

Disciplines of a Disciple

Private Devotion

Rob Rogers August 28, 2022

Introduction

In first century Hebrew culture, it was every young Jewish boy's dream to follow a Rabbi, to be a disciple — a talmadim — an apprentice of a Rabbi.

They would memorize the entire Torah (first five books of the Hebrew Bible). Around age 12 and they would approach a Rabbi and say, "*Can I follow you?*". The Rabbi would then ask a series of questions to test the aspiring young man, and depending on the answers he provided, the Rabbi would then look at the young boy and say, "*Follow me,*" in other words, "*I believe you have what it takes to be one of my talmidim, my apprentices.*"

Everything the young man did, he did through the filter of what the Rabbi would do. How the Rabbi would think and respond. "*I'm facing this situation; what do you think I should do? I'll do that. What would you do about this? I'll do that.*"

A disciple was someone that wanted to become an extension of the life of the one they were following.

This is God's desire for us — that we would be become like Jesus.

Luke 6:40

Students are not above their teacher, but all who are fully trained **will be like their teacher.**

Romans 8:29

For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to **become like His Son.**

1 John 2:6

Whoever claims to live in Him must live **as Jesus did.**

This is why we're pressing into what have been referred as the spiritual disciplines — the spiritual practices of Jesus and His followers over the last 2,000 years, that create the conditions through which the Holy Spirit can mold us, shape us, refine us, grow us, mature us, and make us LIKE JESUS.

- 1. Private Devotion** Things like getting in the Scripture, Prayer, Fasting, Simplifying your life, and slowing down. There is going to be very practical application every single week.
- 2. Biblical Community** We'll look at the rhythms of how the early church functioned in community, as a family with one another.
- 3. Missional Living** – How to live with healthy rhythms and boundaries as it relates to loving those outside of the church.
- 4. Kingdom Stewardship** – Everything in our lives, even our lives themselves don't belong to us. They've been entrusted to us to steward for His glory. How do we faithfully steward our lives, our time, our gifts, our resources for God's glor.

Private Devotion

1. **This is not an exhaustive list... but it is a starting point for us.** So, if the idea of the spiritual practices is new to you... this message will serve as a great launch pad for you.
2. If you're a spiritual practices pro, this will be affirmation for you, and a good reminder.
3. As we go through each of these, be asking, be curious about which of these practices the Holy Spirit might be highlighting for you to press into more intentionally. *Don't try to implement them all at once... but allow God to point you at one of them as a starting point.*

1. **SCRIPTURE**
2. **SABBATH**
3. **SOLITUDE**
4. **FASTING**
5. **PRAYER**

Scripture

It's not just reading the scripture to check off a religious or legalistic obligation. It's getting into the Word of God for the purpose of spiritual transformation. To knowing the Scriptures like Jesus knows them . . . to deeply explore . . . to wrestle with God and allow God to meet us there.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

*All Scripture is **breathed out by God** and **profitable for teaching**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, and for **training in righteousness**, that the man of God may be **complete**, equipped for every good work.*

- **Profitable for Teaching** - The scriptures show us the Truth.
- **Profitable for Reproof** - The scripture exposes our sin... where we're not in alignment with the Truth.
- **Profitable for Correction** - It corrects our wrong thinking and wrong living. Shows us how to get back on track.
- **Training in Righteousness** - Trains us to live like Jesus — to stay in alignment with God and His ways.

The result, according to Paul, is that we would be **COMPLETE**.

- Mature, steadfast, equipped, strengthened, as we follow and become like Jesus.

*If that's going to happen... if the Word of God is going to guide us and help us be formed into the image of Jesus — **it won't do that if you never read it**. If you have five Bibles, and your Bible is collecting dust on your bookshelf. Or if you just listen to a sermon once a week — it's not going to do much for you.*

According to a survey taken by Lifeway Research in 2019, they discovered that...

- **1 in 8 Americans who attend a Protestant Church (12%) admit they rarely or never read the Bible.**

**What should our rhythms look like getting into the word?
What frequency, duration, etc.?**

Joshua 1:8

...you shall **meditate on it day and night**, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Psalms 1:1-2

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he **meditates day and night**.

These verses are describing frequency and intensity.

Day and night... but it's not literal day and night. It's worse! It's another way to say you're in it ALL THE TIME! It means you're always thinking about it. You're reflecting on it. Wondering about it. Bringing it from merely something intellectual, to becoming alive in your life. It's not just skimming... **meditating**. You're reflecting on in.

ILLUSTRATION: To meditate, holds the similar meaning to ruminate, or chew, like a cow eats grass. A cow grinds the grass up in its teeth, swallows it... digests it a little bit... barfs it back up... chews it up a little more.. swallows it again.

This process of swallowing, “un-swallowing,” re-chewing, and re-swallowing is called “**rumination**,” or more commonly, “chewing the cud.”

That's what we're supposed to do with the Word! The Word of God is often compared to spiritual nourishment... Jesus refers to Himself as the bread of life!

**We're to chew on, to meditate on His word, day and night —
memorizing it, thinking on it, always.**

Read it Early, Relationally, and Expectantly

- 1. Read it Early:** My challenge for you is to get into some portion of scripture every day. You can use a reading plan... verse of the day on the Bible app. Track with our reading plans in men's and women's ministries. Determine a frequency and prioritize it.
 - I would specifically challenge you to give God the first minutes of your day.
 - Mark 1:35**
In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.
 - Psalms 63:1**
“O GOD, You are my God; Early will I seek You”
- 2. Read it Relationally:** Don't just read to get through it. Let your reading of it draw you into conversation with the Lord. Let it pull you into dialogue with God. If something challenges you, tell Him. If you don't understand something, ask Him.
- 3. Read it Expectantly:** Expect that God is going to speak to you. Expect God to respond. Something that has been personally beneficial for me is to be ready with a journal and a pen to write down what God might say as I'm reading through His Word. God wants to speak to you. Come ready for it.

a. **Psalm 119:147**

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for **Your words**.

The psalmist is up early, He's conversing with God, even journaling about it, and fully expects to hear something from Him.

Psalm 1 tells us that if we'll do this...

Psalm 1:3

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

***If you Abide in Him... your life will yield fruit.
You'll grow, you'll mature.
Over time, as you allow it, you'll become like Jesus.***

Sabbath

Some people seem to have the Sabbath nailed down. It's structured, it's organized, they're prepared. But for many of us — this is a real challenge to actually take a full 24-hr period and not do a single thing pertaining to work or productivity. That concept is so foreign to us. What we need to recognize is that when the children of Israel were slaves in Egypt and they were being worked into the ground — there was no rest — there was no day of rest. As God drew them out of Egypt, and was establishing them as His chosen nation, He commanded them:

Deuteronomy 5:15

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the **Sabbath day**.

- This tells you God's powerful perspective on work and rest. It's incredible. What God is saying here is that **anyone who works themselves into the ground is still a slave...** anyone who overworks is a slave. You're putting yourself back into the bondage of slavery that God has freed you from.
- When you rest, when you put down your work, you become a revolutionary. When you put your work down, you're reminding your own heart that you've been freed from slavery — from productivity and work.

**But it's not enough to just not overwork, or rest from our work.
It's not enough to simply put it down.**

Have you ever had a season where you're running hard for a long time, and then you finally get a chance to stop? Often, there is this restlessness that surfaces, and one of two things happen, either all the thoughts we've been avoiding start coming to the surface, or we feel this anxious need to get back to work and keep achieving, to keep performing, to keep producing.

- Both responses are an indication that we don't have the slightest clue on how to rest in God.

What we need to realize is that the keeping of **the Sabbath (the fourth commandment) was given to people who had every reason to believe that if they didn't work, they wouldn't survive. It wasn't about achievement; it was about survival.**

They had every reason to believe, as they observed their situation, that if they didn't work, they would die — and God is saying, **“No you won't. I've got you. Will you trust me? Because I will give you seven days of provision for six days of work.”**

Take one 24 hr period and do not do any work.

Don't work. Don't think about being productive. Turn that switch off.

- And just to set expectations... if you've never done this before... you're going to need to baby step this process. It will require some serious planning, intentionality, and discipline on your part. The first time you do this... you might hate it. **But the Sabbath is God's gift to us.**

Prioritizing the Sabbath is more than just resting. **It is a way of reordering your life around six days of productivity, and one day of resting in, delighting in God.**

“I have experienced the utter joy and relief when sabbath does happen, when the house has been cleaned, special food has been bought, the computer has been turned off, the last obligation has been completed or set aside, the candles or the fireplace has been lit, and it is time to stop, whether everything has been finished or not. I know what it is like to rest for hours until I have energy to delight in something – good food, a good book, a leisurely walk, a long awaited conversation with someone I love. I know what it's like to feel joy and hope and peace flow back into my body and soul... I know what it's like to have rest turn into delight, and delight turn into gratitude, and gratitude into worship. I know what it is like to recover myself so completely that I am able, by God's grace, to enter into my work on Monday with a renewed sense of God's calling and God's presence. How could you not love a day that does all that?”¹

~ Ruth Haley Barton

Observing the Sabbath does two primary things in us — it exposes and it expands.

- 1. It exposes our lack of trust in God as our provider.**
- 2. It expands our ability to trust in God as our provider.**

Mark 2:27

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is God's gift to mankind to recenter us on His goodness, His love, His care, His provision, His overwhelmingly generosity, and tending to His creation. It's an ultimate reminder that Jesus Christ took upon Himself the brokenness of the human condition, all of our restless efforts at self-justification, all of our anxious toil, and our fear-riddled efforts to make a name for ourselves, and made a pathway for us to be freed, and to continually live within the restfulness and freedom that Jesus Christ has extended to us.

¹ Ruth Haley Barton. *Pursuing God's Will Together* (InterVarsity Press, Apr 25, 2012)

Discussion Questions

1. Read Romans 8:29. How does it make you feel knowing that God knew you in advance, and that He chose you to become like Jesus?
2. What is the current status of your personal “devotionals”? How can you improve on what you are doing now... one step at a time?
3. What would “meditating on the Word day and night” look like in your life?
4. What do you realistically think your day would be like — if you gave God the first minutes of your day?
5. What are your current “activities” on the Sabbath? How hard do you think it will be to put aside “productivity”?
6. Do you believe that God can/will give you seven day of provision for six days of work?

SCRIPTURE RESOURCES

- *The Bible that Jesus Read* by Phillip Yancey
- *Immerse Bible* 6 book set – New Living Translation, reading the Bible as a novel in chunks
- *The Story: the Bible as one continuing story of God and His people.*
- *In Search of Guidance* — Dallas Willard
- *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* — Gordon Fee
- YouVersion Bible App
- *The Bible Recap: A One-Year Guide to Reading and Understanding the Entire Bible* — Tara Leigh Cobble
- *Reading the Bible in a Year with the Men* - YouVersion
- E3 App
- Pastor Dave Beuhring’s daily video devotionals — Dave’s Devotionals — <https://lionshare.org/resources/free-devotionals/>

SABBATH RESOURCES:

Starting a Sabbath – 4 minutes, Rich Villodas, & Pete Scazzero

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=isA1ZGnrXqY>

A Beginner’s Guide to the Sabbath

<https://www.lessen.blog/blog/how-to-practice-sabbath-from-a-beginner>

Tips on Sabbath for Moms – Including a Sabbath Planning Guide

<https://www.embracingasimplerlife.com/55-practical-ideas-sabbath-christian-mother/>

A Chapter on Sabbath from Garden City by John Mark Comer

<https://johnmarkcomer.com/blog/i-am-not-a-machine-free-chapter-from-garden-city>

6 Ways to Practice the Sabbath — Tim Keller, 2018.

https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/six_ways_to_practice_sabbath

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