



TARGETED SERIES

**SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES**

A TARGETED DISCIPLESHIP SERIES FOR MEN

START HERE

This lesson series may be one of the most important offered by Men's Ministries. ***Spiritual Disciplines*** has been created to assist every man in anchoring the foundations of his life to a higher purpose within the life of Christ. ***Spiritual Disciplines*** allows you to look beyond the feelings of today's realities, the pains that haunt you daily, or the brief celebrations that allow you to let down your guard and become entangled in temptation. These lessons are built around a defined target with a bullseye and a sightline travel path to give you the ability to see where you are going and how to get there. We in Men's Ministries pray this series will encourage you in the Lord regardless of the surroundings you face today. Just as David strengthened himself in the Lord, the hope is the same for you and your group. ***Spiritual Disciplines*** is for those times like David's in 1 Samuel 30:6. "David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each for his sons and daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God."

Each lesson has five sections. The first is called **SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target**, and it gives an overview to the subject being studied. The second section is called **CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target**, and it helps you begin to bring the subject into clearer focus. The third section is called **BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target**, and it is intended to bring the study into clearer focus. The fourth section is called **Next Step**, which is designed to help you deepen your relationship with God by taking measures necessary to reach your goal. Finally, there is a **FireBible** section, which guides you through some directed studies using the number one Pentecostal study Bible.

These lessons have been built using several resources to provide you with an in-depth study without having to purchase every single resource. However, there are a few recommended tools available for purchase that will enhance your engagement with the lessons.

- *FireBible®: English Standard Version®* (www.MyHealthyChurch.com)
- Journal
- Colored Pencils
- Fine Point Pen

The ultimate goal of this study is to equip you to walk in Christ and grow as the priest in your home, church, and marketplace. Within a spiritually healthy,



disciplined life, there is a strong foundation. Without a firm foundation, a building or ship cannot survive battles and attacks from an enemy. The same is true of people.

Once there was a young man's dad who served in the Navy, and the young man was allowed to go out on an aircraft carrier with him for two weeks. Even though it was a small aircraft carrier by the standards of that day, it was massive to the young man. When the young man commented on how massive the ship looked, one of the officers commented to the young man, "In order for the ship to function properly, there has to be more weight beneath the water line than above it. Without the appropriate weight below the water line to support the massive ship, the vessel could not accomplish what it was designed to do."

As you develop into a spiritually mature man, the depth of Christ in your life and weight of your influence on others will be evident to those around you. Your heart and your character must weigh more than your talent and abilities. Paul writes in Colossians 1:10, "So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." Here the word "worthy" means an appropriate weight. It was referencing the way in which they weighed coins in those days. The gold or silver coin had a certain amount of weight in it. They would weigh coins after they had been used because as they were used the coins would lose their weight. If you are going to lead yourself, your family, and your ministry, you will regularly give a lot out, and it is easy to lose some of your spiritual weight. But the concept of walking "worthy" of the Lord is that you are taking time to build the proper weight inside your life.

In these lessons, you will discover core discipleship tools that are often called spiritual disciplines, which will help you develop into a "worthy" leader of your home, church, and marketplace. The goal is for you to use this resource often, measuring and building your spiritual weight. Volumes of books have been written about spiritual disciplines. Men's Ministries will not be giving a prescriptive formula to follow for developing spiritual disciplines because we believe every man is at a different place in his spiritual journey. Therefore, each man, with counsel from his pastor, should seek a discipleship pathway that will help him take the appropriate next steps as he continues to mature in Christ. Men's Ministries believes the Holy Spirit will guide you concerning the spiritual disciplines in your life. Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:9-10, "You have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."



FOR GROUP LEADERS

As you plan to use this material in a group format, below are some tips to help you get the most from these lessons.

- Determine who will be the group leader. The leader will be responsible for making copies, coordinating meeting times, and facilitating discussions.
- The group leader should select individuals to read aloud the **SIGHTLINE** and **CROSSHAIR** sections.
- Before a session begins, the group leader should read through the questions in the **BULLSEYE** and *FireBible* sections. Many lessons have more content than can be covered in one session, so the leader may choose to use only some of the questions or assign group members to work through part or all of the questions before arrival.
- If your group is very large, dividing into groups of three to four people is the best way to work through selected questions from the **BULLSEYE** and *FireBible* sections for thirty to forty minutes. These groups should also commit to work together throughout the week.
- If you've divided into smaller groups, rejoin the entire group together after small group time. Discuss as a large group a few of the selected questions from the **BULLSEYE** section for ten to fifteen minutes.
- Finally, the leader is responsible to hold group members accountable for completing the Scripture reading before each session and ensuring that they are writing in their journals.



LESSON BREAKDOWN

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- Start Here
- 1: Understanding Spiritual Disciplines
- 2: Bible Study
- 3: Communicating with God
- 4: Fasting
- 5: Praise and Worship
- 6: Generosity
- 7: Community

APPENDICES

- A. Bible Translation Tool
- B. Facts about the Bible
- C. The Books of the Bible
- D. S.O.A.P. Bible Study
- E. Bible Reading Plans
- F. Fasting Types
- G. Steps for Effective Fasting
- H. Effective Fasting Worksheet
- I. Generosity Ladder



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

LESSON 1: UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

THE TARGET: As men, there are times when it is difficult to be disciplined in our activities, thought life, and core beliefs. In fact, many men live reactively according to their current circumstances, someone's words or actions, or their own desires. However, disciplines keep you grounded, filter your emotions and feelings, allow you to be accountable, and give you a clear pathway for your future. Spiritual disciplines are the biblical knowledge points, application steps, and practical exercises which allow you to receive, learn, and develop the character of Christ. It is through this process that you begin to experience spiritual transformation, which will enable you to leave a spiritual legacy to future generations.





SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

Peter, in his final statement from 2 Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” What a final statement. Peter focuses on the target of spiritual disciplines: to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. This target brings clarity for our life’s mission and is what every believer should strive toward. Spiritual disciplines help you grow spiritually and strengthen your spiritual man so you can complete your God-given assignment(s). Focusing on the target of becoming like Christ will make the difference.

As you begin moving into a new dimension of spiritual discipline, you will see your walk with Jesus go beyond the Sunday morning worship experience to a personal, daily, and growing relationship with God. As your personal relationship with Christ strengthens, you will notice that people around you begin seeing you differently.

For that reason, Men’s Ministries has identified four dimensions of manhood that every man should experience and pass onto the next generation. These dimensions are Relationship, Identity, Purpose, and Vision. For a full explanation of these dimensions, you can download our Launch resource, which you can access for free on the Men’s Ministries app at <https://subsplash.com/mensministries/app>

It is important to remember that not every man is disciplined at the same level. Just as you would not expect your six-month-old child to have the same behaviors as your seven-year-old child, neither should you expect every man to be at the same level throughout their discipleship journey. In addition, you may be very disciplined in some areas of your life and somewhat undisciplined in other areas.

Spiritual disciplines are developed through a transformation process which starts in your heart as the Holy Spirit works to transform you from the inside out. That acknowledgment allows you to make decisions in your mind and accept the prompting of your heart during prayer time, to study moments in Scripture, and to have conversations with trusted family or friends. The final step is moving beyond your heart passion and mindful decision making to



taking action steps in your daily activities, conversations, thought life, and the quiet minutes when you turn everything off and allow your mind to drift.

As you work through the spiritual disciplines, you will find yourself in one of five places in life. In the book *A Spirit Empowered Church: An Acts 2 Ministry Model*, Alton Garrison shares these five steps of spiritual growth.¹

Unbelievers – People who haven’t received Christ as Lord and Savior of their lives.

Believers – People who’ve received Christ as Lord (belief system) but haven’t yet become learners who obey God’s Word (behavior and actions).

Disciples – People who adhere to the teachings and practices of growing in Christ and demonstrate a lifestyle corresponding to God’s Word.

Servant-Leaders – People who’ve grown in the direction, ways, and timing of the Lord and share their knowledge of Christ with others so they, too, can learn His direction, ways, and timing. They’re involved in different aspects of church life (bus drivers, altar workers, greeters, deacons, Sunday School teachers, etc.).

Reproducers – People who mentor others through relationship to the point where they become servant-leaders.

You may not be where you would like to be in your spiritual journey, but as you allow God to transform you, you will become who God intends you to be. Alton Garrison observes, “*Statistics show that adults tend to stop growing spiritually in the fifth to seventh year of their Christian experience.*”² However, this does not have to be the case. Take it as a challenge to keep growing in Christ. As you take responsibility for your spiritual growth through spiritual disciplines, God can help you better cover, protect, care, and connect with those in your sphere of influence in a healthy manner.

1 Garrison, Alton. *A Spirit Empowered Church: An Acts 2 Ministry Model*. Influence Resources, Springfield, MO. 2015. Page 84.

2 Garrison. *A Spirit Empowered Church: An Acts 2 Ministry Model*. Page 178.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

As you begin taking your spiritual growth to a new level, consider the following three thoughts.

First, Men's Ministries recommends assessing where you are. This self-assessment from <https://storage.snappages.site/dkyym24ydo/assets/files/Spirit-Empowered-Faith-self-assessment-S-89.pdf>, completed annually, can give you a benchmark of your spiritual health, much like an annual physical gives you a snapshot of your physical health.

Second, seek a fresh daily encounter with the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit guiding your discipleship, all you will be gaining is knowledge void of the power required for true spiritual growth. If you are not sure about the Holy Spirit's role in your life, consider a targeted study about Him. Men's Ministries has an outstanding resource you can use to learn more about the Holy Spirit. You can find this free resource on the Men's Ministries app at <https://subsplash.com/mensministries/app>.

Finally, remember spiritual growth is a process and ultimately, Christ wants your life united with His life in order to make an impact in your world. This can be accomplished as you learn to utilize the spiritual disciplines in your daily life.

One question men on the spiritual growth journey wrestle with is whether spiritual growth happens automatically or as a result of a believer's intentional application of spiritual disciplines. In other words, do spiritual disciplines cause spiritual growth? The biblical term used to describe this growth or maturing is spiritual formation, and there are two theories about how it takes place.

The first is that spiritual growth happens only when God takes the initiative. He acts and people depend on Him to bring about change in their hearts. The second theory is that an individual takes responsibility for his own growth by obeying and exercising his spiritual muscles. In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul outlines the tensions between these two theories of growth.

At the end of the day, spiritual maturity is a gift from God given to the believer. You cannot earn this gift; however, you must exert effort to receive it. Therefore, Men's Ministries believes that if you are going to be involved



in spiritual formation, you should be aware that spiritual disciplines are the catalyst for, but not the cause of, that formation. Spiritual maturity comes from God alone, who is pleased to work through us to assist others in finding their purpose within the Church.

As you move forward in this study, there are two extremes to avoid. The first is to focus exclusively on following the rules of the spiritual disciplines. If this happens, the by-product is legalism. The second extreme is to completely ignore all rules and boundaries of the spiritual disciplines. If this happens, the by-product is lawlessness.

Spiritual formation can be difficult to understand. Here are a few thoughts to help you along your journey.

First, spiritual formation involves transformation. Paul underscores this in Romans 12:2 where he uses the word “transformed.” In the noun form, it means metamorphosis—to be changed or transformed. In the verb form, the word means shaped, formed, or modeled into Christ’s image. Paul teaches that spiritual formation affects all of one’s life and can be seen in behavioral change.

Second, spiritual formation must be intentional. Matthew refers to this type of growth as an active followership or submission, which implies that you will pattern your life after Jesus’ life (Matthew 4:19; 16:24; 28:19).

Third, the goal or target of spiritual formation is to become like Christ. Paul tells the believer in Colossians 1:28–29 and Ephesians 4:13 that spiritual maturity will be the believer’s benchmark.

Spiritual disciplines are strategically designed to ensure that you are continually taking next steps in your walk with Christ. Remember, the target is to grow in Christlike character, convictions, and conduct through intentional teachings, exercises, and spiritual disciplines that will empower you to live out the Christian life to a greater measure. Again, if all you do is gain knowledge without learning how to apply that knowledge in everyday life, you are missing the full concept of discipleship. Like any other relationship, growing close to God requires a personal investment of time and energy. To help you develop your relationship with God, you must invest in your growth *personally*.

A young man was once invited to travel on an aircraft training carrier with his dad for two weeks. During that time, the young man was privileged to observe the intricacies of flight training. In one conversation with a pilot, the



young man asked, “What is needed the most when you are landing a plane in the middle of the ocean with minimal light?” The pilot responded, “In that moment, the thing I need the most is discipline not enthusiasm.” Likewise, spiritual discipline is what will ensure that you do not crash and burn during your life journey.

Men’s Ministries believes spiritual formation is an intentional, multi-faceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed in a believer so that they can become His continually maturing disciple. This means you must assume some responsibility for the process of spiritual formation. If this is true, what should you know about the process of spiritual formation? The Bible does not seem to provide a process to develop spiritual maturity. However, the church, over the years, has identified various disciplines which have come to be considered essential to spiritual formation.





BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target

Spiritual disciplines are the tools used to help you develop spiritual maturity in your life. When these disciplines are practiced, you intentionally bring your whole self under God's authority. Spiritual disciplines are means by which the grace of God transforms you, making you into the man He calls you to be. Over the years, although different names have been given for them, most Bible teachers have agreed on 14 spiritual disciplines. These are spiritual reading, spiritual direction, meditation, prayer, confession, worship, bodily exercise, fasting, blessed subtraction, sabbath keeping, spiritual retreats/sabbaticals, tithing, journaling, and building spiritually healthy relationships.

Spiritual disciplines are not a cure all. They are tools you use to draw closer to God. Moreover, as a reminder, when you incorporate the use of disciplines into your spiritual formation, you should leave the results to God's timing. Don't grow weary in well doing. Be patient, giving God time to work on your behalf. Here are some simple exercises for you as you seek God for your sightline, focus, and bullseye.

- Start journaling. Get a notebook and begin to write down how you see the Scriptures, areas of your life which are changing, struggle points within this study, prayers and thoughts. At times you may even want to share your journaling with your family or friends. Years from now, you will be able to look back and see what the Lord has accomplished in and through you.
- Look over Alton Garrison's discipleship steps. With which do you most identify right now? Prayerfully write out a plan to move to the next level.



- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being strongly growing and 4 being stopped growing, rate yourself on your spiritual growth journey. Write out a plan to improve.

- What is God's role in spiritual formation?

- What is your role in spiritual formation?

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.



- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you experienced to your family and to others around you?

Next Step:

- Courage:** Commit to one month of one spiritual discipline.
- Strength:** Commit to three months of two spiritual disciplines.
- Endurance:** Commit to twelve months of three or more spiritual disciplines.

FireBible:

Men's Ministries is excited about your opportunity to get into God's Word and find the truths that you will set you free. If you are interested in going even deeper in your studies, we recommend the *FireBible*. The *FireBible* is the number one Pentecostal study Bible in the world. This study will reference the *FireBible* from time to time; however, you don't have to own one to use this study. If you have a *FireBible*, check out the following notes.

- Read the *FireBible* notes on Philippians 2:12-13. What can you learn about spiritual growth?

- Read the *FireBible* note on Romans 12:2. What can you learn about transformation and its role in spiritual growth?



- Read the *FireBible* note on Ephesians 4:13. What are the five ways unity of the faith is experienced and maintained? How can these five ways assist you in your spiritual growth?

- Read the *FireBible* note on Colossians 1:28. What does *mature* mean in a Scriptural context? How does maturity assist in spiritual formation?

- Read the *FireBible* article “Sanctification.”
 - o What can you glean from this article?

 - o On a scale of 1–4 with 1 being very high and 4 being very low, where would you rate your spirituality? Why?

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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

LESSON 2: BIBLE STUDY

THE TARGET: Men's Ministries starts with the premise that the Bible is both reliable and accurate. The Bible is the best-selling book in history. But, it is more than a history book. The Bible is the story of God's redemptive work in the world. In this lesson, you will learn about the Bible and how to begin the important spiritual discipline of studying it.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

In their book, *The Faith: Given Once, For All*, Chuck Colson and Harold Fickett note that there are more ancient manuscripts of the Bible than any other book—24,947 of the New Testament and 14,000 of the Old Testament (The ancient Greek poem, Homer's Iliad is the next closest with only six hundred manuscripts).¹ Bible manuscripts are extremely accurate and consistent with one another. This is because, according to Hebrew practice, only eyewitness testimony was accepted; and when copying documents, the Jews would copy one letter at a time—not word by word, phrase by phrase, or sentence by sentence.

Although the Bible consists of sixty-six books written over one thousand five

¹ Colson, Charles and Harold Fickett. *The Faith Given Once for All*. Zondervan, 2008, Pages 52-53.



hundred years by forty people in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) on three different continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe), the story of Scripture exhibits amazing harmony.

If this is true, why is it that men do not read the Bible? It could be for a myriad of reasons. Here are three to consider.

First, perhaps men do not trust the purpose of the Bible. Paul helps men understand its purpose when he writes 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”

Second, men may not read the Bible because it can be intimidating. To some men, the Bible can be overpowering and larger than life, having too many pages. It can be too difficult to follow the storyline, and the names, places and teaching are hard to pronounce or communicate. As you press towards this spiritual discipline of growing in your knowledge, understanding, and practices of Scripture, you must work toward the exposure and removal of obstacles you may face with the Bible.

Third, possibly the most common reason why men do not read the Bible is because they do not understand it. Men would rather remain silent on something they do not understand rather than engage with it and risk looking foolish. Men will use ignorance as an excuse for escape, so they do not have to show their lack of knowledge concerning Biblical comprehension.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

As you develop deeper study habits, please note there are three words we would like you to learn to more accurately interpret God's Word and assist you in your understanding of Scripture. The first word is *exegesis*. Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart have a fantastic explanation for exegesis. They say, "The first task of the interpreter is called *exegesis*. Exegesis is the careful, systemic study of the Scripture **to discover the original, intended meaning** [emphasis ours]. This is basically an historical task. It is the attempt to hear the Word as the original recipients were to have heard it, to find out what was the original intent of the words of the Bible."²

The second word is *eisegesis*. Here's how Carl Gibbs explains eisegesis: "Eisegesis usually occurs when an interpreter **ignores a rule of interpretation because it conflicts with his or her preconceived notions** [emphasis ours] . . . occurs when one approaches a text with the prejudices and twists the Bible's message to make it say what one wants it to say."³

The final word is *hermeneutics*. Gibbs states, "Hermeneutics is the study of biblical interpretation, while exegesis refers to the implementation of those rules" (Gibbs, 2004, page 21). In other words, **you cannot make a passage of Scripture say something today that it never meant to the original author and audience**. A text simply cannot mean what it never meant.

Fee stated correctly, "Hermeneutics refers to seeking the contemporary relevance of ancient texts. It asks the questions about the Bible's meaning in the 'here and now.' The reason one must not begin with the here and now is that the only proper control for hermeneutics is to be found in the **original intent** [emphasis ours] of the biblical text . . . Otherwise biblical texts can be made to mean whatever they mean to any given reader."⁴

Engaging in deep study of the Bible involves more than just reading a passage of Scripture. It takes effort, work, and time to allow this spiritual

2 Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Fourth Edition, Zondervan. 2014, Page 52-53.

3 Gibbs. *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*. Global University; Third Edition. 2004, Page 21.

4 Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Page 33.



discipline to affect the way you see Scripture. Here are some important guidelines to help you accurately apply exegesis and hermeneutics.

First, you must avoid the temptation to apply eisegesis rather than exegesis. You may have a natural inclination to use a specific passage of the Bible to prove your convictions and beliefs. However, when you do this, the passage is taken out of context, and the true meaning of the Scripture often becomes distorted.

Second, you need to discover the original intent of the author.

Third, to become proficient in Bible study, you need to study the culture of the author's time in which he wrote. The authors of the Bible assume you know the land, language, and culture of the time in which they wrote.





BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target

To hit the bullseye in Bible study we suggest the following.

One, pick a translation you can understand. In **Appendix A**, there is a Bible Translation Tool to assist you. Remember, all translations are just that—a translation.

However, depending on where you are in your spiritual journey, make sure you pick a translation that will best help you engage with the text.

Two, as you begin to study the Bible, ask the Holy Spirit to assist you in your understanding of what you are reading. While the writers wrote for a specific time and place, you need the Holy Spirit to help you extrapolate the meaning for your life today.

Three, to better engage in the spiritual discipline of Bible study, avoid skipping around to different chapters and verses. Bible study is more effective when you select a systematic verse-by-verse study pattern to follow.

Four, consider journaling as you read, using the S.O.A.P. method of studying Scripture. You can find the S.O.A.P. method in **Appendix D**.

Five, consistency is key to the discipline of Bible study. For the greatest spiritual benefit, Men's Ministries recommends engaging in Bible study a minimum of five out of seven days a week. When you take the time to put in the work to develop a good Bible study habit, you are on a solid pathway for growth and development. For accountability and support, talk with your pastor about your study patterns and reading schedule.

The following exercises will help you begin the spiritual discipline of Bible study.

- Read through the types of Bible translations in **Appendix A**. Select a translation at a level that you believe will help you begin and remain consistent in this spiritual discipline. Which version did you choose? Men's Ministries recommends you purchase a *FireBible*. This Bible is filled with study notes and is the number one Pentecostal Study Bible worldwide and is available in several versions.



- Before you purchase a Bible, read Psalm 139:23–24 in three different translations. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

- Look at a sample reading plan in **Appendix E**. Select a reading plan at a pace where you can remain consistent in your reading for a minimum of five out of seven days.

- Before you read a book of the Bible, read its overview in **Appendix C**. If you have a *FireBible*, information is provided at the beginning of each book that describes the author, theme, date of the writing, background, purpose, survey, and special features. Take the time to read this introduction to familiarize yourself with what you are about to read. Make sure you have a journal and you are writing down things that stand out to you.

- Look back at the three words listed in the Crosshair Section. Write down in your own words what the words *exegesis*, *eisegesis*, and *hermeneutics* mean. Why is this important to know?



- Write out 2 Timothy 3:16 in your own words. From this verse, what is the purpose of the Bible?

- Read Romans 6:1-15 and practice the S.O.A.P. method of journaling found in **Appendix D**. What were your thoughts through this process?

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Next Step:

- ❑ **Courage:** Select a Bible reading plan and begin your spiritual formation journey. Remember consistency is key and if you get off track just pick up where you left off. Do not become burdened trying to “catch up.”
- ❑ **Strength:** Commit to faithfully reading the Bible for the next ninety days for *five out of seven days*. Then, after ninety days, *recommit*.
- ❑ **Endurance:** Commit to reading the Gospel of Mark. Daily, read the Scripture until you learn something (it could be one verse or an entire chapter). Write in your journal what you have learned, and then pick up the next day where you left off in your reading, repeating the system until you finish Mark. What were your impressions of this method of Bible study?

FireBible:

- Read the *FireBible* article, “Bible Training for Christians.”
 - » Summarize in your own words the seven reasons for biblical and theological training under point one. Write out three steps you can take to improve your biblical and theological training over the next ninety days.



- » Why is it important for your Bible study to be more than intellectual?

- Read the *FireBible* article, “The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture.”
 - » Summarize in your own words the fourteen thoughts about the inspiration and authority of Scripture. What can you glean from these thoughts? How can you apply them to your life today?

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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

LESSON 3: COMMUNICATING WITH GOD

THE TARGET: Men's Ministries believes you are called to fight a spiritual battle. You are commissioned to be part of a group that will make a spiritual impact on your family, church, and in your marketplace. This type of impact will happen through prayer. In this lesson, you will learn how prayer helps you grow closer to God, demolish strongholds, and expand the Kingdom of God in your home, church, and marketplace.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

Words are a powerful tool within every single person on the planet. Words can calm the troubled soul, bring hope to the hopeless, express the passion of your heart to another person, and launch vision for tomorrow to those struggling with today. Words can state a truth that changes a person's life. Conversely, words can create unforgettable pain. Even saying nothing can communicate fear of being misunderstood or hated.



The original purpose of words was for Adam to communicate with God.

After sin, the spiritual purpose of communication became reconnecting with God—sharing your feelings, emotions, pain, hopes, and love with Him—and asking for forgiveness through Jesus Christ. This godly purpose for communication is captured by Paul in Romans 10:8-13.

But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Therefore, prayer or communicating with God is basically talking with Him, hearing what He is saying, and receiving from Him what is needed (Mark 11:24; James 4:2-10,16). When you spend time with God in communication, **first**, you get to know Him better. **Second**, you take on more of His characteristics, attributes, and behaviors. And **third**, you become stronger in your ability to live for Him.

God desires for man to stay connected to Him (Mark 1:35-36). Jesus understood the necessity to talk daily to His Father and at times to be alone with God the Father; likewise, you should follow the example Christ gave for daily prayer and times of being alone with Father God. Prayer is how you communicate with God (Matthew 6:5-7). When you communicate with God, you tap into His power and receive His help (Luke 11:9-11). It is through prayer that your heart connects with God’s heart.

There are many ways to pray. Each one has a purpose, a sightline for you to follow. We begin with the **prayer of supplication**. This type of prayer is a humble and earnest request. **The sightline for this prayer is the seriousness of its intent**. This prayer has a zeal and serious attention (Matthew 11:12; Luke 22:39-44). You could almost say this prayer is the prayer from the depths of your heart. It is the cry of your spirit man wanting a conversation where both parties talk and listen in deep respect to what the other is saying (John 17:6-12).



Then there is the **prayer of thanksgiving**. This prayer focuses on **giving an expression of thanks**. This form of prayer is vitally important and yet can be overlooked or forgotten. To many people, the prayer of thanksgiving could be classified as praise and worship. It is imperative that as Christian men, we cultivate a thankful heart and learn how to express gratitude for all God has done. When you learn to give God thanks, you get your eyes off of what has not happened or what is not working, and onto all of God's goodness and faithfulness that you have already experienced in your life (Psalm 100:4).

The next prayer is called **intercession**. Intercession begins with praying God's Word over a situation. It is different than supplication in the position you adopt as you communicate with God. **This type of prayer intercepts the plans of the enemy and, as such, is spiritual warfare.** The sightline for intercessory prayer is for **nations, people groups, and urgent requests which may take days, weeks, months, or years to come to pass.** You can also intercede for another person (Isaiah 59:16; Ezekiel 22:30; Romans 8:22,34). This type of prayer pleads for or even begs for the answer to the need. And the intercessor does not give up. He stays focused on communicating with God and waits for His answer.

Finally, there is **prophetic prayer**. This prayer type moves beyond praying for your family or personal problems to praying God's desire for the future. **Prophetic prayer aligns you with what God wants to communicate to your family, church, and community.** This prayer challenges you to find the activity of God in your current situation and pray from your lips what God places on your heart (Hebrews 7:25).

When someone comes to you wanting to give you a prophetic word, remember to confirm that information with your pastor. Too many people have allowed someone to speak into their lives only to find out later that the word spoken wasn't Scriptural or even truthful. The person may build their hopes and dreams around that word with tragic results. If you feel you have a word for someone, please give the person you speak to the opportunity to share what you said with his pastor. Private words can do public damage. Study 1 Corinthians 14 to gain the Holy Spirit's wisdom concerning this type of prayer.

Most of your spiritual formation will not be accomplished without allowing room for the Holy Spirit to speak to your spirit man. Many believers know how to pray, but few know how to recognize and listen to the voice of



God. In order to have real conversations with God, give God time to talk, respond to all you are saying and asking Him to do in your life, and to share His heart and desire for you. As you grow in this spiritual discipline, you must be able to hear the voice of the Spirit.

Beyond training, process, and strategy, strive to walk by faith and not by sight, which comes from hearing the voice of God. There is a supernatural dimension to spiritual formation, and it is found by keeping an ear open to heaven. To develop your spiritual ear, ask yourself three questions.

First, can you hear God's voice? **Second**, is the noise level of your life low enough so that you can hear God's voice when He speaks? **Third**, do you have the guts to obey Him even if you do not understand Him?





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

God commonly speaks to believers today in five ways.

First, God speaks by the Holy Spirit **through the Bible**. To understand how powerful the Word of God is, consider 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” Furthermore, Psalm 119:105 declares, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Second, God speaks through His **preachers and teachers**. Paul states this principle in Romans 12:6: “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith.”

Third, God speaks **prophetically through His church**. Prophets functioned within the New Testament church as Spirit-filled proclaimers and interpreters of the Word of God, called by God to warn, exhort, comfort, and edify. They were not to be regarded as infallible. Their prophecies were subject to the evaluation of the church, other prophets, and God’s Word. **You are required to discern and test whether their witness is from God**. Remember, it is God who appoints them, not men.

Fourth, God speaks through **personal impressions from the Holy Spirit**. According to John, here is how Jesus explains this principle in John 14:26: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

A word of caution is needed. Some people are rationalists. They believe God quit speaking after apostolic times. The other extreme is a group some would call the mystics. They think every impression is from God. They attribute every action to a God-inspired impression. One way to make sure you are on track is to **judge everything you hear and are told by the Word of God**. Balance is key.

Fifth, God speaks **through circumstances**. God speaks through a variety of circumstances: pain, open and closed doors, etc. While experience is an important part of the Christian life, make sure you balance this with biblical revelation. C. S. Lewis said, “God whispers to us in our pleasure . . . but shouts



in our pains.”¹ The Psalmist describes this powerfully in Psalm 119; “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word (Psalm 119:67); “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes” (Psalm 119:71); and “The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces” (Psalm 119:72).

¹ Daniel Ritchie January 16, 2017 <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-shouts-to-us-in-our-pain> (accessed June 30, 2020).





BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target

How does God communicate with you today? From the burning bush with Moses, to an angel with Gideon, to a cloud telling the Israelites when to move, to a dream with Joseph, and even through a donkey with Balaam, God speaks. *The testimony of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is that God speaks to His people.* From this study, you have learned that God speaks to you in a variety of ways: The Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church (other believers). None of these methods on their own may be clear enough to indicate God's direction. However, when God says the same thing through several or all of these ways you have confidence to proceed. When you communicate with God, remember, He will never contradict His written Word.

PRAYER CHART

Read the following verses and then answer the five questions.

Read	God Speaks Through
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 22	The Bible
<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 34:5-7	His Character
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 12:6-19 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 9:6-8	Christian Leadership
<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 13:1-3; 16:6	Activity of God
<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 15:22-35	Peace of the Holy Spirit
<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 47:13-27	Wisdom
<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 12:5-17	Supernatural Intervention
<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 28:10-17 <input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 37:5-11	Dreams
<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 10:1-22	Visions
<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 3:2-14	Audible Voice

1. To whom did God speak in the passage?
2. How did God speak to them?



3. What was their response to what God said?
 4. How does God use that specific method to speak today?
 5. What can interfere with your ability to hear God when He uses this method?
 - On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very deep and 4 being shallow, rate yourself on the depth of your relationship with God. Write out a plan to deepen your relationship with God over the next 90 days.
-
- How does this study affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you.
 - Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?



- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

Next Step:

- Courage:** Commit to five minutes a day for twelve weeks of communication with God.
- Strength:** Commit to fifteen minutes a day for twelve weeks of communication with God.
- Endurance:** Commit to thirty minutes a day for twelve weeks of communication with God. Journal your thoughts and impressions.

FireBible:

- Read the *FireBible* article, “Effective Praying.”
 - » Summarize the three reasons for prayer.

- » With which of the five requirements for effective praying do you most resonate? Why?



» After reading the “Biblical Elements and Methods of Effective Praying” section, what can you glean from these elements?

• Read the *FireBible* article, “Intercession.”

» What can you glean from the section “The Intercession of Christ and the Holy Spirit?”

» After reading “The Intercession of the Believer” section, what are two things that spoke to your heart? Why?

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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

LESSON 4: FASTING

THE TARGET: The spiritual discipline of fasting is available to strengthen you spiritually and to help you overcome barriers that keep you from living a victorious life. This lesson helps you learn what a fast is and why this spiritual discipline should be incorporated into your spiritual formation journey.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

Why fast? What is a fast? Are there any rules? From what can you fast? How long and how often should you fast? With so many questions surrounding this spiritual discipline, it's no surprise some people have a difficult time.

Fasting primarily refers to the practice of completely or partially abstaining from food for a specified period of time. It is an ancient practice found in most religions of the world. Traditionally, fasting has been a widely used form of asceticism, which is a severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons, such as penance for the purpose of purifying the person or atoning for sins and wrongdoing. While Men's Ministries does not recommend such strict asceticism, the discipline of fasting is valuable for strengthening you spiritually and helping you overcome barriers to a victorious Christian life.



For that reason, Men's Ministries has identified four dimensions of manhood that every man should experience and pass onto the next generation. These dimensions are Relationship, Identity, Purpose, and Vision. For a full explanation of these dimensions, you can download our Launch resource, which you can access for free on the Men's Ministries app at <https://subsplash.com/mensministries/app>.

Jesus taught that believers should pray and fast (Matthew 6:5,16). Whereas prayer is about **connecting** to God, fasting is about **disconnecting** from the world. When you begin to practice fasting as a spiritual discipline, you should expect resistance, interference, and opposition. There are many traps associated with fasting, so don't be caught by surprise when you have obstacles to overcome or circumstances you must deal with during the fast. Remember, you are attempting to advance your spiritual journey, which necessitates taking ground away from the enemy. As you attempt to develop your spiritual muscles through fasting, you will have to fight the good fight of faith to secure the victory through Christ.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

There are at least **four reasons** why you should consider this discipline.

First, fasting helps you **overcome temptation**. It is true that denial produces discipline (Hebrews 12:11; 2 Peter 1:5-15).

Second, fasting brings **breakthrough** (Daniel 10:12-14; Ephesians 6:12). This is because fasting **weakens the flesh and strengthens your spirit**.

Third, fasting **assists in bringing forth the will of God** in a specific situation (Esther 4:16). When you find yourself in a situation that brings no clear, concise resolve, fasting will help you follow God's pathway.

Finally, fasting can bring **clarity and understanding** (Acts 13:2). Fasting reduces and removes what needs to be out of your life so you can become who God has destined you to be.

The Bible is filled with people who fasted with tremendous results. When Moses needed specific instruction, he fasted (Exodus 34:28). Three times Daniel fasted. The **first** time, Daniel did not want to violate his conscience, so he issued a 10-day diet challenge to the leaders (Daniel 1:11-14). The **second** time, Daniel pleaded for mercy (Daniel 9:3). His **third** time to fast was when he was waiting for an answer to a request. The fast lasted 21 days (Daniel 10:3,12-14). When Ezra needed protection and provision, he fasted (Ezra 8:21-23). When Esther needed to thwart an enemy's plan to destroy her people, she fasted (Esther 4:14-17). As you take some time to peruse these stories about fasting, you will discover that **results followed their time of fasting**. You too can expect results from times you spend in prayer and fasting.

This is an absolute: **fasting brings a greater awareness of God's presence**.

In addition, you can **expect a greater love for God**. You can also expect a **greater burden for lost people**. You will experience a greater compassion for hurting, addicted, and oppressed people when fasting is part of your spiritual discipline tool box. When you fast, you will experience a greater power over sin and freedom from sin's bondage, and you will experience great victory over the plans of the enemy.





BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target

When you begin to fast, you should *expect resistance and opposition*. However, as you start your fast, you may experience a deep sense of the Holy Spirit in your life. You need to be prepared. This section will help you understand how to fast and how to implement this spiritual discipline in your spiritual formation journey.

Read and answer the following:

- 1 Samuel 14:24-30
 - » Who called the fast?

 - » Why was the fast called?

 - » What was wrong about this specific call to fast?

 - » What did Jonathan do that put his life in danger?

 - » Were his remarks about the fast right or wrong? Why?

- 2 Chronicles 20:1-29
 - » Who called the fast?



- » How do you know his motives were right before God as opposed to King Saul's in 1 Samuel 14:24-30?

- » How did the people respond to the call to fast and pray?

- » What were the results of this fast? What did it set in motion?

- » What would have been the results if they had not fasted?

- From the two different Scriptural examples, answer the following.
 - » What are some examples of situations today that are good occasions to fast?

 - » How will fasting help in those situations?

 - » What could happen if you choose *not* to fast and pray over these situations?



» What must you be careful to do before you begin to fast? Why?

- Walk through the effective fasting worksheet in **Appendix H**.

How does this study affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers below or in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Next Step:

Men's Ministries believes every man should decide to take a next step in their spiritual formation journey. Which step will you choose? When will you begin? Before you commit to a fast, go through **Appendix F** and decide what type of fast will you do. Then, complete the effective fasting worksheet in **Appendix H**.

- Courage:** I have never fasted, so I will attempt to fast from breakfast to sundown on _____.
- Strength:** I have fasted some but desire to be more consistent. Example: I will fast the first Wednesday of every month this year. I will begin on _____.
- Endurance:** I will fast ten days this year from _____ to _____. I will journal my thoughts and reflections about my fast.

FireBible:

- Read the *FireBible* note on Daniel 10:13.
 - » What can you glean from this article?

- Read the *FireBible* note on Matthew 6:16.
 - » What can you glean from this article?

- » On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very high and 4 being very low, where would you rate your spirituality? Why?



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

LESSON 5: PRAISE AND WORSHIP

THE TARGET: Worship is an intense love or admiration for God. Men's Ministries believes there is power in praise and worship. Praise and worship should take place in all parts of your life, not just when you go to church. In this lesson, you will learn ways to offer praise and worship to God, and how to practice this powerful discipline in your spiritual formation journey.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

Worship is the reasonable, heartfelt response of those who have known God's grace and value Him above anyone or anything else (Psalm 22:3; John 4:24). Worship is your spirit connecting to God's spirit (John 4:24).

Worship can be expressed in several different ways. **You can worship God together with other Christians.** In Psalm 95, you can find the words "let us" six different times. However, you are not relegated to worship God only around other believers. **You can worship God alone with no one else around** (Matthew 6:6). You are **expected to worship God both verbally and physically** (Psalm 47:1; 134:2). This means you have freedom to express your worship with your body and voice. You can bow, kneel, stand, sit, clap your hands, and lift your hands. Because these are biblical forms of worship, you are invited to use them in your worship of God.





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

You were created to worship, serve, and obey something. As a believer, you are created to worship the God of the Bible. Of the 10 commandments God gave Israel, the first commandment deals with worship (Exodus 20:1-3). God is the only one worthy of your worship (Psalm 18:3). It is true—you become like what you worship (Psalm 115:8; Jeremiah 2:5; 1 John 5:21).

If worship is a spiritual discipline, what is its purpose? There are at least *four reasons* to sharpen the spiritual discipline of worship.

First, as you develop your habit of worship, you thank God for who He is and all He has done (Psalm 100:4). **You purpose is to praise God simply because He is God and there is no one else like Him.** He has created you, answers your prayers, works in your life, and blesses you.

Second, worship Him to **get your eyes on Him** and off of your troubles (Hebrews 12:2; Psalm 43:5; 57:1-8).

Third, practice the discipline of worship to **feel His presence and to learn more about Him** (Psalm 16:11). When Moses got into the presence of God, he understood and saw who God was (Exodus 34:5-9).

Finally, sharpen your worship habit to **defeat the enemy** and his plans for your life (Psalm 116:17; 2 Chronicles 20:18-30).





BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target

- Read Hebrews 13:15.
 - » What does the phrase “sacrifice of praise” mean to you? Describe a time in your life when you offered a sacrifice of praise.

- Read 2 Chronicles 20:18–30.
 - » What can you glean about praise and worship from these verses?

- Read Psalm 95.
 - » Highlight the six times the phrase “let us” is used. What can you learn from these six highlights about praise and worship?



How does this study affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers below or in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you experienced to your family and to others around you?

Next Step:

- Courage:** I don't worship God in any of the five ways listed. I commit to begin to worship Him in _____ way when I attend church.



- ❑ **Strength:** I would like to deepen this spiritual discipline and begin to worship God in my private time in _____ way.
- ❑ **Endurance:** I will find three worship songs and dedicate a time and place to listen and worship in private. After your worship time, write down your impressions in your journal.

FireBible:

- Read the *FireBible* note on Psalm 100:2.
 - » What can a believer recall when they praise God?

 - » On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not well, rate yourself on how well you express your praise to God. Write out a plan to improve.

- Read the *FireBible* note on Psalm 134:1-3.
 - » What is the result of spiritual worship inspired by the Spirit of God?

- Read the *FireBible* note on John 4:23-24.
 - » What should true worship reflect?



- Read the *FireBible* article, “Worship.”
 - » Write in your own words the definition of worship.

 - » What can you ascertain from the historical aspect of worship that will help your worship today?

 - » Summarize the ten points in the expressions of Christian worship section.

 - » Why would you want to make sure hindrances are out of the way as you grow in the spiritual discipline of worship?



» Which of the twelve blessings of worship do you most need in your life right now?

• Read the *FireBible* article, “Praise.”

» What did you learn about the four important reasons why you should praise God as a believer?

» What did you discover about the various biblical methods of praise? How can you apply what you learned to your personal time of praise to God?

» With which reason for praise did you most resonate? Why?



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

LESSON 6: GENEROSITY

THE TARGET: Generosity is a much-debated subject. Before starting this study, talk to your pastor about his feelings and thoughts about generosity. The intention of Men's Ministries is not to start any arguments between your pastor and you but rather to encourage you to submit to your pastor. The study is built upon the premise that everything a believer owns has been given by God. Generosity of time, talent, and finances is a by-product of deepening spiritual formation. You will learn why and how to grow in the spiritual discipline of generosity. It is not about giving so you can "earn" blessings. Rather, it is about the power of obedience and how the Lordship of Christ intervenes in your life as you follow His teaching on giving. This lesson seeks to bring clear understanding of what God's Word says about giving tithes and offerings to the local church. This lesson also seeks to create a desire within you to give cheerfully and extravagantly.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

As you grow more spiritually mature, your generosity will come to include acts of giving, acts of kindness, words of encouragement, and time committed to family, friends and neighbors, as well as to prayer.



Generosity is a **heart** issue (Matthew 6:19–21). Jesus said in verse 21, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This verse could be expanded to say: “Show me your checkbook, show me your credit card statements, show me your bank statement, show me your receipts, and I will show you where your heart is.” The **priority** of your money always determines the **path** of your heart.

Generosity is a spiritual practice (2 Corinthians 8:6–7). If you are going to practice generosity as a discipline, here are a few guidelines as you practice this habit.

First, learn to **see what and whom God sees** (Proverbs 29:18). As you look at others, can you see their potential? As you look at places, can you see His kingdom expanding?

Second, learn to **love what and whom God loves**. Jesus showed love for the lost (Luke 19:10), His people (John 21:15–17), and His bride (Ephesians 5:25).

Finally, if you are going to grow in this discipline, you must **learn to give as God gives**. God gives wholeheartedly, sacrificially, and without regret (John 3:16).





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

What does the term “tithe” mean to you? What does “offering” mean? Examining these two terms is a good place to begin. A tithe is a tenth of our income, whereas an offering is a gift over and above the tithe and is voluntary. Sometimes the offering has an intended target, i.e. missions, a building program, benevolence, or a special assignment.

The **first step** in the development of generosity is **becoming a consistent giver**. The purpose of tithing is to allow you to develop the mindset that God is first in your life (Luke 14:33; Deuteronomy 14:23). A biblical understanding of this spiritual discipline helps to keep this habit in focus. And tithing is biblical (Leviticus 27:30–32; Numbers 18:21,24–32; 35:2–3). A review of **Appendix I** will give you a visual description on the steps of generosity.

There are **six biblical reasons to develop this discipline**.

First, God is pleased by your obedience (Malachi 3:10; Leviticus 27:32; Proverbs 3:9). The tithe must be complete. In other words, it must be a tenth. The tithe is holy, which means it is set apart for God. The entire tithe belongs to the Lord. God asks for obedience more than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22).

Second, tithing teaches you to always put God first in your life (Deuteronomy 14:23). Remember, generosity is a heart issue (Matthew 6:21).

Third, when you develop the discipline of generosity and tithing becomes consistent in your life, **God’s blessings are promised to you** (Malachi 3:10–11; Proverbs 3:9–10).

Fourth, tithing and generosity helps to **guard you from materialism**. God wants you to learn to trust Him for all you need (1 Timothy 6:17–18).

Fifth, you should develop generosity because it helps **meet the needs of God’s people and the local church** (1 Corinthians 16:1–2).

Sixth, when you learn the spiritual discipline of generosity, you **remind yourself that God is the owner of everything** you have, and you have been entrusted to steward what He has given to your care (Deuteronomy 8:18).



Jesus spoke more about generosity and money than any other subject.

Don't misunderstand this statement—Jesus wasn't all about the money; He was all about your heart. And where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be (Matthew 6:21). Jesus knew the pressures of daily life. He watched how finances could control some people and how some people controlled their finances. His wisdom to believers in Scripture was to prepare them for this tension of the heart and to teach them to allow love of God to ultimately control their hearts. As you grow in this spiritual discipline, you will notice your heart become more connected to the power behind the teaching, and you'll begin to find it easier to follow.





BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target

As a Christ follower, your biblical financial strategy is *God first*. It takes faith to put God first, rather than last in our generosity.

- Read 1 Kings 17:10-16.
 - » What can you learn about putting God first?

- Read Malachi 3:10-11.
 - » What two things are promised when you put God first?

- Read Genesis 4:1-7.
 - » What can happen as a result of not doing things in God's order?



How does this study affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers below or in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you experienced to your family and to others around you?

Next Step:

- Courage:** If you have never developed the spiritual discipline of tithing, commit to ninety days of faithful tithing. After ninety days, evaluate how God has blessed you.

- Strength:** If you already tithe, commit to a year's worth of random acts of kindness either weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Make sure to journal your blessings, impressions, and any miracles that occur.



- ❑ **Endurance:** Look at the giving ladder in **Appendix I**. Where are you currently on the ladder? Write out a plan to move up one rung on the ladder this next year.

FireBible:

- Read the *FireBible* note on Leviticus 27:30.
 - » Who was the tithe supposed to support?

- Read the *FireBible* note on Malachi 3:8.
 - » Summarize the two thoughts from this verse about tithing.

 - » What can you glean from this?

- Read the *FireBible* note on Matthew 6:24.
 - » Write out in your own words the two points about serving money.

 - » What steps have you taken to ensure you serve God more than money?



- Read the *FireBible* note on 2 Corinthians 8:2.
 - » Which of the eight principles and promises of giving resonated with you most? Why?

- Read the *FireBible* note on 2 Corinthians 8:7.
 - » Why should you excel in the spiritual discipline of generosity?

 - » On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not as well, rate yourself on how well you excel in generosity. Write out a plan to improve.

- Read the *FireBible* article, “Tithes and Offering.”
 - » Write out five aspects of what tithes and offerings are.



- » How does knowing this help you develop a heart of generosity?

- » From the seven reasons listed on how and why we should give, with which reason do you most identify? Why?

- » From the seven reasons listed on how and why we should give, with which reason do you least identify? Why?

- » After reading the section “Are Christians Today Obligated to Tithe?,” what did you learn?

- » What did you ascertain from the “Why and Where Do We Tithe?” section?



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

LESSON 7: COMMUNITY

THE TARGET: Men's Ministries believes that as a Christian man, you have a vertical covenant with God and a horizontal covenant with other men. In this lesson, you will discover the need to practice the spiritual discipline of community.



SIGHTLINE: Acquire Your Target

The Early Church in the Book of Acts invested in **growth** through **community** with other believers (Acts 2:46) as they shared their newfound faith in Christ with others. As the first-century church started growing, the power of community was essential. **Community created an atmosphere of common principles and values taught and lived out by Christ.** The result of this community would be a commitment to fellowship, discipleship, service, worship, and evangelism through attitudes, interests, and goals. The first-century church community focused on the reliability of having all things in common, the gift of sharing and providing for those who struggled. Unfortunately, today's society teaches Americans that individualism should be the norm. Randy Frazee sums it up well when he states:

We live in a society in which we experience what some sociologists call, "crowded loneliness." We're surrounded by



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

people but do not feel a sense of belonging. In fact, a survey conducted by the Gallup organization revealed that 7 in 10 people do not know their neighbors and that one-third of Americans admit to frequent periods of loneliness.¹

American society has fed this notion of thinking of self above others. In this culture, the individual's rights are always considered over community responsibilities. However, when you begin to develop the spiritual discipline of community, you begin to think of others as more important than you. Perhaps the sequoia tree will give you a picture of what can happen when Christian men refuse to allow culture to keep them from this spiritual discipline.

Sequoia redwood trees have a unique root system that is a marvel, compared to their mammoth size. . . . Their roots actually only go down 6-12 feet, and yet, these trees rarely fall over. They withstand strong winds, earthquakes, fires, storms, and prolonged flooding. How can something up to 500 tons, reaching over 350 feet in height, and live [sic] for many centuries remain standing with roots only going down about 10 feet? . . . Their root system is intertwined with the other redwood trees. . . . Only redwoods have the strength and ability to support other redwoods. . . . Beneath the surface of these huge redwood trees are roots like an army of men who have their arms interlocked, standing and supporting each other. They are preventing the adversaries of life from knocking each other down. They are also making sure there is plenty of nutrients for growth to continue.²

Most men cannot withstand the storms of life by themselves. But everything changes when you **grow in community** with other followers of Christ. Your roots are fused together so that you can stand in the storm, and your growth goes deeper and becomes stronger.

1 Frazee, Randy. *The Connecting Church*. Zondervan, 2001, Page 23.

2 Susan Williamson. *What Kind of Root System Do You Have?* The John Maxwell Team. December 7, 2013. <https://johnmaxwellteam.com/what-kind-of-root-system-do-you-have/> (Accessed December 15, 2020).





CROSSHAIR: Focus on Your Target

Why should you, as a man, be connected in a Christian community with other men? Here are a few reasons to practice the spiritual discipline of community.

First, if you have as a goal to pattern your life after Christ, you should realize Jesus was not a loner. He lived in community with others. A reading of the Gospels makes it clear that Jesus and His disciples traveled, ate, slept, and worked together in community.

Second, Jesus places a high value on community with other believers (Matthew 5:23–24). In fact, God values healthy connection among believers to the extent that He would rather you put your offering on hold to go make things right with someone first, rather than give your offering and remain in conflict with them.

Third, Christianity simply does not work in isolation and independence (1 Corinthians 12:25–27).

Fourth, you should practice the discipline of community because it has the potential to destroy the power of shame, sin, and offense. The enemy wants to keep you isolated in order to keep you from freedom. Whenever you find yourself hiding from others, trying to push them away, an alarm should go off inside you to remind you not to neglect this discipline.

Finally, when you practice the discipline of community, you will grow in your relationship with God and with other men. God will use community to be His hands, His feet, and His guidance. When you practice this discipline, **you will be tuned in to what God wants to say and do through your life.**

The results of walking in spiritual community with others are incredible. There is physical and spiritual health. Henry Cloud in his book *Boundaries* says it this way: “Research illustrates that when we are in a loving biblical relationship, we are growing. When we are isolated, we are slowly dying.”³

When you walk in spiritual community you grow and mature spiritually (Romans 14:1). If you live in isolation, unconnected to deep relationships, it is hard to have a meaningful and joy-filled life.

³ Cloud, Henry. *Boundaries Updated and Expanded Edition: When to Say Yes, How to Say No To Take Control of Your Life*. Zondervan, 2017, Page 290.



Spiritual endurance happens when you practice the discipline of community (Ecclesiastes 4:12; Hebrews 3:13). Furthermore, spiritual change and growth can only happen through relationships (Romans 12:15). Knowledge is good, but only relationships make an eternal impact. Thom Rainer said:

Church members who became involved in some type of group in the churches were five times more likely to be active in the church five years later compared to those who only attended worship services. . . More than 83 percent of those who joined and were involved in a small group were still active in the churches five years later. But only 16 percent of those who attended worship services only remained in the churches five years later.⁴

4 Rainer, Thom S. *I will: Nine Traits of the Outwardly Focused Christian*. B & H Books, 2015, Pages 36–37.





BULLSEYE: Hit Your Target

Fill in the following chart. What can you glean?

Read	God Speaks Through
Galatians 5:13	_____ one another.
Galatians 6:2	_____ one another's burdens.
Romans 12:10	_____ one another.
Romans 15:7	_____ one another.
Romans 15:14	_____ one another.
Romans 16:16	_____ one another.
Colossians 3:13	_____ one another.
Ephesians 5:21	_____ one another.
1 Thessalonians 5:11	_____ one another.

- Read through Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Highlight every time Jesus did life with other people. What can you learn from Jesus' community life with others?

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, how well do you live in community with other believers? Write out a plan to improve.

How has this study affected the way you look at community? How does this study affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers below or in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about what you just studied. How did this study help deepen your love for God?

- Write down a thought from this study that you experienced this week.

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate what you experienced to your family and to others around you?



Next Step:

- Courage:** Commit to meeting with a group of men quarterly for one year. I will begin _____.
- Strength:** Commit to meeting with a group of men monthly for one year. I will begin _____.
- Endurance:** Commit to meeting with a group of men weekly for twelve weeks. I will begin _____.

FireBible:

- Read the *FireBible* note on Acts 2:42–47.
 - » What role did other people play in the development of the Early Church?

 - » How can this knowledge help you grow in your relationship with other believers?

- Read the *FireBible* note on 1 Corinthians 12:25.
 - » What can you glean about living in community with other believers?



- Read the *FireBible* note on Ephesians 4:3,13-14.
 - » How can you ensure you maintain unity of the Spirit with other believers?

 - » What are three ways you can ensure you maintain unity of the faith?

- Read the *FireBible* note on Hebrews 10:25.
 - » What does being in community provide to you?

- Read the *FireBible* article, on “The Church.”
 - » From the 12 descriptors of the church, what can you glean?

 - » Why is living in community with other believers important?

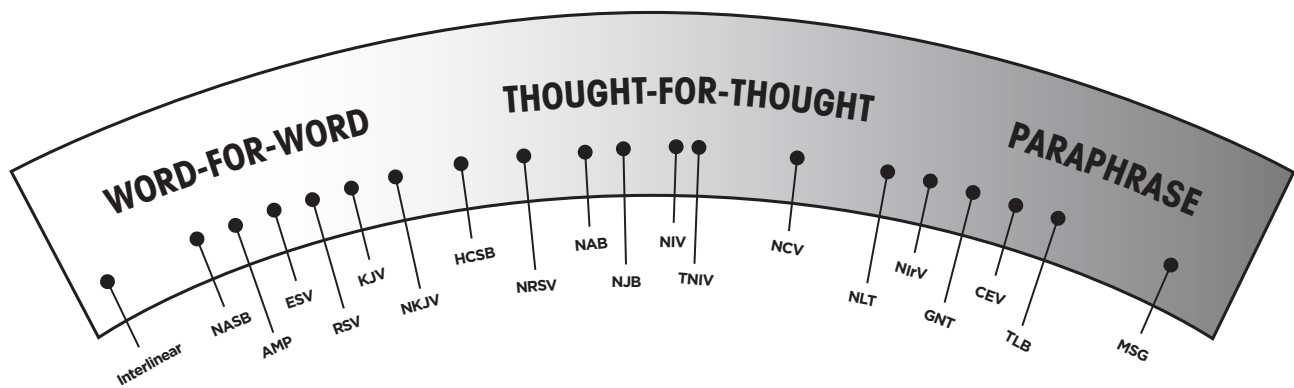
- Read the *FireBible* article, “Spiritual Separation for Believers.”
 - » Why is this important as you develop and strengthen your community with other believers?

 - » What does separation *not* mean?



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX A BIBLE TRANSLATION TOOL¹ Types of Bible Translations



NASB - New American Standard Bible
AMP - Amplified Bible
ESV - English Standard Version
RSV - Revised Standard Version
KJV - King James Version
NKJV - New King James Version

HCSB - Holmes Christian Standard Bible
NRSV - New Revised Standard Version
NAB - New American Bible
NJB - New Jerusalem Bible
NIV - New International Version
TNIV - Today's New International Version
NCV - New Century Version
NLT - New Living Translation

Nlrv - New International Reader's Version
GNT - Good News Translation
(also Good News Bible)
CEV - Contemporary English Version
TLB - The Living Bible
MSG - The Message

Understanding the Spectrum

Word-for-Word (Far Left)

Word-for-word translations aim to translate directly the meaning of each individual word from the original language. These translations are the most literal, but can sometimes be difficult to read.

¹ <https://me.me/i/types-of-bible-translations-thought-for-thought-paraphrase-word-for-word-nab-n-ncv-6bf2183f509740e09d8f13779fc3fb94> (Accessed September 10, 2019).

Paraphrase (Far Right)

Paraphrase translations strive to capture the overall meaning of a passage, with a greater focus on the purpose and intent of God’s message through the human author than on the meaning of each individual word used. Paraphrase translations are very readable, but do not always provide literal translations of the words used by the original author.

Thought-for-Thought (Middle)

Thought-for-thought translations blend word-for-word translation and paraphrase styles, creating versions that are both true to the literal meaning of the text and true to the overall meaning of a passage. These translations are a great “middle” ground for readers who want the best of both worlds!



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX B FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE

- “Bible” comes from Latin *biblia*, meaning “books.”
- The Bible has 66 books.
- The Christian Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- The word “testament” means “covenant.”
- The Bible was written from about 1450 BC to AD 100 by many different authors writing in many different times and places.
- The Bible contains many literary genres including poetry, myth, wisdom literature, prophecy, letters, narratives, hyperbole, and apocryphal literature.
- The Bible was the first book to be printed in AD 1454.

FACTS ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT

- The OT was originally written in Hebrew.
- The OT has 39 books.
- The OT is divided into four sections.
 - Law (Genesis–Numbers)
 - History (Joshua–Esther)
 - Poetry (Job–Song of Songs)
 - Prophets (Isaiah–Malachi)
 - » Major Prophets (Isaiah–Daniel)
 - » Minor Prophets (Hosea–Malachi)



FACTS ABOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT

- The NT was originally written in Greek.
- The NT has 27 books.
- The NT is divided into four sections.
 - Gospel (Matthew–John)
 - History (Acts)
 - Epistles (Romans–3 John)
 - Prophecy (Revelation)

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®)
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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX C THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Who Wrote the Bible?

Ultimately, above the human authors, the Bible was written by God. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that the Bible was “breathed out” by God. God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that, while using their own writing styles and personalities, they still recorded exactly what God intended. The Bible was not dictated by God, but it was perfectly guided and entirely inspired by Him.

Humanly speaking, the Bible was written by approximately 40 men of diverse backgrounds over the course of 1500 years. Isaiah was a prophet, Ezra was a priest, Matthew was a tax collector, John was a fisherman, Paul was a tent maker, Moses was a shepherd, Luke was a physician. Despite being penned by different authors over 15 centuries, the Bible does not contradict itself and does not contain any errors. The authors all present different perspectives, but they all proclaim the same one true God, and the same one way of salvation—Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Few of the books of the Bible specifically name their author.

The Old Testament

The Five Books of Moses / The Law / The Pentateuch / The Torah

1. Genesis

Author: Moses

Date written: 1445-1405 BC

Description: Beginnings: Creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, Abraham and Isaac, Sodom and Gomorrah, Jacob (birth of the 12 tribes of Israel), Joseph



2. **Exodus**

Author: Moses

Date written: 1445-1405 BC

Description: Rescue and Redemption: Introduction to Moses, deliverance from Egypt, the plagues, parting of the Red Sea, manna and quail from heaven, journey into the Promised Land.

3. **Leviticus**

Author: Moses

Date written: 1445-1405 BC

Description: Holiness: How to live, what to do, and what not to do as God's people; guidelines and instructions for worship and sacrifices for forgiveness of sins; these laws and regulations were given to the Israelites by God to protect them and keep them healthy and safe.

4. **Numbers**

Author: Moses

Date written: 1405 BC

Description: Desert Wanderings: A mixture of a kind of census of the people of Israel and some famous stories, such as Moses' temper tantrum with the rock which prevented him from entering the Promised Land and the story of Balak and Balaam where God speaks through Balaam's donkey.

5. **Deuteronomy**

Author: Moses

Date written: 1405 BC

Description: Covenant Renewal: The Ten Commandments (chapter 5); God's instructions for holy living including descriptions of specific ceremonies, festivals, and celebrations; driving out the evil inhabitants of the Promised Land

History Books

6. **Joshua**

Author: Joshua

Date written: 1350 BC

Description: Conquering Canaan: Taking possession of the Promised Land: walls of Jericho, sin of Achan, the sun standing still, division of the land, blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience



7. **Judges**

Author: Samuel/Nathan/Gad

Date written: 1050-1000 BC

Description: Rebellion and Rescue: Before Israel had a king, God raised up judges (Gideon, Deborah, Samson) who were anointed and empowered by God's Spirit to lead and deliver God's people from various enemies.

8. **Ruth**

Author: Samuel/Nathan/Gad

Date written: 1000-900 BC

Description: Selfless Loyalty and Redeeming Love: Written to Jews at the time with a strong theme of kindness and loyalty, this book introduces us to the idea of our need for a "Kinsmen Redeemer." Ruth is the faithful, loyal daughter-in-law to Naomi.

9. **1 Samuel**

Author: Samuel/Nathan/Gad

Date written: 1000-900 BC

Description: Establishing the Kingship under God: Samuel is introduced: prophet to Israel; anoints and appoints Israel's first king, Saul; Saul's sad story; David vs. Goliath; the anointing and prophetic appointing of one of the Bible's most famous characters, King David; David's struggle to become king

10. **2 Samuel**

Author: Samuel/Nathan/Gad

Date written: 1000-900 BC

Description: David's Reign: King David's reign as king over Judah and Israel, the return of the Ark of the Covenant, David's wars as king, David and Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan

11. **1 Kings**

Author: Prophet Jeremiah

Date written: 560-550 BC

Description: Kings of Israel and Judah: King David's successor is introduced and appointed; King Solomon (wealthiest, most wise and powerful king in history), construction of the Temple, introduction of the prophet Elijah, amazing miracles performed by Elijah, rise and fall of various kings



12. **2 Kings**

Author: Prophet Jeremiah

Date written: 560–550 BC

Description: Kings of Israel and Judah: Elijah recruits Elisha, Elijah taken to heaven in a whirlwind (without dying), Elisha becomes the appointed prophet, healing of Naaman's leprosy, rise and fall of various kings, fall of Jerusalem

13. **1 Chronicles**

Author: Ezra

Date written: 450–420 BC

Description: Israel's History as God's Covenant People: Genealogy of the 12 tribes of Israel (Jacob); Saul and his son, Jonathan, die; more stories of King David, his appointment and service as king; description of God's plans for the Temple passed to Solomon from his father, King David; Solomon appointed as king; David's death

14. **2 Chronicles**

Author: Ezra

Date written: 450–420 BC

Description: True Worship, Revival, and Reform: Solomon's famous request for wisdom, building of the Temple, rise and fall of kings

15. **Ezra**

Author: Ezra

Date written: 450–420 BC

Description: Starting Over: The promise from God to restore His people from captivity is fulfilled through Ezra and Nehemiah.

16. **Nehemiah**

Author: Ezra and Nehemiah

Date written: 430–420 BC

Description: Rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem: how to combat and defeat spiritual opposition when doing God's work

17. **Esther**

Author: Mordecai

Date written: 460–400 BC

Description: God's Sovereign Care and a Bold Queen's Destiny: the only book of the Bible that doesn't mention God, story of an unlikely Jew who was chosen by God to save His people



Poetry Books

18. **Job**

Author: Unknown. Many scholars suggest Moses

Date written: Unknown. Many scholars suggest 1400 BC

Description: Why do the righteous suffer? Story of a righteous man who loses everything as a test from Satan himself, a conversation between Job and three friends who try to help him but actually give bad input and rhetorical questions God poses to Job about Himself

19. **Psalms**

Author: Several different authors, mostly David

Date written: 1000–400 BC

Description: Prayers and Praises: Songs, poems, and laments from King David and several other psalmists, includes longest chapter of the Bible (Psalm 119). The Psalms often give us the words we need to express ourselves when we don't know how.

20. **Proverbs**

Author: Solomon

Date written: 970–700 BC

Description: Wisdom for Right Living: Contains the greatest principles to be found, personification of wisdom, fear of the Lord

21. **Ecclesiastes**

Author: King Solomon

Date written: 935 BC

Description: Life is meaningless apart from God: Written by King Solomon during a time when he was struggling in his walk with God. He had everything and had tried everything (even a number of ungodly wives) but still felt empty in the end. His honesty about life in general is brutal. In the end, you see and hear his “returning to the Lord.”

22. **Song of Solomon**

Author: King Solomon

Date written: 960 BC

Description: The gift and beauty of wedded love: A love story, poetic literature, expresses the beauty of the marriage relationship God designed. Some interpreters identify a metaphor of Christ and the Church. Others state that this is strictly meant to be a picture of God's design for marriage.



Major Prophets

23. **Isaiah**

Author: Isaiah

Date written: 700 BC

Description: Judgment and Salvation: He confronts the sin of the nation of Israel, he prophesied a future hope of deliverance, and he prophesied of a future Messiah. Chapter 53: written approximately 750 years before fulfillment!

24. **Jeremiah**

Author: Jeremiah

Date written: 585–580 BC

Description: God's inescapable judgment for unrepentant Judah: He prophesies about God's judgment to come for a people who have not repented, the message is validated by a godly messenger, known for the potter and clay metaphor

25. **Lamentations**

Author: Jeremiah

Date written: 586–585 BC

Description: Present sorrow and future hope: expresses his sorrow and emotional pain over the destruction of Jerusalem, these tragedies were a result of Judah's rebellion against Him.

26. **Ezekiel**

Author: Ezekiel

Date written: 590–570 BC

Description: God's judgment and Glory: he delivers the message of God's judgment to a rebellious and faithless people in Judah and Jerusalem and other nations, to encourage the faithful followers that God would restore one day.

27. **Daniel**

Author: Daniel

Date written: 536–530 BC

Description: God's sovereignty in History: he wanted to assure God's people that their present situation was not their final destination, to be able to pass on the stories of God's sovereignty, the lions' den and fiery furnace are two famous stories, prophecies regarding end times.



Minor Prophets

28. **Hosea**

Author: Hosea

Date written: 715–710 BC

Description: Unfaithfulness, judgment and God's redeeming love: calling Israel back to their devotion to the true God, no matter what has been done God still loves His children, if disobedience continues then consequences will follow.

29. **Joel**

Author: Joel

Date written: 835–830 BC

Description: The awesome Day of the Lord: talks about two natural disasters that occur and the threat of a foreign military invasion of Judah, repentance with fasting and prayer for God's mercy.

30. **Amos**

Author: Amos

Date written: 760–755 BC

Description: Justice, righteousness and God's punishment for sin: repentance was called for as a result of pride and corruption, and idolatry.

31. **Obadiah**

Author: Obadiah

Date written: 840 BC

Description: Judgment on Edom: judgment was coming because of their prideful rejoicing over the suffering of Judah.

32. **Jonah**

Author: Jonah

Date written: 760 BC

Description: The magnitude of God's saving mercy: Israel's fall from their purpose of being a light to a lost world, God's mercy goes to great depths.

33. **Micah**

Author: Micah

Date written: 740–710 BC

Description: Justice and judgment/Mercy and salvation: expose the offenses that made God angry.



34. **Nahum**

Author: Nahum

Date written: 630–620 BC

Description: Nineveh’s approaching destruction: warned against impending destruction but also provided a message of hope to God’s people.

35. **Habakkuk**

Author: Habakkuk

Date written: 606 BC

Description: Living by faith and Trusting God’s judgment: God provides assurance to those who remained faithful to Him, the righteous shall live by faith.

36. **Zephaniah**

Author: Zephaniah

Date written: 630 BC

Description: The Day of the Lord and destruction and salvation: warning Judah and the people of Jerusalem about the approaching judgment coming from God, the phrase “day of the Lord” is used extensively.

37. **Haggai**

Author: Haggai

Date written: 520 BC

Description: Rebuilding the temple: when one obeys God the result will be with the strength of His spirit, a call to the people to rearrange their lives so their spiritual concerns will have proper place

38. **Zehariah**

Author: Zechariah

Date written: 520–470 BC

Description: The completion of the temple and the coming of the King: encouragement to start building the Temple, hanging on to the hope that the Messiah will come.

39. **Malachi**

Author: Malachi

Date written: 430–420 BC

Description: The Lord’s Love, Discipline, and Coming: warning against a worship that is routine, a faith that is weakened, turn from sins and religious hypocrisy, remove obstacles of doubt and disobedience that block God’s flow of favor and blessing



Approximately 400–450 years pass between the writing of Malachi and the birth of Jesus. If you would like to glean information about this time period that leads up to the birth of Christ, here are three recommended resources for you.

1. Josephus Carta's Illustrated the Jewish War by William Whiston (translator), R. Steven Notley (Introduction) ISBN: 978-9652208774
2. 1 Book of Maccabees in the Apocrypha: This work sheds historical light during this time period.
3. A concise History of Ancient Israel by Bernd U. Schipper ISBN: 978-1575067322. This work covers the historical period from the children of Israel into the Promised Land up to the Greek period just before the Roman's takeover.
4. It would be good to read in your *FireBible* the historical chart "From Malachi to Christ."

The New Testament

The Gospels

40. Matthew

Author: Matthew

Date written: AD 60

Description: Matthew emphasizes that Jesus fulfills the Jewish Scriptures, and argues from those Scriptures the way a trained scribe would. He portrays Jesus as the crux of the hope of Israel to his Jewish audience, but also emphasizes the missions to the Gentiles.

41. Mark

Author: Mark

Date written: AD 55–65

Description: Mark emphasizes a messianic secret in as much as Jesus hides his messianic identity as much as he can from the people. He also addresses the failure of the disciples. The main focus of Jesus is on the sick, the poor, the morally and socially marginalized, and others rather than catering to the powerful elite.



42. **Luke**

Author: Luke

Date written: AD 60-63

Description: Luke places an emphasis on Jesus' ministry to the outcasts, the religiously unfit, the poor and the women. This writing takes place between Galilee and Jerusalem.

43. **John**

Author: John

Date written: AD 80-95

Description: John places emphasis on Jesus being the Word and He is therefore the appointed messenger of God. The Spirit is another point of emphasis in this Gospel. Jesus is in confrontation with "the Jews" which he seems to identify as the Judean authorities in Jerusalem. John utilizes the many common images in his culture to communicate with the people.

History

44. **Acts**

Author: Luke

Date written: AD 63

Description: Luke emphasizes prayer, signs and wonders, and the Spirit. He takes this book to identify the spread of the Gospel in world evangelism. His emphasis is that the Spirit is needed to carry out this task.

Paul's Letters to Churches

45. **Romans**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 57

Description: Paul emphasizes that God can save both the Jew and the Gentile. The Christians from Rome needed to learn cultural sensitivity in Christ. It is spiritual, not ethnic descent from Abraham that mattered. Paul wants both Jew and Gentile to accept each other and glorify God together.



46. **1 Corinthians**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 55–56

Description: Paul combats the ideology of the day where social status determines a person's role. The people had their own social interests and the people were not getting along, so Paul addressed it. Paul addresses the erroneous views taken by both the people with higher status and those who were manual laborers because of the ideologies they brought into their theology.

47. **2 Corinthians**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 55–56

Description: Paul wants to refresh the trust and deep friendship that his converts had with him. He utilizes a style of writing that is full of reproof, comfort, and friendship.

48. **Galatians**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 49

Description: Paul combats the Judean Christians in Galatia to correct the teachings from some who were trying to impose Mosaic laws onto the Gentiles. They especially believed that following the law of circumcision, which was a major cultural symbol, was needed in order to prove their fidelity to Judaism. The Judean Jews were arguing that in order to become a full Jesus-follower then Gentiles had to make circumcision a requirement.

49. **Ephesians**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 62

Description: Paul was arrested because he had brought a Gentile into the temple and ethnic and cultural division between Jew and Gentiles was a major issue in the church of Ephesus. Paul addresses the need for the church to be a good witness in the society. He also combats the struggles some of these believers have with their occult practices attempting to help them to be overcomers.



50. **Philippians**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 62-63

Description: Paul states that he writes to thank this church. He also wanted to provide insight to some uses they would face like the further persecution of the church. In light of this persecution, the church at Phillpi is encouraged to work together. In the time of Paul, encouragement to work in unity was common which is a reason Paul may have used the words “joy” or “rejoice” 16 times to describe what their attitude should be during persecution.

51. **Colossians**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 62

Description: Paul addresses the different mystical and gnostic cultural influences that permeated both the Gentile and Jewish thought. Paul writes the most profound presentation of Christology anywhere in the New Testament which contains a mini ethics course; he stresses Christlike character and ethics in the home, family, and work, in all parts of life.

52. **1 Thessalonians**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 51

Description: Paul writes to a very young church at Thessalonica who continued to experience persecution after Paul had left. He encourages them with the promise of a future hope.

53. **2 Thessalonians**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 51-52

Description: Paul writes to clear up any misunderstandings about end-time events. The Thessalonians thought it was “any day now” and had become lazy and unproductive. Some believers had thought that the Day of the Lord had already come.

Paul’s Letters to Friends

54. **1 Timothy**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 65

Description: Paul addresses the false teaching that was taking place. His solution was to appoint qualified church leaders who could address the heresies that were spreading into the church.



55. **2 Timothy**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 67

Description: Paul perhaps was discouraged because he will not live to see the fruit of his ministry. Paul discusses the persecution both from within and without the church. He admonishes Timothy to remain faithful to God to the end, just like he has been, by remaining focused on Scriptures and the sound teaching he can find in them.

56. **Titus**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 65-66

Description: Paul admonishes Titus to deliver sound teaching and to do good works. He challenged Titus to continue to stand against those who were trying to demand Christians be circumcised. He encouraged Christians to do good in order to be a good witness to unbelievers.

57. **Philemon**

Author: Paul

Date written: AD 62

Description: Paul fights for reconciliation and doing what is right. Roman law required Paul to return Onesimus to his master, with serious penalties if he failed to do so. Paul used his relationship as a spiritual father to Philemon to plead for the release of Onesimus.

General Letters

58. **Hebrews**

Author: unknown, mostly likely either Paul, Luke, Barnabas, or Apollos

Date written: AD 67-69

Description: The writer tries to pen an argument by the ancient, complex argumentation method of comparison. He writes contrasting Jesus with major themes from the Old Testament. This book contains repeated warnings against apostasy.



59. **James**

Author: James

Date written: AD 45-49

Description: James seeks to offer the solution to combating the rich. He talks about the pride of the rich, the persecution by the rich, and pay withheld by the rich. James takes time to discuss the Christians who are tempted to retaliate with violent acts or words. His call is for Christians to respond to wisdom, faith, and patient endurance.

60. **1 Peter**

Author: Peter

Date Written: AD 60-63

Description: Peter writes to help Christians with the persecution taking place at the hands of the Romans. Rome is looking for a scapegoat and rather than fight with the Jews which were a larger religion, they opted to take it out on the small group of Christians.

61. **2 Peter**

Author: Peter

Date written: AD 66-67

Description: Peter challenges the first-century gnosticism of knowledge. He mentions these seven times in his letter. Since gnostics believed that bodily sins do not matter, Peter wanted to encourage believers to press on in the faith.

62. **1 John**

Author: John

Date written: AD 85-95

Description: John wanted to encourage the Christians to understand the true love of God. He warned against antichrists and lawlessness. John was afraid these believers might be tempted with the heresy of compromise advocated by false prophets while they maintained love for each other.

63. **2 John**

Author: John

Date written: AD 85-95

Description: John wanted to give sound teaching against the teaching of the secessionists who believed Jesus was a great prophet but not the supreme Lord in the flesh.



64. **3 John**

Author: John

Date written: AD 85–95

Description: John writes a letter of recommendation for his traveling missionary friend who needs to be welcomed by the local church while he is teaching in the area. John wants to continue to wage war against opposing influence to the Gospel message.

65. **Jude**

Author: Jude

Date written: AD 70–80

Description: Jude writes to oppose the false teachers whose sexual lifestyles are immoral and who are filled with arrogance. He is contending and fighting for the faith.

Prophecy

66. **Revelation**

Author: John

Date written: AD 90–96

Description: John writes to describe the ultimate revelation and victory of Jesus Christ and the culmination of history. His writing is dominated by three series of judgments with snapshots of worship in heaven. It's a revelation both *from Him* and *about Him*. Principally a revelation of Jesus as the coming warrior and King. In essence, this book says, "Jesus is going to win." John writes in logical rather than chronological sequence.



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX D

S.O.A.P.

What is S.O.A.P.?

- Scripture
- Observation
- Application
- Prayer

How to Use S.O.A.P.

Scripture

- Choose a section, passage, or chapter of Scripture to read (such as the daily *One Year Bible* portion). Write out the Scripture verse that spoke to you the most.

Observation

- What did you observe about the verse(s) that spoke to you? Write out why or how this spoke to you.

Application

- How can you apply the observation so that it affects your life today? Write out an action step you can take.

Prayer

- Write out a prayer to God based on what you just learned and ask Him to help you apply this truth in your life.

Men's Ministries recommends asking these additional questions.

- What adjustments should you make to help bring your life into alignment with what the passage says?
- What was read that was not understood?
- What made the author write in the way he did?
- Was there a problem the author was addressing or a behavior he was correcting?



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX E

BIBLE READING PLANS

See next three pages.



Plan 1

Commit to reading God's Word at least five days a week using this Bible Reading Plan. Keep a journal, using the S.O.A.P. method (**Appendix D**) as you read.

Week 1		Week 7	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to Ephesians	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 3:18-4:1
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 1:1-14	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 4:2-6
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 1:15-23	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 4:7-18
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 2:1-10	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to James
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 2:11-22	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> James 1:1-11
Week 2		Week 8	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 3:1-13	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> James 1:12-18
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 3:14-21	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> James 1:19-27
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 4:1-16	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> James 2:1-13
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 4:17-32	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> James 2:14-26
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 5:1-20	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> James 3:1-12
Week 3		Week 9	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 5:21-33	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> James 3:13-18
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 6:1-24	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> James 4:1-6
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to Philippians	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> James 4:7-12
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 1:1-19	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> James 4:13-17
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 1:20-30	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> James 5:1-6
Week 4		Week 10	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 2:1-11	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> James 5:7-12
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 2:12-18	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> James 5:13-20
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 2:19-30	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to 1,2,3 John
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 3:1-11	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 1:1-10
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 3:12-21	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 2:1-11
Week 5		Week 11	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 4:1-9	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 2:12-17
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 4:10-23	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 2:18-27
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to Colossians	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 2:28-3:10
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 1:1-14	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 3:11-24
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 1:15-23	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 4:1-6
Week 6		Week 12	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 1:24-29	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 4:7-21
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 2:1-7	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 5:1-12
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 2:8-23	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 5:13-21
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 3:1-11	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 John 1-13
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 3:12-17	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 John 1-15



Plan 2

Commit to reading God's Word at least five days a week using this Bible Reading Plan. Keep a journal, using the S.O.A.P. method (**Appendix D**) as you read.

Week 1		Week 7	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to John	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 8
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> John 1	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 9
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> John 2	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 10
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> John 3	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 11
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> John 4	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 12
Week 2		Week 8	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> John 5	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 13
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> John 6	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 14
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> John 7	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 15
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> John 8	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 16
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> John 9	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to 1 Corinthians
Week 3		Week 9	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> John 10	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 1
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> John 11	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 2
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> John 12	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 3
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> John 13	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 4
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> John 14	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 5
Week 4		Week 10	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> John 15	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 6
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> John 16	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 7
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> John 17	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 8
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> John 18	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 9
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> John 19	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 10
Week 5		Week 11	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> John 20	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 11
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> John 21	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 12
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to Romans	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 13
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 1	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 14
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 2	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 15
Week 6		Week 12	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 3	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 16
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 4	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Intro to 2 Peter
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 5	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Peter 1
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 6	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Peter 2
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 7	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Peter 3



Plan 3 (Thematic)

Commit to reading God's Word at least five days a week using this Bible Reading Plan. Keep a journal, using the S.O.A.P. method (**Appendix D**) as you read. Look for themes of **surrender, trust, and obedience.**

Week 1		Week 7	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 12	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 6-7
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 13-14	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 11-12
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 15-16	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 23-24
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 17-18	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 1-3
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 19-20	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Esther 4-7
Week 2		Week 2	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 21	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Kings 19
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 22-23	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Kings 2
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 24-25	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Isaiah 6
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 3-4	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Jeremiah 1
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 5-6	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Ezekiel 2-3
Week 3		Week 3	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 7-8	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Hosea 1-3
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 9-10	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 4
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 11	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Mark 1-3
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 12	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 1
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Exodus 13-14	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 26:6-13
Week 4		Week 4	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruth 1-2	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Mark 14:1-9
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruth 3-4	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke 7:36-50
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 1	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> John 12:1-8
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 2-3	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 26
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 7	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> John 10
Week 5		Week 5	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 9-10	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> John 13
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 15-16	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> John 18
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 17-18	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> John 19
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 19-20	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> John 20-21
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 21-23	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 1-2
Week 6		Week 6	
Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 24,26	Day 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 4,8
Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Samuel 31	Day 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 9-10
Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 1	Day 3	<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 13,15-16
Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 2-3	Day 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 19,21
Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Samuel 4-5	Day 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Acts 27-28



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX F FASTING TYPES

Four Kinds of Fasts

1. The complete fast is going without food for a definite period.
 - “Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD” (Judges 20:26).
 - Biblical fasts were held for three days, one week, one month, and even forty days.
2. The absolute fast is going without food or water and should be short.
 - Moses’ forty-day fast would kill anyone without supernatural intervention. Be sure to test the spirit that tries to talk you into a forty-day fast without water, because normally it is physically impossible.
3. The selective fast includes omitting certain foods for a certain period of time.
 - John the Baptist and Daniel with his three friends practiced selective fasts.
 - Selective fasts are ideal for people who have hypoglycemia or other health issues/needs.



4. A partial fast involves avoiding all or certain foods periodically.
 - Example: One may choose to fast a certain meal each day for a period of time.
 - A partial fast could be a rotational plan for fasting. Example: One may choose to fast during a certain day each week indefinitely.
5. A soul fast is based around a “theme” in your life or a specific situation.
 - This can be fasting something other than food to remind you of the thing that needs to be tempered or removed from your life or situation.
 - Examples: social media, electronic devices, sleeping in, television, etc.

Abuses of Fasting

1. Some separated the formal practice from internal devotion to God and repentance from sin, which it was supposed to represent (Isaiah 58:5; Joel 2:13).
2. Fasting was sometimes practiced to cover other sinful motives and/or practices (1 Kings 21:9-13; Isaiah 58:1-4).
3. Others fasted for economic rather than spiritual or ministry reasons (Isaiah 58:7).
4. Some hypocrites fasted for appearances rather than as a genuine act of worship to God (Matthew 6:16).
5. Fasting, probably for ascetic reasons, was demanded by some false teachers in the Early Church (1 Timothy 4:3).
6. Today, we have to avoid the temptation to fast in order to lose weight.
7. Don't fast to get God to do what you want Him to do.



Fasts in the Bible

1. The **Disciple's** Fast

- Fasting for freedom from addiction (Matthew 17:20–21, Mark 9:28–29). If we fast, we can break the besetting sins that limit a life of freedom in Christ.

2. The **Ezra** Fast

- Fasting to solve problems (Ezra 8:21–23). If we fast for a specific purpose, we may solve a debilitating problem.

3. The **Samuel** Fast

- Fasting to draw people to the Lord (1 Samuel 7:1–8). If we fast and pray for revival, God will pour Himself on His people.

4. The **Elijah** Fast

- Fasting to break crippling fears and other mental problems (1 Kings 19:2–18). Through fasting, God will show us how to overcome negative emotional and personal habits.

5. The **Widow's** Fast

- Fasting to provide for the needy (1 Kings 17:12). When we sacrifice our own physical needs, God enables us to focus on and provide for the needs of others.

6. The **Apostle Paul** Fast

- Fasting for insight and decision making (Acts. 9:9–19). If we fast to subject our will to God's, He will reveal His will to us.

7. The **Daniel** Fast

- Fasting for health and physical healing (Daniel 1:12–20). When we fast for physical well-being, God will touch our bodies and enrich our souls.



8. The **John the Baptist** Fast

- Fasting for an influential testimony (Matthew 3:4; Luke 1:15). If we fast for the influence of our testimonies, God will use us.

9. The **Esther** Fast

- Fasting for protection from the evil one (Esther 4:16). If we fast for protection and deliverance from Satan and his plans, God will deliver us from evil.

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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX G STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE FASTING

How you begin and conduct your fast will largely impact your experience and results. By following these seven basic steps to fasting, you will make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding. Make a habit of following these seven steps and writing down your objectives and commitments for each step every time you prepare to fast.

Step 1: Set your **objective**.

This is the place to set your goals for the time you will be in a fast. An example might be: For this fast, I have as an objective to draw closer to my Heavenly Father or I am believing God for a miracle in my family, etc.

Step 2: Make your **commitment**.

For Jesus, it was a matter of when believers would fast, not if (Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14-15). Making commitments ahead of time will help you sustain your fast when physical hunger and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it. Before you fast decide the following up front:

- How long will you fast (i.e. one meal, one day, one week, several weeks, forty days)? Beginners should start slowly, building up to longer fasts.
- What type of fast is God directing you to undertake (i.e., complete, selective, partial, or soul fast)? Determine and write down the details of your fast. Identify what you are fasting specifically and what your fast will look like each day.



- What physical or social activities will you restrict?
- How much time each day will you devote to prayer and God's Word?

Step 3: Prepare yourself **spiritually**.

The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin can hinder your prayers. Here are several things you can do to prepare your heart:

- Remember that God is your Father and He loves you and is for you.
- Confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance and accept God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Seek forgiveness from all you have offended and forgive all who have hurt you (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:4; 17:3-4).
- Make restitution as the Holy Spirit leads you.
- Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit according to His command in Ephesians 5:18 and His promise in 1 John 5:14-15.
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ as Lord and Master; refuse to obey your worldly nature (Romans 12:1-2).
- Meditate on the attributes of God: His love, sovereignty, power, wisdom, faithfulness, grace, and compassion (Psalm 48:9-10; 103:1-8; 11-13).
- Begin your time of fasting and prayer with an expectant heart (Hebrews 11:6).
- Do not underestimate spiritual opposition. Satan sometimes intensifies the natural battle between body and spirit (Galatians 5:16-17).

Step 4: Prepare yourself **physically**.

Begin omitting certain foods so that your body is ready for the change in your diet. For example, if you plan to fast caffeine or sugars, begin decreasing the amount of caffeinated drinks or sweets in your diet ahead of time to prevent headaches and other issues when you begin to fast. In addition, let your spouse and/or family know about your fast and prepare them for any changes you may be making in your meals, schedule, etc.



Step 5: Put yourself on a **schedule**.

Write down your plan for prayer and Bible reading for morning, noon, and night.

Step 6: End your fast **gradually**.

If you are fasting all foods or certain food groups, especially if your fast is for a longer time period, be careful not to return to your normal diet all at once when the fast ends. Gradually introduce various types of food back into your diet. Give your body time to get used to foods that you have not eaten for some time.

Step 7: Expect **results**.

Write down what you are believing God will do, reveal, or speak to you about during your fast. Pray over these seven steps and your commitment to fast. Believe God will do what only He can do!



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX H EFFECTIVE FASTING WORKSHEET

Step 1: Set your objective.

Step 2: Make your commitment.

Determine how long you will fast.

Determine the type of fast God wants you to undertake.



Determine what physical or social activities you will restrict.

Step 3: Prepare yourself spiritually.

Take time to pray through the prayers and Scriptures listed previously (**Appendix G**) in order to prepare spiritually for your fast.

Step 4: Prepare yourself physically.

Begin eliminating certain foods, sugars, caffeine, etc., in order to avoid physical withdrawal side effects. What do you need to begin eliminating?

Step 5: Put yourself on a schedule.

Determine how much time you will devote to prayer and God’s Word each day. Create a plan for morning, afternoon, and evening. When will you spend extra time in prayer and worship?

Step 6: End your fast gradually.



Step 7: Expect results.

Take time before your fast begins to write down your goals and expectations. What are you asking for and believing God will do in your life?



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

APPENDIX I GENEROSITY LADDER

How to Move to the Next Step in Generosity.

1. Identify where you are.
2. Identify where you want to go.

The **Giving Ladder** is your guide to taking your next step in giving.



This is someone who realizes that, although the tithe is the minimum the Bible asks, God has prompted and enabled them to give more for the kingdom.

This is someone who has seen the blessing that comes with giving and is ready to commit to giving the tithe – 10% – that Scripture (Malachi 3:10) asks of believers.

This is someone ready to be more intentional about their giving, has made an assessment and determined to start giving consistently.

This is someone ready to take the exciting first step toward worshipping and growing through giving.

Everyone has the opportunity to impact the kingdom through participating in God's work and seeing the growth that comes through giving.



TARGETED SERIES

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

DEVELOPED BY THE
Assemblies of God
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