

# I dare you.

Six practices to help you  
connect more deeply  
with God.



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connect more deeply  
with God.

# I dare you.

We've all done stupid things because of a dare...

Jumped off a roof.

Eaten a red hot chili pepper.

Asked a girl to a school dance.

No, just me?

**But sometimes a dare can be a good thing.** A dare can get us to try something we might otherwise not be willing to try. A dare can motivate us, stimulate us, and even inspire us.

Over the next six weeks, I hope you'll be inspired to try six practices designed to help you connect more deeply with God.

**I dare you is a churchwide initiative to help us become more intentional about our spiritual growth.**

The six-week initiative will combine weekly sermons, small group discussion guides, social media content, a series booklet, and weekly practices (we'll call them dares) designed to engage kids, teens, families, and adults in six key practices designed to connect us more deeply with God.

So... will you take the dare?

Will you join me in trying these six practices along with the rest of our church family for the next six weeks in order to experience God's peace, joy, hope, and strength more fully?

I hope so.

In fact, I dare you.

Because I am convinced that God is going to use these next six weeks to powerfully to transform you and me as we connect more deeply with God together.

**Pastor Doug**

**There is nothing more inspiring than a great story!**

Please use the QR code on the right to share your story of how these practices are helping you connect with God. Our team will select stories to share throughout this six-week I dare you initiative. Your story could inspire someone else to take the dare!





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**I dare you.**



# **Week 1**

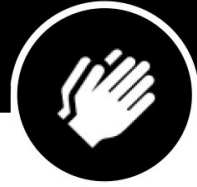
## **Prayer**

Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouse  
of God's infinite grace and power.

**- Dave Early**

# Week 1

## Prayer



### Sermon notes

Sunday, January 16

#### Matthew 6:9-13

[Jesus said] “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. <sup>9</sup> “This, then, is how you should pray:

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, <sup>10</sup> your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread. <sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*

<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

#### Sermon Notes

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# Week 1

## Prayer



**Sermon notes, continued**

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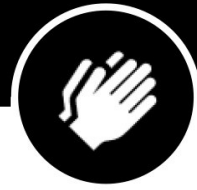
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# Week 1 Prayer



## Weekly Dares

### For everyone

Spend five minutes in prayer every day this week following these five simple steps:

- Worship God and thank Him for His love and His faithfulness
- Submit yourself to His will today
- Present your requests and needs to Him
- Sit quietly for one minute and let God speak to your heart
- Thank Him for His love and faithfulness

### For couples

Spend 2-3 minutes (one for each) praying for each other before you go to bed. If you're not married, you can do this on FaceTime or over the phone.

### For families

For children under 2 – Write down three traits you want your child to embody as an adult. Pray over your child at bedtime and ask God to help you nurture those traits in your child.

For children 3-9 – Ask them what makes them sad and what makes them happy. Then spend a few minutes praying that God would help them comfort others that are sad with the same things that comfort them.

If you have an older child, ask them what is coming in their next week that they are nervous or anxious about and then tell them you want to pray with them to invite God's presence into that moment or task.

## Double Dare

Try to spend 30 minutes this week in *Silence and Solitude*. This means turning off your phone and going somewhere you can be alone (your room, the bathroom, a park bench, the beach) and undisturbed with God.

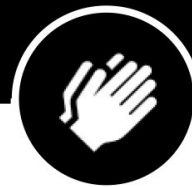
Begin by reading Psalm 100 slowly. Pause and take deep breaths and try to relax your body and your mind.

Spend the first few minutes praising God and thanking Him for His goodness. Then, allow the Lord to lead you to pray for people and situations in your life.

*Note: Don't get frustrated by the fact that your mind keeps wandering away from prayer. Part of this exercise is simply training your mind to pray when it tries to run away like a dog off leash.*



# Week 1 Prayer



## Daily Devotional Day 1

This week we are developing the habit of prayer. For many of us, prayer is something we do spontaneously and occasionally, but not intentionally. In other words, we pray when we happen to think about it, which is usually when we really need something from God.

The problem is this often reduces God to nothing more than a vending machine or an emergency room doctor, when in fact, God wants us to be in a real relationship with Him. Read Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and reflect on the relational nature of Jesus' words when He prays. Notice that Jesus opens His prayer with the words, "our Father." Not *my* Father, but *our* Father. This means that we can relate to God in prayer with the same kind of intimacy that Jesus experienced with God—after all, He's our father too!

**Question for reflection:** *When we read Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, one thing we notice is that the first half of the prayer contains words of praise ("hallowed – or holy- be your name) and surrender (your Kingdom come, your will be done). How much time do you usually spend in praise and surrender before you begin to present your requests to God? What might need to change?*

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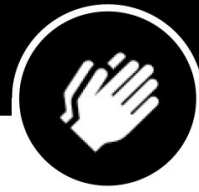
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**Don't forget to take this week's dare and spend five minutes in prayer today.**

# Week 1 Prayer



## Daily Devotional Day 2

Isn't it amazing that we can speak to the God of the universe anytime we want to? *Hebrews 4:16* encourages us with these words:

*Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

When you spend time in prayer today, be sure to thank God that He has given you access to Him anytime and anywhere.

**Question for reflection:** *Have you ever met a celebrity or an influential leader? What was your reaction? Why do you think we tend to get excited when we meet our favorite celebrity, but take the fact that we have 24-7 access to God for granted?*

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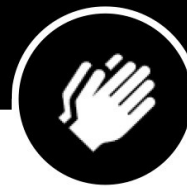
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**Don't forget to take this week's dare and spend five minutes in prayer today.**

# Week 1 Prayer



## Daily Devotional Day 3

I don't know about you, but when I wake up in the morning, my mind is instantly flooded by all the needs, concerns, and issues of the upcoming day. Whether it's a to-do list at work, an important meeting or presentation, an impending deadline or bill, or a relational conflict, it doesn't take more than a minute or two to get overwhelmed. It makes sense that Jesus often prayed early in the morning. Consider Mark 1:35...

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.*

This doesn't mean that we have to pray in the morning in order to pray like Jesus. But it does remind us that praying in the morning allows us to connect with God before we are bombarded by temptation, stress, worry, anxiety, and a million distractions.

Spending the first few minutes of your morning in prayer is a great way to invite God into those situations before they have a chance to overwhelm you. Tomorrow, try spending your five minutes in prayer before you do anything else.

**Question for reflection:** *What do you typically do first thing in the morning (besides using the restroom)? Why do you think you start your mornings that way? What do you think might change if you started with a few minutes of prayer before reaching for your phone or making your coffee?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare and spend five minutes in prayer today.**

# Week 1

## Prayer



### Discussion Guide

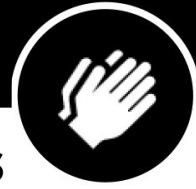
For groups, families, couples, or individuals

**Ice Breaker Question:** *What is the best Christmas gift you've ever received?*

1. What do you think keeps most people from praying on a regular basis? What about you personally—what obstacles prevent you from praying on a regular basis?
2. How would you describe the purpose of prayer?
3. In his book *How to Pray*, Pete Greig (founder of the 24-7 prayer movement) asks a probing question: Is prayer your steering wheel of your spare tire? How would you answer that question? Give an example.
4. Have you been practicing this week's dare? What has your experience been so far?
5. How do you feel about praying out loud? Why do you think this is so challenging for many people? How do you think developing the skill of praying out loud would benefit you and those around you?
6. Read Psalm 46:10. What do you think is the relationship between being still (quiet) and knowing God?
7. Read Luke 11:1. Luke describes Jesus praying in a certain (or specific) place. Do you have a specific "prayer spot?" Are there any specific locations (your room, the beach, a church building, etc.) that help you connect with God? Explain.

# Week 1

## Prayer



### Recommended Resources

For digging deeper

**How to Pray** by Pete Greig (book)

**A Praying Life** by Bob Miller (book)

**Prayer** by Richard Foster (book)

**A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracted World**

by Paul E. Miller (book)

**Prayer: The Timeless Secret of High-Impact Leaders**

by Dave Early (book)

<https://prayercourse.org/toolshed/> (web resource)

<https://practictheway.org/pray/week-one> (sermon)



# **Week 2**

## **Scripture**

The Word of God is the breath of God.

**- Woodrow Kroll**

# Week 2 Scripture



## Sermon notes

Sunday, January 23

### Luke 24:25-27

[Jesus] said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

### Luke 24:44-45

[Jesus] said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

### Sermon Notes

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# Week 2 Scripture



**If you are ignorant of God’s Word, you will always  
be ignorant of God’s will.**

- Billy Graham

## **Sermon notes, continued**

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# Week 2 Scripture



## Weekly Dares

### For everyone

Read the Gospel of John this week by reading 3 chapters each day. It's 21 chapters long, so if you do 3 chapters per day (even if you have to spread it out throughout the day), you'll read an entire book of the Bible in one week!

**Helpful Hack 1:** Download the Bible app on your phone or tablet if you don't already have it.

**Helpful Hack 2:** The team over at *Bible Project* has some really helpful videos designed to help you better understand the books of the Bible, including John. Go to YouTube and simply search for "Bible Project, John) and watch the short intro video for John before you begin reading this week.

### For couples

Read the Gospel of John this week by reading 3 chapters each day and then talk about it together over dinner or on the couch.

### For families

For children under 2 – Read Galatians 5:22–26 over your child at bedtime this week and pray that God would build these things in your child's life.

For children 3–9 – Read the Psalm that corresponds to today's date (for example, read Psalm 23 on January 23, etc.) and ask your child to listen for any words they don't know. Then, talk to them about that word or phrase.

If you have an older child, encourage them to read the Gospel of John along with you.

## Double Dare

Our friends over at Bible Project just completed an incredibly helpful podcast series called *The Paradigm* designed to help you read and better understand the structure and the purpose of the Bible.

Listen to the podcast series on iTunes, Spotify, or by going to [bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com) and clicking the "podcast" tab at the top.

*Note:* It's a 12-part series, so it might take you a few weeks to get through it all, depending on how much time you have in a week to listen to podcasts.

# Week 2

## Scripture



### Daily Devotional Day 1

Romans 12:2 encourages us to “... not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Our minds can become so cluttered with negative thoughts. Worry, anxiety, fear... These thoughts can also lead to feelings of rejection, unworthiness, hopelessness, and the list goes on. This is because when thoughts are allowed to come into the mind, they quickly travel to the heart. These negative thoughts and feelings are certainly not of God, so why do we choose to entertain them?\*

One of the reasons it’s important to read the Bible consistently is that it saturates our mind with truth and helps us replace those negative thoughts with God’s truth.

*\* from <https://devotableapp.com/daily-devotion-romans-12-2-renewing-your-mind/>*

**Question for reflection:** *How has the Bible changed your behavior by influencing your thinking?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare and read three chapters from the Gospel of John every day!**

# Week 2

## Scripture



### Daily Devotional Day 2

Theologian John Stott said, “In the Bible God gives us revelations of Himself which lead us to worship, promises of salvation which stimulate our faith, and commandments expressing His will which demand our obedience. This is the meaning of Christian discipleship.”

The Bible is God's self-revelation. It reveals who God is, who we are, and why we are here. Through Bible study we gain insights into God, human nature, and creation. Studying scripture equips, guides, and reveals how to live in life-giving ways that deepen our friendship with God and others. Both the Old and New Testaments encourage regular study, meditation, contemplation, and memorization of God's Word. The benefits of Bible study are directly related to how open, attentive, and obedient we are to what we read.\*

*\* from the Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun*

**Question for reflection:** *Why do you believe the Bible is crucial for Christian discipleship?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare and read three chapters from the Gospel of John every day!**

# Week 2 Scripture



## Daily Devotional Day 3

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is led by God's Spirit into the wilderness and tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). Jesus responds to each of Satan's temptations by quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures, including Deuteronomy 8:3, Psalm 91:11-12, Deuteronomy 6:13, and Isaiah 9:1-2.

This is significant, because throughout the four Gospels, Jesus repeatedly quotes from the Old Testament Scriptures, demonstrating that He (1) knew the Scriptures, and (2) considered them to have divine authority. In fact, scholars estimate that over one-tenth of Jesus' recorded New Testament words were taken from the Old Testament. In the four Gospels, 180 of the 1,800 verses that report His discourses are either Old Testament quotes or Old Testament allusions.\*

As followers of Jesus, we believe the Bible has authority because Jesus believed it has authority and treated it as such.

\* from [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=second\\_person](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=second_person)

**Question for reflection:** *What do you believe about the Bible? Do you believe it is "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16)? If so, why?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare and read three chapters from the Gospel of John every day!**

# Week 2

## Scripture



### Discussion Guide

For groups, families, couples, or individuals

**Ice Breaker Question:** *Do you have a favorite Bible story? If so, what is it and why is it your favorite?*

1. What role did the Bible play in your earliest church experiences and how do you think that shaped you?
2. What does your practice of scripture-reading look like right now? How did you get to that point?
3. What difficulties do you face when it comes to the Bible (fear, confusion, boredom, skepticism, etc.)?
4. Did you practice this week's dare? What has your experience been so far?
5. For centuries, Scripture wasn't read privately by individuals, it was read out loud in the context of a church community. Have someone in the group read the entire book of Philippians (or have four different people each read one chapter) out loud while the rest of the group listens.

After the reading, pause for a couple of minutes to reflect on what you heard. Then, discuss the experience as a group. What was it like? What do you remember from the reading? Did anything stick out to you as you listened?

# Week 2

## Scripture



### Recommended Resources

For digging deeper

**How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth** by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart (book)

**How To Read the Bible Book by Book** by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart (book)

**Surprised by Scripture** by NT Wright (book)

**Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes** by E. Randolph Richards

**What the Bible is All About** by Dr. Henrietta Mears (book)

**Bibleproject.com** (web resources)

**Bibleproject.com/podcast/series/paradigm** (podcast series)



# **Week 3**

## **Sabbath**

Capacity. You have one. Stop apologizing for that. It's put there so you rest and ask for help. Choose to live with both—Sabbath and a team, because we were built to need rest and need God and need each other. The original sin was people trying to act like and be like God. Let's be human. When will you rest this week? When will you ask for help?

**- Jeannie Allen**

# Week 3

## Sabbath



### Sermon notes

Sunday, January 30

#### **Genesis 2:1-2**

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.  
<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

#### **Exodus 20:8-11**

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

#### **Deuteronomy 5:12-15**

Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. <sup>13</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>14</sup> but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. <sup>15</sup> Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

#### **Mark 2:23-28**

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" <sup>25</sup> He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? <sup>26</sup> In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."



# Week 3 Sabbath



**The Sabbath is a day blessed by God  
and set aside for rest and worship.**

- practicingtheway.com

## **Sermon notes**

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# Week 3 Sabbath



## Weekly Dares

### **For everyone**

Practice a four-hour Sabbath sometime this week (see next page for details).

### **For couples**

Practice a four-hour Sabbath *together* this week (see next page for details).

### **For families**

For children under 2 – Find some time alone this week and sit down with a journal. Write a brief prayer to God about the joy and frustration of parenting in this season.

For children 3-9 – Ask your child what are some things that help them feel close to God (example may include going to the beach, playing at the park, or getting prayed for at night). Make a list and then do one or two of those things this week.

If you have an older child, encourage them try to spend an entire day with no electronics (iPad, phone, games, TV, etc.) this week. Then discuss the experience with them.

## **Double Dare**

Practice a full day (sundown the first day to sundown the next day) Sabbath this week (see next page for details).

# Week 3

## Sabbath



### Suggestions for practicing a Sabbath\*:

**Step 1:** Set aside a specific time for your Sabbath.

**Step 2:** Pick a ritual to clearly begin your Sabbath. This could include lighting a candle, taking communion, reading a Psalm, or sharing a meal.

**Step 3:** Spend the entire time in rest and worship. Fill your time with activities that are life-giving for your soul. Begin to transition from entertainment, TV, social media, shopping, and going “out,” to activities that deeply connect you to Jesus and His rest. These can include reading, walking, taking a nap, eating a good meal, spending time with family and friends, praying, reading the Bible, taking your dog to the park, and even making love (if you’re married).

**Step 4:** Pick a ritual to clearly end your Sabbath. This could include putting out the candle, taking communion, reading a Psalm, or celebrating with a meal.

This is not a “to do” list: there are no “to do”s on Sabbath! No oughts or shoulds. This is just a list of activities many people find restful and restorative.

*\* adapted from practicingtheway.org*

### Notes

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# Week 3 Sabbath



## Daily Devotional Day 1

We live in a cultural moment of restlessness. The unsatisfied desires of our human condition are exacerbated by the barrage of digital marketing from a consumption-oriented, consumer-driven economy. We have multi-billion dollar, multi-national industries hovering over our minds – via our devices – in an attempt to monetize our restlessness. But rest doesn't come from buying a product; it comes from Sabbath, a word that literally means stopping. The Sabbath is an entire day set aside to stop – stop working, stop wanting, stop worrying, etc.—and to simply rest in God's presence.\*

Most followers of Jesus (at least, in the modern, Western world) no longer practice Sabbath. This means many of us are missing out on one of the most life-giving practices of the way of Jesus, and arguably, one of the most important for our cultural moment.

Jesus made an interesting statement in Mark 2:27: The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Is it possible that we should think of the Sabbath not in terms of a command, but rather as a gift? Is it possible that God, in His infinite wisdom and love for us, offers us the practice of Sabbath as a gift intended for our flourishing? May we discover joy and peace in stopping, resting, and delighting in Him.

\* adapted from <https://practictheway.org>

**Question for reflection:** *Before this week, did you think of Sabbath as a command or a gift? In what ways do you think Sabbath could be a gift in your own life?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to set aside time to practice Sabbath sometime this week.**

# Week 3 Sabbath



## Daily Devotional Day 2

Most Protestant Christians feel uncomfortable with the idea of rituals. They remind us of Catholicism or even pagan cultic practices. But the people of God have historically been shaped by rituals and practices designed to focus our attention, resist temptation, and rehearse spiritual truth. Even in our modern Christian experience, we continue such practices (think of baptism, communion, wedding ceremonies, etc.).

In addition to these formal, recognizable rituals, we all have dozens of mini-rituals we engage in every day, such as brushing our teeth, washing our hands, and our consistent commute to work or school.

Whoever we are, whatever we believe, wherever we live, and whatever our consumer preferences may be, we spend our days doing things—we live in routines formed by habits and practices. We move in patterns that we have set overtime, day by day. These habits and practices shape our loves, our desires, and ultimately who we are and what we worship.\*

Rituals are not just things like communion or rain dances. They are things like a glass of wine in the evening, Sunday afternoon football, Saturday afternoon shopping trips, or even reaching for our phone first thing in the morning. Sabbath can be viewed as a counter-ritual—a practice designed to undo the force of all our other rituals in order to focus our love and attention towards God.

\* from Liturgy of the Ordinary by Tish Harrison Warren

**Question for reflection:** *How do you think practicing the Sabbath can function as a counter-ritual? In other words, what other tendencies and habits are being undone through the practice of Sabbath?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to set aside time to practice Sabbath sometime this week.**

# Week 3

## Sabbath



### Daily Devotional Day 3

Have you ever experienced a phantom phone vibration? That sensation that makes you feel as if your phone is buzzing, only to have you reach for it and realize it was just in your head? Or have you ever experienced the compulsory need to reach for your phone, perhaps in a grocery store line, while your friend has gone to the restroom, or simply to avoid the discomfort of silence? What about that moment when you are met with an uncomfortable feeling like grief or anger or sadness, and you immediately pick up your phone, almost subconsciously realizing that it's way easier to spend a few minutes scrolling than it is to deal with your feelings?

There is no use sugarcoating it: whether mild or severe, almost all of us suffer from some degree of digital dependence. For you, it might be a feeling of anxiety when your phone dies and a loved one can't reach you, or a deep sense of "fomo" (fear of missing out) when you see a friend's Instagram story (are they having fun without me?), or the obvious dents that Netflix or Facebook make in your productivity.

The demands of our phones are non-stop: another text, another email, another task, another post, another tweet, another invite, another buzz. And yet, Sabbath is a day set aside to stop, a day to say "no" to the demands of our world and to say "yes" to rest in God and His good world.

Now, there isn't a command in the scriptures prohibiting technology on the Sabbath. Jesus didn't have a smart phone, nor did His followers. No one can put "thus saith the Lord" before a command about technology. But what if behind the buzz of our phones and the demands of technology, there was an invitation to greater rest, greater freedom, and greater peace? For this week's Practice, we invite you to consider the role technology plays in your life and to utilize Sabbath as a day to resist its hold.\*

\* adapted from <https://practicingtheway.org/rest/part-five>

**Question for reflection:** *How would you describe your relationship with technology? What benefits could be found in limiting your use of technology on the Sabbath? Use the page on the left if necessary.*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to set aside time to practice Sabbath sometime this week.**

# Week 3

## Sabbath



### Discussion Guide

For groups, families, couples, or individuals

**Ice Breaker Question:** *If you had one day to do whatever you wanted, where would you go and what would you do?*

1. Is Sabbath already a part of your life, or not? If yes, to what extent?
2. What has been (or do you sense will be) your greatest obstacle in practicing Sabbath?
3. Is the practice of Sabbath new to you? Was it part of your upbringing? Did you grow up with any kind of negative understanding about it? Explain.
4. How does the idea of practicing Sabbath make you feel? Nervous about Sabbath being too legalistic? Skeptical about working this into your schedule? Full of anticipation for rest? Something entirely different?
5. In what ways do you see our culture pushing back against a life of rest?
6. Have someone read Luke 6:6-11. What does this story tell us about the way in which the Pharisees viewed the Sabbath?
7. Have someone read Mark 2:27. What do you think that Jesus meant when He said “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath?”

# Week 3

## Sabbath



### Recommended Resources

For digging deeper

**The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry** by John Mark Comer (book)

**Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now**  
by Walter Brueggemann (book)

**Subversive Sabbath** by AJ Swoboda (book)

**Garden City** by John Mark Comer (book)

**<https://practictheway.org/teaching/rest-for-your-soul>**  
(sermon)

**<https://practictheway.org/teaching/sabbath-as-rhythm>**  
(sermon)

**<https://practictheway.org/teaching/stop-rest-delight-worship>** (sermon)





# Week 4

## Service

But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

**-Jesus (Luke 22:26-27 ESV)**

# Week 4

## Service



### Sermon notes

Sunday, February 6

#### John 2:1-11

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,<sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.<sup>3</sup> When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

<sup>4</sup> "Woman,\* why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."

<sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

<sup>6</sup> Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.<sup>8</sup> Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so,<sup>9</sup> and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside<sup>10</sup> and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

<sup>11</sup> What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

*\* NIV note: The Greek word for "Woman" here does not denote any disrespect.*

#### Sermon Notes

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# Week 4 Service



## Weekly Dares

### For everyone

Choose a chore at home (or at work) that no one wants to do and take it on for the week.

### For couples

Take on a chore or household responsibility that usually belongs to your spouse. Do it for the week with a great attitude (and do it really well).

### For families

For children under 2 – Think of something that someone has done for you that has made your parenting journey a little easier (brought you a meal, bought you a coffee, watched your child for an afternoon, etc.). Do that for another family with young children.

For children 3-9 – Do the same task as above, but have your child contribute by coloring or drawing something to send with the gift.

Finally, if you have an older child, encourage them to take on a chore for the week that usually belongs to someone else.

## Double Dare

Gather up your small group (or family or a group of friends) and serve at either (1) one of Ventura Missionary Church's partner ministries\* or (2) a neighbor's home.

*\* Use the QR code below to browse VMC's partner ministries or to contact our Missions and Outreach specialist.*



*Note: To scan the QR code, simply open the camera app on your smartphone or tablet and point it at the image above.*

# Week 4

## Service



### Daily Devotional Day 1

In John 13, Jesus does something shocking: he takes off His outer garment, gets down on His knees, and proceeds to wash His disciples' feet.

While washing someone else's feet was common in the ancient world, it was a task reserved for the lowest household slave—certainly not for a respected spiritual leader like Jesus. Feet were typically dirty, smelly, and caked with mud and dirt and... well you get the idea. Yet Jesus willingly, voluntarily, and humbly chose to set a powerful example for His disciples and for us.

After He got up from washing their feet, Jesus said these words:

*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.*

As followers of Jesus, we are invited to live like Jesus, love like Jesus, and serve like Jesus.

**Question for reflection:** *Jesus instructed His disciples to "do as I have done for you." Since foot-washing isn't really a thing in our modern context, what would be an equivalent way for us to follow Jesus' example?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to take on a chore (one you don't like) and do it for the week.**

# Week 4

## Service



### Daily Devotional Day 2

We've all heard of a *pecking order*. Every community, social group, organization, company, school yard and family has a pecking order. Human nature dictates that there are those who are served and those who do the serving. In the old days, masters had servants who did a lot of menial work for them. And in some parts of the world this is still the case.\*

In Mark 9:33–36, Jesus' disciples begin to argue about which one of them was at the top of the pecking order. Jesus calls them together and corrects this attitude by telling them, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."

Chances are, you find yourself in various pecking orders in your family, your workplace, your community, and your home. You might be at the top of the hierarchy in one place (for example, your home), but somewhere in the middle at work. Or you may feel like you always seem to be at the bottom of the social order no matter where you go. Regardless of your current position, our society seems to constantly encourage us to move up the ladder, to be in charge, to be a boss, to call the shots. But is that what Jesus encouraged? Is that how Jesus lived? The picture we get of Jesus in the Gospels is one that emphasizes His humility and His servanthood. Yes, He had great power, but He didn't use it for his own advantage to move up the ladder.

Following Jesus means becoming like Jesus. That means following Jesus means being a lot more like a servant than a boss, regardless of your position in the pecking order.

*\* adapted from "Serving Others: Morning Devotions" by Chris Witts ([hope1032.com.au/stories/faith/devotions/2021/serving-others/](http://hope1032.com.au/stories/faith/devotions/2021/serving-others/))*

**Question for reflection:** *Where in the pecking order do you fit at home? At school? At work? How might you serve the people below you and above you in those places?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to take on a chore (one you don't like) and do it for the week.**

# Week 4

## Service



### Daily Devotional Day 3

In Philippians 2:3-5, the Apostle Paul gives some challenging instructions:

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. <sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus...*

Paul follows up his instructions with a poem that describes the humble, sacrificial nature of Jesus (you can read the whole thing in Philippians 2:6-11). In the poem, Paul points out that Jesus willingly allowed Himself to be tortured and killed on our behalf. Listen to what Paul says in verse 8:

*[Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

Paul emphasizes the fact that Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate act of sacrifice and service.

**Question for reflection:** *Have you ever considered Jesus' death an act of service? How does that impact your understanding of what it means to serve others as an expression of your faith in Jesus?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to take on a chore (one you don't like) and do it for the week.**

# Week 4

## Service



### Discussion Guide

For groups, families, couples, or individuals

**Ice Breaker Question:** *What was your least favorite chore when you were growing up?*

1. What are some of the ways you already serve consistently (at work, at home, etc.)?
2. Do you think you have room to grow in this area? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever been guilty of serving with the wrong attitude (resentment, frustration, anger, self-promotion, desire to be recognized, false humility, etc.)? Explain.
4. Who in your life do you have a hard time serving? Why?
5. Read John 13:1-17 as a group. What surprises you about this story? How do you think you would have reacted if you were one of the disciples?
6. Read Philippians 2:1-11 together. What stands out to you as you read that passage? What is surprising? What is challenging?
7. How are you practicing the dare this week? Has it been easy or difficult? Explain.



# Week 4

## Service



### Recommended Resources

For digging deeper

**Celebration of Discipline** by Richard Foster

**Roaring Lambs** by Bob Briner

**The Sacred Year** by Michael Yankoski

**Strong and Weak** by Andy Crouch

**<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/topics/serving/>**  
(web resources)

**Jesus and Privilege**, Jon Tyson (sermon)\*

\* search YouTube for Jon Tyson, Jesus and Privilege



# **Week 5**

## **Physical Body**

Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body – which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty, and our energy.

**- C.S. Lewis**

# Week 5

## Physical Body



### Sermon notes

Sunday, February 13

#### 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup>You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup>By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup>Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” <sup>17</sup>But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

<sup>18</sup>Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. <sup>19</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup>you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

#### Sermon Notes

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# Week 5

## Physical Body



**In the Scriptures we find that the body is  
not incidental to our faith, but integral to our worship.**

- Liturgy of the Ordinary by Tish Harrison Warren

### Sermon notes, continued

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# Week 5

## Physical Body



### Weekly Dares

#### For everyone

Feel free to choose one or more of the following (or try all four!).

1. Get at least 8 hours of sleep every night this week.
2. Eliminate all fast food from your diet this week.
3. Get at least 20 minutes of exercise (walking counts) every day this week.
4. Be intentional about reducing your screen time (TV, phone, etc.) this week.

#### For couples

Go on a walk together three times this week and try preparing a healthy meal together at least once this week.

#### For families

For children under 2 – Introduce a new vegetable this week.

For children 3-9 – Take your child to the grocery store or Farmer's Market and allow them to pick a new vegetable to try this week.

If you have an older child, invite them to help you prepare one of the meals this week (including helping you shop for the ingredients).

### Double Dare

Fast from one meal this week as a way of reclaiming control over the demands of your physical body. (find more information about fasting here: <https://practicingtheway.org/practices/fasting> or by scanning the QR code below).



*Note: To scan the QR code, simply open the camera app on your smartphone or tablet and point it at the image above.*

# Week 5 Physical Body



## Daily Devotional Day 1

In Romans 12, the Apostle Paul shifts the direction of his letter and inserts the word “therefore” to indicate this shift. Up to that point in the letter, Paul had written 11 chapters about all the ways in which God’s grace and mercy have been on display throughout history. In Romans 12:1, Paul begins to explain how we should respond to God’s grace and mercy, by saying these words:

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

It’s interesting that Paul’s instructions are to “offer our bodies” as a living sacrifice as the appropriate response to God’s mercy. He doesn’t say, “offer your soul” or “offer your thoughts” or “offer your attitude,” he specifically says to offer our bodies. This means that our bodies matter to God, and what we do with our bodies matters to God. In other words, our bodies are instruments of worship.

**Question for reflection:** *What do you think it means to offer your body as a living sacrifice to God? What is one way you can offer your body to God today?*

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**Don’t forget to take this week’s dares to (1) sleep at least 8 hours, (2) eliminate fast food, (3) exercise, and (4) reduce screen time.**

# Week 5

## Physical Body



### Daily Devotional Day 2

The Psalms are poetic expressions of a wide range of human emotions, including praise, lament, anger, frustration, confusion, disappointment, worship, awe, and devotion. In Psalm 139, the author (the heading attributes this Psalm to David) reflects on God's creative work, saying:

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

We often neglect to consider the care that God took in forming our bodies, but David can't help but respond in awe at the beautiful care God takes in creating life. When was the last time you paused and considered the loving care God took when creating your body? When was the last time you rejoiced for your body?

Many times, instead of rejoicing, we take it for granted. Or worse, we wish for better.\*

We wish our teeth were straighter, our hair was thicker, our skin was smoother, our legs were thinner, our shoulders were more muscular. But perhaps if we spent more time rejoicing for the gift of our bodies, we'd be more intentional about using what we've been given for God's glory!

*\* adapted from "Treat Your Body Like a Temple" by Cecily Joy (<https://thegracetogrow.com/treat-your-body-like-a-temple/>)*

**Question for reflection:** *How can you give God glory for your body today? How can you use your body for God's glory today?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dares to (1) sleep at least 8 hours, (2) eliminate fast food, (3) exercise, and (4) reduce screen time.**

# Week 5

## Physical Body



### Daily Devotional Day 3

Every Easter, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. In fact, hopefully we celebrate that incredible truth much more often than just once a year at Easter. It is, after all, the central claim of the Christian faith.

In his letter to the Corinthian church, Paul devotes a large section of his letter to discussing Jesus' resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15). He even goes so far as to give the names of some of the eyewitnesses who had personal interactions with Jesus after His resurrection. This was Paul's way of saying, "if you don't believe me, go talk to Peter, go talk to Andrew, go talk to James—they were there, they saw Him, and they can verify."

Within that section of 1 Corinthians, Paul makes a fascinating claim about the implications of Jesus' resurrection. He says that, just as Jesus experienced a physical resurrection, all believers will experience a physical resurrection as well. In fact, he calls Jesus' resurrection the *firstfruits*, meaning that His resurrection is the pattern for our future resurrection. This means that our eternal destiny is not as a disembodied soul floating around in heaven, we're actually going to get a renewed resurrected body that—according to 1 Corinthians 15:42–44—will be imperishable, glorified, powerful, and incorruptible.

That means no more sickness, no more disease, no more disabilities, no more aches and pains! That is one of the things we look forward to when Christ returns—a renewed, resurrected body!

**Question for reflection:** *What difference does it make in your life today knowing that the fulfillment of the promise of God is the resurrection and that you will be raised not just as a spirit, but also with a body?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dares to (1) sleep at least 8 hours, (2) eliminate fast food, (3) exercise, and (4) reduce screen time.**



# Week 5

## Physical Body



### Discussion Guide

For groups, families, couples, or individuals

**Ice Breaker Question:** *What is your favorite food?*

1. Have you ever heard a sermon on the importance of caring for your physical body before? What stood out to you about this week's sermon?
2. What is your biggest challenge when it comes to your physical health?
3. One of the early heresies that made its way into the church was something called *Gnosticism*, which taught (among other things) that the material and the spiritual were in direct opposition and therefore our physical body is bad. Do you think that kind of faulty thinking has influenced the way Christians think about the importance of the physical body today? If so, how?
4. On the other side of the importance of caring for our physical bodies is the tendency to worship our body. In other words, some people can get so caught up in physical health, nutrition, body shape, and working out that they begin to worship their body instead of using their body to worship God. How have you seen this phenomenon in our American culture?
5. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul instructs Christians to honor the Lord with our bodies. What do you think he means?
6. Christians often say that *all sin is sin*, meaning that there are no categories for sin—it's all equally destructive. Do you think some sin is worse than others? Read 1 Corinthians 6:18 and discuss your answer.

# Week 5

## Physical Body



### Recommended Resources

For digging deeper

**What God Has to Say about Our Bodies: How the Gospel Is Good News for Our Physical Selves** by Sam Allberry

**Wonderfully Made** by John W. Kleinig

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/created-body-soul/>  
(article)

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/gospelbound/good-news-for-our-bodies/> (podcast)

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/tgc-podcast/christians-care-physical-fitness/> (podcast)



# **Week 6**

## **Worship**

The inner essence of worship is to know God truly and then respond from the heart to that knowledge by valuing God, treasuring God, prizing God, enjoying God, being satisfied with God above all earthly things. And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in demonstrable acts of praise from the lips and demonstrable acts of love in serving others for the sake of Christ.

**– John Piper**

# Week 6

## Worship



### Sermon notes

Sunday, February 20

#### Colossians 3:15-17

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

#### Sermon Notes

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# **Week 6**

## **Worship**



**Worship changes the worshiper into  
the image of the One worshiped.**

- Jack Hayford

### **Sermon notes, continued**

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# Week 6 Worship



## Weekly Dares

### **For everyone**

Play the “Ventura Missionary Worship” playlist (or any worship playlist you prefer) on Spotify in the car this week. If you don’t have Spotify, you can search for worship playlists on YouTube or Apple Music.

*Note: Yes, worship is much more than music, but it’s fascinating how what we listen to shapes our thoughts and our mood. Listening to worship music won’t revolutionize your worship life, but it will quietly create space for your heart and mind to focus on truths about God.*

### **For couples**

Play the “Ventura Missionary Worship” playlist on Spotify in your home this week. If you don’t have Spotify, you can search for worship playlists on YouTube or Apple Music.

### **For families**

For children under 2 – Search for *Kids Worship Songs* on Spotify or Apple Music and select a playlist to use in the car this week.

For children 3-9 – Search for *Kids Worship Songs* on Spotify or Apple Music and select a playlist to use in the car this week. On the way to school, talk to your child about the lyrics to the songs you are listening to.

If you have an older child, invite them to find a worship playlist they want to listen to in the car this week.

## Double Dare

Read Psalm 95:1-7 and reflect on it. Then, try writing your own Psalm of praise as an expression of worship to God. Don’t worry, it doesn’t have to rhyme or follow any specific format, just write what comes to your mind as your worship God.

# Week 6 Worship



## Daily Devotional Day 1

We've already considered Romans 12:1 in last week's study, but this week, let's reflect on the fundamental formula for worship contained in this passage. The Apostle Paul writes: *In view of God's mercy... offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship (Romans 12:1).*

Did you catch the formula? According to Paul, worship starts with a recognition of God's mercy (think of the phrase *God's mercy* as a way of expressing the sum total of God's goodness). Once we recognize God's incredible goodness, our natural response should be to offer our entire life to Him as an expression of thanksgiving and worship.

That means that worship is a response. Worship is like a child opening an especially awesome gift on Christmas morning that causes their whole self to respond and react in joy and thankfulness.

*Question for reflection: When was the last time you sat and considered God's goodness in a way that caused you to respond and react in worship?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to listen to worship music in the car all week.**

# Week 6 Worship



## Daily Devotional Day 2

In John 15:5, Jesus made a bold statement:

*Apart from me you can do nothing.*

His words were not designed to boost His own ego, but to invite all of us into a partnership with Him. And it is in that partnership that we find one of the greatest paradoxes of all. If we give up our plans, surrender our ambition and throw out the desire to make a name for ourselves, He will use us to do far, far more than we ever could accomplish on our own.\*

Success — the sort that lasts, that transforms the world and satisfies us to the very depths of our souls — is found when we submit all we have to God.

I'll say it again: success is found when we submit all we have to God.

*\* from <https://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2015/09/how-to-be-the-last-one-standing-by-being-the-first-one-kneeling>*

*Question for reflection: What areas of your life am you still holding onto and living for yourself? What areas of your life do you keep God out of? What would it look like to give Him access to every area of your life and live in partnership with Him?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to listen to worship music in the car all week.**



# Week 6 Worship



## Daily Devotional Day 3

Typically, we associate worship with singing at church. Even this week's dares have to do with worship music. But Scripture makes it clear that worship is about much more than singing. In fact, according to the Bible, worship involves pretty much everything we do.

Consider Colossians 3:17, which reminds us: *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Or, reflect on 1 Corinthians 10:31, which encourages us with these words: *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

That means that the quality of our work (at our jobs or at home or at school or on the sports field) can be an expression of worship. It means that the way we treat people (family, friends, strangers, enemies) is an expression of worship to God. It means that the way we take care of our bodies (whether or not I regularly brush our teeth, what food we eat) is an expression of worship. *Everything* we do is an expression of worship and so everything we do matters to God.

**Question for reflection:** *What are some of the areas of your life that you don't usually associate with worship? How can you begin to think about these areas of your life in a way that expresses worship to God?*

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**Don't forget to take this week's dare to listen  
to worship music in the car all week.**

# Week 6 Worship



## Discussion Guide

For groups, families, couples, or individuals

*Ice Breaker Question: What is something you are passionate about?*

1. Did you take this week's dare? What has been your experience?
2. How would you define worship?
3. Have someone in the group read Romans 11:33–36. That word *glory* literally means heaviness or weightiness. What do you think it means for something to have glory (weight) in your life?
4. Have someone in the group read Romans 1:21–25. What are some ways that we, or others, exchange the glory of God for the glory of created things? Why do you think we do this? What role do you think our desires and our fears play in what does and does not take center stage in our lives?
5. C.S. Lewis famously said that “All of our problems come from **disordered loves**. When we inquire why a sin was committed we can be assured it is because one has loved that which is inferior to that which is superior. Your loving something as if it were 1st or 2nd when it should be 3rd or 4th, it is sin. All disordered loves lead to brokenness and pain because they violate the very reality of the purpose of creation.”  
  
What are some things that have become, or threaten to become, disordered loves in your life? In other words, what things are you tempted to love more than God?
6. Have someone in the group read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18. What do you think it means to rejoice always? Is that even possible? Why or why not?

# Week 6 Worship



## Recommended Resources

For digging deeper

**You Are What You Love** by James K. A. Smith

**Liturgy of the Ordinary** by Tish Harrison Warren

**Facedown** by Matt Redman,

**Worship** by AW Tozer

**Worship is a Verb** by Robert E. Webber

**Unceasing Worship** by Harold Best

**<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/six-definitions-of-worship/>** (article)

**<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-is-worship/>**  
(article)



