

habits of grace

Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines
October 15th-December 10th

Chapters 1-3

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God has given us “means of grace”—habits and practices through which we experience his presence and power.

Also, known as the *spiritual disciplines*.

- These are Christian practices that are rooted in Scripture (many times exemplified by Jesus himself) and church history that aim to help a person experience God and grow spiritually.

Mathis groups these into three:

1. **Hearing God’s voice** (Word)
2. **Having God’s ear** (Prayer)
3. **Belonging to His body** (Fellowship)

Chapters 1–3 focus on the first: **Hearing His Voice through Scripture.**

I. Shape Your Life with the Words of Life

Why Scripture is Central

God has spoken.

- In creation (Gen. 1; Ps. 19:1-2)
- In Jesus (Jn. 1:1-2, 14)
- In the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16)

The Bible is God’s specific word to us, without which we only have the “God of the philosophers.”

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Preaching the Gospel to Yourself

“Hearing the word of the cross, and preaching it to ourselves, is the central strategy for sinners in the fight for joy.”

~John Piper

Scripture is not only for information, but for transformation (Rom. 10:17).

II. Read for Breadth, Study for Depth

Breadth (Wide Reading)

Read broadly to understand the grand story of Scripture.

- You become familiar with the voice of God in his plan for salvation.

Depth (Focused Study)

Study carefully to dig into meaning and detail.

- You are looking for the deep insights for a mature faith.

Balance of Both

We need both breadth and depth.

- Breadth keeps us from distortion; depth keeps us from shallowness.
- Both are needed for healthy growth.

Transformation

Bible reading has a transformative effect (Rom. 12:2).

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III. Warm Yourself at the Fire of Meditation

What Meditation Is

Not emptying the mind but filling it with God's truth.

Moves from merely grasping information to deep knowledge that is lived out.

The Place of Meditation

- "Begin with reading or hearing. Go on with meditation; end in prayer."
(William Bridge, "The Work and the Way of Meditation")
- "The word feedeth meditation, and meditation feedeth prayer. . . .
Meditation must follow hearing and precede prayer. . . . What we take in by
the word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer." (Thomas Manton,
Complete Works, vol. 17)
- "The reason we come away so cold from reading the word is, because we do
not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation." (Thomas Watson, "How We
May Read the Scriptures with Most Spiritual Profit," dir. 8)
- "The great reason why our prayers are ineffectual, is because we do not
meditate before them." (William Bates, "On Divine Meditation," chap. 4)

Practical Suggestions

- Pause after reading—linger over a verse or phrase.
- Ask: What does this teach about God? About me? About Christ?
- Journal your thoughts.

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Concluding thoughts

- We need to hear God's voice daily (i.e., day and night).
- Preach the gospel to yourself.
- Balance breadth + depth.
- Interact with God's Word for transformation.
- The habits are means, not ends—knowledge of Christ is the ultimate end.