

PARK STREET BRETHREN CHURCH

Church-Wide Book Study: Week One

A resource for groups and individuals seeking to experience Christ's transforming power in their lives through ancient practices of the faith. This guided study will be directed by the ***Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*** by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun.

Each week, we will be exploring three different spiritual disciplines that will help us grow in our understanding and appreciation for God. These disciplines are organized into seven categories that each have a different emphasis or approach. Our Sunday morning services will focus on the larger categories, highlighting the goal that each discipline is aiming toward, while our individual or group studies will zoom into the specific disciplines outlined in this packet.

If you or your group would like to focus on fewer disciplines, more disciplines, or completely different disciplines within the selected category each week, feel free to do so. Our goal is to provide a basic scaffolding that each of us can build from, resulting ultimately in greater spiritual depth and maturity as we position ourselves to encounter the Living God.

An important reminder before we begin is that Christ alone is the one who can change us. Spiritual Disciplines are not endeavors for hard-working people to become more self-righteous: But they can be avenues for God to meet us and restore us to who He wants us to be. If you have a copy of ***Spiritual Disciplines Handbook***, Adele Calhoun provides a helpful introduction on pages 17-25.

This week, as we prepare to begin our study, consider these questions:

- + What has been your experience, if any, with spiritual disciplines? Are they a regular part of your devotional life? If so, which disciplines?
- + Can you think of examples in Scripture where individuals engaged in spiritual disciplines to connect with God? What were the results of those engagements?
- + What are the biggest obstacles preventing you from growing in your relationship with God through this church-wide study?

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Church-Wide Book Study: Week Two

WORSHIP GOD: RESPOND TO GOD'S GRACE

- + **GRATITUDE** is a loving, thankful response to God for His presence within us and this world. Nothing we have is deserved. All is a gift from God, so our appropriate response is to notice and thank God throughout each day.
(pages 31-33)

Keep a list of gifts for which you are thankful.

- + Instituted by Jesus, **HOLY COMMUNION** connects the Old Testament blood sacrifices to God's plan to rescue us through His Son's own blood. Our participation in the Eucharist, the meal of remembrance, is the outward sign of our awareness of the depth of God's love for us.
(pages 34-36)

Celebrate the bread and cup with Christian community.

- + **SABBATH** is setting apart a particular time for rest and worship of God. It is a day of intentionally keeping company with Jesus by letting go of busyness and productivity, instead taking time to love God, love others, and enjoy our God who loves us.
(pages 42-45)

Set aside 24 hours to rest and disconnect from regular rhythms.

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Church-Wide Book Study: Week Three

OPEN YOURSELF TO GOD: WHAT IS GOD SAYING?

- + **CONTEMPLATION/EXAMEN** is the process of waking up to see Jesus in all things and to reflect on those moments and experiences. Awareness of the Spirit working in our lives & discernment of His presence helps us recognize who God created us to be.
(pages 54-61)

Spend time at the end of each day reflecting on the conversations, activities, and achievements of your day, noticing God's presence and how He met your needs.

- + **SELF-CARE** helps us to honor who God created us to be and value ourselves as God values us. We are created as His beloved children so we should treat ourselves as His "very good" works of creation.
(pages 80-83)

Treat yourself by discovering spaces and activities that allow you to be restored in Christ.

- + **UNPLUGGING** creates space to be fully present with God and others. It allows for periods of uninterrupted time with Jesus and others.
(pages 95-97)

Disconnect from your phone, television, computer, or other distractions so you can hear God's voice.

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Church-Wide Book Study: Week Four

RELINQUISH THE FALSE SELF: LET GO OF THE WAYS YOU HIDE & PRETEND AND BE THE REAL YOU

- + **CONFESSION & SELF-EXAMINATION** mean admitting and surrendering our weaknesses to our loving Savior and to our faith community who invites us to repent and seek forgiveness. By His grace, the Lord then leads the way to transformation into His likeness.
(pages 101-104)

Find someone to confess to and pray together.

- + **SILENCE & SOLITUDE** invite us to find respite from the demands and contaminates of our world to allow space and time for us to be with Jesus, experiencing freedom and developing our listening-to-God skills.
(pages 121-124, 128-131)

Make time this week to be alone and silent so that you can hear from the Lord.

- + **WAITING** is patiently trusting in God's goodness and timing. It is sustaining a deep desire for His answer while holding on to hope.
(pages 138-140)

Intentionally slow down this week: Be the last to speak. Listen deeply. Trust God to work, even without your pressing.

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Church-Wide Book Study: Week Five

SHARE LIFE WITH OTHERS: CONNECT WITH AN INTENTIONAL, CHRIST-GLORIFYING COMMUNITY

- + **HOSPITALITY** is sharing your home and resources with a friend or stranger to demonstrate the welcoming heart of our Lord.
(pages 161-163)

Intentionally bless someone this week with an invitation or gift.

- + **MENTORING** is believing in and empowering others to become more than they could be on their own. Godly mentors help people grow to their God-given potential.
(pages 164-166)

Thank the mentors in your life. Connect this week with anyone God may be calling you to help on their spiritual journey.

- + **SERVICE** is giving, sharing, and caring for others in the name of Jesus, loving your neighbor as yourself. This kind of work isn't flashy and doesn't always showcase our particular talents, but it unselfishly does what's needed to be done and is a humble witness to the goodness of God.
(pages 167-170)

Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you an opportunity to serve someone this week. Follow the Spirit's prompting and do it!

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Church-Wide Book Study: Week Six

HEAR GOD'S WORD: READ THE BIBLE WITH AN EXPECTATION TO MEET WITH THE LORD

- + **BIBLE STUDY** is learning what God says in order to understand His truth more fully and apply it to our lives. As we let God's Word really sink in, we know more about Him and deepen our relationship with Him.
(pages 184-186)

Commit to really studying Scripture this week—by yourself and/or with others.

- + **LECTIO DIVINA** requires an open heart and mind. This act of reading scripture by reflecting, listening, and dwelling aims to enrich our relationship with our Father as opposed to learning information about Him.
(pages 187-190)

Lectio is the re-reading of the same passage multiple times. Read the same passage three times a day for six days.

- + **MEMORIZATION** is simply hiding God's Word in our hearts and minds so it can shape and influence our lives. This intentional habit allows God's Word to go with us, work through us, and provide encouragement to others.
(pages 194-196)

Memorize a passage of Scripture this week.

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Church-Wide Book Study: Week Seven

INCARNATE THE LOVE OF CHRIST: BE A LIVING
EXAMPLE OF JESUS TO THOSE AROUND YOU

- + **BLESSING OTHERS/ENCOURAGEMENT** is literally to speak well of others. We declare God's delight in others to remind them of God's love and their hope in Him.
(pages 198-201)

Ask God who needs your encouragement and bless one person every day this week.

- + **FORGIVENESS** is a costly, hard process that refuses to ignore or minimize a wrong, but spares the wrongdoer by the power of Jesus through us. It frees us from the cycle of hatred, bitterness, and revenge.
(pages 212-214)

Who have you left unforgiven? Go to Jesus today to begin the work necessary to forgive that person. Then follow it through.

- + **STEWARDSHIP** encompasses all of life. Nothing we have really belongs to us, it all belongs to God. We desire to be generous for the benefit and love of God and others.
(pages 224-227)

Think of your time, money, and talents. Consider where the Lord is asking you to be more generous and obey Him!

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Church-Wide Book Study: Week Eight

PRAYER: CONNECT WITH GOD

- + **CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER** is simply and naturally talking to God while listening closely to each other. It usually involves two or more people taking turns with short prayers on a theme or topic.
(pages 242-244)

Find an individual or group and practice conversational prayer. Keep your eyes open if you'd like. Imagine Christ is with you and you are talking with friends.

- + **INTERCESSORY PRAYER** is a way for us to partner with God for the concerns of our world. We faithfully join with Him and trust His heart.
(pages 258-261)

Identify a cause or person and commit to praying for them every day.

- + **LISTENING PRAYER** is learning to discern and hear God's voice as He speaks. Hearing Him may involve friends, nature, music, a specific scripture verse, etc. Our God is creative and persistent as He faithfully seeks our attention.
(pages 266-268)

In your prayer time this week, shift from being in the driver's seat to listening what He is saying—His word may be for you or for someone else.

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