

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a paved road that curves through a dry, hilly landscape. The road is light-colored and leads towards a distant, hazy horizon. The hills are covered in sparse, dry vegetation. The overall color palette is muted, with various shades of brown and tan.

firstmbchurch

my **PATH**

A discipleship plan for developing
fully devoted followers of Christ.

Group Study Guide

3 VALUES | 1 MISSION | 6 PRIORITIES

LESSON 2

SPEND TIME WITH GOD

... because we grow deeper on purpose.



QUICK REFRESHER...

We have three values, one mission, and six priorities.

Our mission: First MB Church exists to help people find and follow Jesus.

Our values: We aim to be real people, with a real faith, making a real impact.

Our priorities: To fulfill our mission and values, we believe we should:

- 1) Connect with a few, 2) Spend time with God, 3) Live a life of worship,
4) Engage in missions, 5) Serve somewhere, and 6) Share somehow.

Life can be described as a race. Everyone seems to be extremely busy with very full schedules. Between work, family, and activities, the days seem to just fly by.

In the midst of all the hustle and bustle, where do you find time for God? It is good to prioritize, although there can be a danger in it. If all you do is say God first, family second, and work third then **God can become more of an activity to be done than a relationship to be grown.** Developing your relationship with God shouldn't be just another duty on your "to do" list for the week. God wants to have a deep, personal, meaningful, and loving relationship with you.

Matthew 7:21-23 reads:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of

My Father in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?' Then I will announce to them, 'I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!'

This is a somewhat difficult passage to understand. Some people in this passage spent their whole lives being *fans* of Jesus, but not *disciples*. **They chose activity over relationship, while Jesus wants relationship over religion.** There is a lot of religious activity listed in this passage, but all of it doesn't amount to anything unless you know (have a relationship with) Jesus. Despite all the activity, Jesus clearly states the people never knew Him. This is the difference between being a *fan* of Jesus and being a *disciple*.

Discipline.

"It is important to maintain this 'discipline' even when I'm not 'feeling it,' because real growth happens by a 'long obedience in the same direction,' not short spurts of inspiration and goose bumps.

J.D. Greear

When Your "Quiet Times"
Get Stale. PERSONAL
PASTOR J.D. MAR 6, 2009

Disciples.

In the Great Commission Jesus states "Go, therefore, and make disciples."

He doesn't say anything about going and making more fans. A lot of people *know about* Jesus, but very few are actually devoted disciples. What is the difference between a fan and a disciple? A very basic definition of a disciple is someone who loves and follows Jesus. A disciple doesn't just follow or do activities. A disciple seeks to have a relationship with Jesus.

Many people who followed Jesus throughout His ministry were more interested in what *He* could do for *them* than what *they* could do for *Him*. Today there are plenty of people who know about God,

but do not have any relationship with Him. They might periodically try to kindle the relationship, but it is usually out of wanting something (job, finances, better health, etc.). Fans practice religion. They see the blessing in what God can do for them rather than God being the ultimate blessing.

God doesn't just want fans.

He wants disciples who follow and love Him.

Follow & Love.

How do you follow and love God? At First MB we believe that kind of relationship is developed by spending intentional, one-on-one time with Jesus (sometimes we call that a "quiet time").

A quiet time can take many avenues. It would be easy if all the church had to do was tell you to love God. If this is all it took then making disciples would be simple.

Relationships take time and investment. The church's role is to develop an atmosphere and avenues for you to develop your relationship with God. Your role is to invest the time and energy into that relationship.

At first your relationship with God might look like just following rules. You might start out by obeying a list of "thou shall nots." For some their relationship with God is solely based on a list of does and don'ts. **It is okay to start here, but it is not okay to stay.** Remaining in this state can lead to doing a bunch of religious activities out of mere duty.

The Source.

If you want to get warm,
you must stand near the fire;
if you want to be wet,
you must get into the water.
If you want joy, power, peace,
eternal life, you must get close
to, or even into the thing that
has them. They are not some
sort of prize which God could, if
He chose, just hand out to
anyone. They are a great
fountain of energy and beauty
spurting up at the very center of
reality. If you are close to it, the
spray will wet you: if you are not,
you will remain dry.
Once a man is united to God,
how could he not live forever?
Once a man is separated from
God, what can he do but wither
and die.

C.S. Lewis
Mere Christianity

An entire group of people in the New Testament called Pharisees had perfected practicing religious activities. The Pharisees were really good at following rules, but lost their love in their relationship with God. For them it was a *religion*, not a *relationship*.

How do you grow in your relationship with God? At First MB we believe a beginning step is to set aside time. We call it “15 minutes in your chair.” We are recommending this as a base. This merely means finding a time and a place where you can read your Bible, pray, listen, and spend time with God.

It is during this time you set aside activity and seek relationship. Jesus states in Matthew 11:28-30:

“Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

The Pharisees had burdened themselves and others with religious activities. Jesus is inviting everyone into rest. Would you describe your relationship with Jesus as restful?

Discovering the right place and time can be a little challenging. Everyone connects differently. What works for one person doesn’t work for someone else.

For some going on a walk while listening to their audio Bible is the best way for them to grow in their relationship with God. Others need a quiet room. Typically it is best to try to eliminate distractions. This is your time with God. Figure out what works for you and connect.

SOAP

When you do find your time and location, we recommend **SOAP** as an option for connecting with God. SOAP stands for **Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer**. Begin by asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read a passage of **Scripture**. Think quality versus quantity. If you read a passage and one verse

really impacts you, then stop and reflect on it. It is better to reflect on a few passages than to read multiple chapters without reflecting on anything.

Next, make some **observations** about what you have read.

Was there anything in the passage that stuck out to you? This can be something you just found to be interesting. It can be inspirational or convicting. Look throughout the passage for something that speaks directly to you. No one will be grading your observations. This is between you and the Holy Spirit. Don't be worried if your observations are obvious. As you practice the art of making observations they will become increasingly deeper. Your observations on the same text will change depending on your life circumstances.

The third step is **application**. How does the particular passage apply to your life? Just like the observations, the application might change depending on your current circumstances. The application should have an impact on your thoughts, feelings, or behavior. Application is of little use if it doesn't initiate some level of change. The Holy Spirit may be prompting you to a specific action or a confession you need to make. Change doesn't usually happen overnight. Set up a time frame to put the application to work in your life. In some way the application should strengthen your relationship with Jesus.

The last step is **prayer**. This whole process should be bookended with prayer, but then it wouldn't spell SOAP. Prayer is the process by which you are connecting your heart and mind to

YouVersion

If you're not sure where to start in your quiet time with God, we recommend using a mobile app called YouVersion. This app is a free download on any device. Here you can read dozens of translations of the Bible, and you can also take advantage of Bible reading plans that will help keep you accountable and provide some structure. You can choose a plan based on a particular topic, book, or season, or you can choose to read through the entire Bible.

God through the Holy Spirit. Take the observation and application from the passage and use them as a basis for your prayer. Jesus invites you to speak to God as your Father. Use the Scripture as part of your prayer. Do you pray as a child speaking to their father? Do you take time to stop and listen in your prayer time? Pray knowing He is listening and wants to speak to you.

Fifteen minutes in your chair and SOAP can be the beginning of your quiet time with God. Real faith isn't about checklists and legalistic rules; instead, seek a relationship with Jesus today by spending time with Him.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you believe quiet time with God is a necessary discipline to have a relationship with Him? Why or why not?
2. Discuss the difference between religious activities and having a relationship with God.
3. Read John 15:1-4. How do you plan to remain connected to Jesus?
4. What are some obstacles keeping people from having a quiet time with God?
5. Read Colossians 2:6-8. Use the SOAP method on this passage.
6. What are the most meaningful ways for you to connect with God? Do you have a specific time, location, or method that you seem to prefer?
7. Do you personally feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life? Why or why not? If He's speaking into your life, how can you learn to hear Him?
8. Read Matthew 11:28-30. How do you find rest in your relationship with Jesus?



 firstmbchurch

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