible, pray for the Holy Spirit, like a surgeon, to do His work and expect some cutting and exposing, and then deep restoration. Don't try to hide from God, but open up your heart and life to the Spirit's work through His Word. Pray for God to speak to you through His Word and Spirit. Everyday disciples of Jesus are transformed by God's Word.

Prayer

Your Word is like a razor-sharp sword as it is enlivened by the Spirit. I have already experienced this. Sometimes I find Scripture uncomfortable as it penetrates my deepest parts, but this is what I need as Your disciple. Please speak to me. Break down my defences. Uncover my sin. Speak truth to my heart. Don't hold back Lord. I can handle the truth. Set me free.

Today's Bible Focus

"The word of God is alive and active."

LUNCHTIME (or when you can make a moment during the day)

1. Meditate for a short time on today's Bible Focus. Let it seep into your heart.
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Week 2 - Day 5 - Just Do It

MORNING

Scripture: James 1:22-25

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

Devotion

This week we have found that the Bible teaches us God's truth and wisdom. It reveals God's will and promises. And, enlivened by God's Spirit, it cuts deep and opens up our hearts to God's healing work. But no matter how powerful and helpful God's Word is, no matter how much we learn from it, reading the Bible is of no use to us if we do nothing about it.

James draws on the illustration of a mirror that is of no help if you don't use it. What's the point of a mirror if it doesn't assist you to brush your hair or adjust your makeup or trim your beard? Mirrors are only helpful if they produce some action. Similarly, reading Scripture is pointless for us if we hear what it is saying, and then keep on living the same way. There's no purpose in studying the Bible if you're not planning to do something about it.

The real blessing of studying Scripture is not more knowledge (although that can certainly help). According to James, the blessing comes as we remember what we have learned and put it into practice (1:25). For this reason, I've written a daily Bible focus into the Everyday Disciple devotions so that we can meditate on God's truth and implement it during our day.

However, we need to be realistic about this. You will not be able to apply every single thing that you are learning from God's Word. No one has the focus, energy or time to keep adding new practices to their life every day. Much of our spiritual growth comes through God's Word gradually seeping into our minds and hearts. But we must come to Scripture with a ready heart to put it into practice, not just learn more.

Prayer

I'm enjoying reading Your Word each day, Lord. I come with an expectation that I will not only learn something new, but that You will speak to me personally. I'm a slow learner, but I really want the truth and life of Scripture to transform the way I think and live. Please show me what I need to change and give me strength to obey. I'm ready to do whatever pleases You. Grow me as I study the Bible. I want to be a doer of the Word, not just a hearer.

Today's Bible Focus

“Do not merely listen to the word, do what it says.”

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Week 2 - Day 6 - An Example of God's Word at Work

MORNING

Scripture: Acts 8:30-35

³⁰ Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. ³¹ "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." ³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

Devotion

The man riding in the chariot was a high-ranking, Ethiopian official who had been worshipping in Jerusalem. He was most likely a God-fearer, a term used to describe followers of Judaism who had not fully converted to become Jews. You see the monotheism and ethics of Judaism were very appealing to godly seekers in a degraded, pagan culture, so some people would become semi-Jews. They practiced the Jewish faith, but identifying as a Jew through circumcision was often a bridge too far. This God-fearing guy was returning to Ethiopia after worshipping in Jerusalem.

In this story, we find a great example of the purpose and power of Scripture.

1. The Ethiopian official is reading Scripture and God awakens a hunger. He is stuck in Isaiah 53 and its prophecies about Jesus. He wants to know who Isaiah is referring to.
2. Philip (placed by God alongside the chariot) knows Scripture well and can explain it correctly. He hops into the chariot and shares the good news about Jesus from the scroll of Isaiah (8:35).
3. God's Spirit enlivens Scripture as Philip shares the gospel, and the heart of the Ethiopian guy is radically changed by the truth of Scripture.

A method of evangelism that is proving effective these days is asking someone who is interested in learning about Christianity to study the Bible with you. This story is a very early example of two people exploring the Scriptures together as God works in power through His Word. Not only is reading the Bible helpful in teaching us and changing us, but it also powerful in evangelism. Maybe there is a not yet Christian you could invite to read the Bible with you? Remember Hebrews 4:12: "The Word of God is alive and active."

In this Plan, we've seen how knowing and living Scripture is vital for everyday disciples of Jesus. In the next Plan in the series ("Serving in Community"), we will explore the purpose and value of Christian community for our growth and ministry as disciples.

Prayer

I recognize the power of Your Spirit-inspired Word in transforming my life, but I don't always believe that this will happen for others, especially those who don't know You yet. I pray for those You have put around me who are not yet Christians. Please work in their hearts and open their eyes. Lord, is there any helpful Scripture that I could share with them at the moment?

Today's Bible Focus

"Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus."

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