



**Connect Group  
Study Booklet  
Spring 2022**



# Disciplines of the Disciple: Lesson 1 - Read Your Bible

## Psalms 1 (Author's Translation)

1. **Blessed is the man who has not walked in the advice of the wicked, or in the way of sinners he has not stood, or in the seat of mockers he has not sat.**
2. **But indeed in the Torah of the LORD is his pleasure, and in His Torah he meditates day and night.**
3. **For he will be like a tree planted by streams of water which his fruit he will give in his time. Also, his leaf will not fall and all that he does will be successful.**
4. **Not so for the wicked, but indeed are like chaff that the wind scatters.**
5. **Therefore the wicked will not arise in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.**
6. **For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, and the way of the wicked will perish.**

## 1) The Foundation of the Blessed

The first psalm serves as a preamble to the rest of the book. Like an introductory paragraph, Psalms 1 immediately tells the readers what to expect from the rest of the psalms. Mainly, the difference between the righteous and wicked and their destinies. This psalm is categorized as a wisdom psalm (see Psalms 32, 34, and 39 for other examples). As wisdom literature, its first fundamental principle is clearly expressed in Proverbs 1:7, **“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise**

**wisdom and instruction.”** This polarity between the wise and the foolish is the central theme of wisdom literature.

Who is blessed? The psalm opens up with what the blessed man is not involved in. He does not walk in the counsel or advice of the wicked. The ideas of the wicked do not guide the steps of the blessed man. He simply doesn't entertain their bad advice, regardless of how "good" it might seem. Nor does the blessed stand in the way of sinners. *Chata'im*, translated as sinners, literally means "those who miss" particularly a goal or target. They are going the wrong way and won't hit anything useful. Those who stand in the same paths of them cannot be going the right way. Simply put, there are roads that will take you to Nashville, and then there are roads that won't take you anywhere close. The righteous should not be on the roads that lead to unrighteousness. Nor do the blessed sit in the seats of mockers, scoffers and cynics who never get anything done and just mock those who try to do anything at all. The blessed are more productive and don't have time to sit with those who uselessly criticize everything.

What consumes the time of the blessed? Verse 2 answers the Torah of the LORD. Torah can be understood as "the Law" or even the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch). But here the Torah should be understood by its more fundamental function of "instruction." It is in God's instruction that the blessed find their delight, and it is by meditating on His instruction day and night that they find their pleasure. Kings are instructed to read God's instruction every day so **"he may learn to fear the LORD his God"** and **"his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen"** (Deut 17:18-20). Regardless of how "great" or "small" a person is, true blessedness cannot be found outside the continual devotion to God's instruction. Joshua is also commanded in identical language to, **"Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all this is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous..."** (Joshua 1:8). It is only by

the careful observance and obedience to God's instruction that one is truly "blessed."

Read your Bible. Just do it! Stop making excuses and being too busy. If you are not filling yourself up with God's instruction, then something else readily is. Busy-ness and convenience are poor substitutes for a healthy devotional life for the disciple. Reading your Bible is foundational and must be prioritized. Otherwise, we begin to fall into other categories than blessed. What we are filling ourselves up with and what is influencing us matters. What consumes our time matters and affects every facet of our lives. If our lives are consumed with something other than God's instruction, we will not be able to hear Him or discern what His way is.

**Group Discussion: What other things can we fill ourselves up with than God's word? Why is it vital for a Christian to have a healthy devotional life and how does this affect their life?**

## **2) The Destinies of the Righteous and Wicked**

The one who meditates on the Torah will be like a tree planted by streams of water. The image is of a tree that is planted by a continuous source of water. In contrast to a wadi that would have wet and dry seasons where water would only sporadically run. The tree by the streams is constantly nourished and will flourish. Elsewhere, the tree will fade and wither when the seasons turn hot and dry. It cannot thrive or even survive long. The Christian, like the tree, is in need of constant nourishment from a continuously flowing stream. A sporadic and inconsistent devotional life will produce exactly that in a Christian's life, an inconsistent and unfruitful life. The Christian who daily and continuously devotes themselves to God's instruction will be able to stand the dry seasons and will produce fruit in his or her right

season. They will be functioning and producing exactly as they are supposed to. The psalm does not present the blessed's success as a reward, but as the natural progression of someone who diligently follows the Creator's instruction who is the source of all life.

**“Not so for the wicked.”** Those who are consumed by other things are compared to chaff. When wheat is threshed, it is tossed up in the air and the substance less chaff blows away. It is an image of being without weight and substance. While chaff is part of the crop, it is useless to the farmer and must be disposed of. The pursuits of the unrighteous are worthless and will eventually be scattered by the ever-changing winds. The chaff cannot endure, nor the tree that is not consistently nourished.

Because the wicked are without substance, they are not able to stand in the judgment. There is nothing for them to lean on and nothing to give them the strength needed to stand. They have chosen their own way and their own place, which is unfortunately not in a place that can sustain them. Also, the sinner cannot be counted among the assembly of the righteous. The “ones who miss” have chosen a different path and will not find themselves in the same place as the righteous. Not all paths lead to the same place and it is foolish to think so.

**“For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, and the way of the wicked will perish.”** Here is the conclusion of the first psalm. The paths the LORD knows are the ones He has traveled and prepared. Thus, those who walk these paths will find the source of all life at its destination. Other paths will not find the same destination, but in the end is its own demise. In a world that applauds trailblazers and cutting your own path, the Bible regards this as foolishness and death. **“There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”**

**(Proverbs 14:12)** Life is only found by sticking close to the paths and instruction the LORD has given.

**Group Discussion: How important is it to stick with the path the Lord has laid out? Why do we try to make our own paths?**

### **3) Application: The Well Fed Christian**

**Deuteronomy 8:3 (NASB95) “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”**

Even more important than food or anything else that can consume our time, is our devotion to the words of God. The Christian without a healthy, consistent devotional life is a malnourished Christian. He cannot hope to perform as he is supposed to without a healthy spiritual diet. If you have watched a pirate movie, you may have heard the captains yelling at their crewmates, “Ye scurvy dogs!” Scurvy is a vitamin C deficiency that sailors in the 19th century and older commonly suffered from. If the sailors didn’t soon get the necessary nutrients commonly gotten through fruits and vegetables, the condition could become debilitating and even deadly. Bruising, bleeding gums, and fatigue are common symptoms. Old wounds could also reopen. Metaphorically, scurvy accurately describes a Christian who is not invested in reading the Bible. A disciple must ask what they are consuming and filling themselves up with. Are they filling up with the worries and interests of this world? Or are they taking in the fuel we are designed for, the word of God? The results of each are obvious, a lack of the word of God is debilitating to the Christian. They will be inconsistent and will have no way to discern God’s will in their lives. However, the natural

progression of a well-fed Christian on the word of God is consistent production of fruit, regardless of hard times. If you get nothing else from this lesson, then understand this, read your Bible. It is a necessary discipline with no substitute. You simply cannot grow and produce as a Christian without it.

**Group Discussion: What difference have you seen in your own life when you have a committed devotional life?**

Psalms 1:1-6 Daily Devotion - Written by:  
Kyle Carey

**Day 1, Verse 1-** *“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers”*

Great joy comes from obeying God! Friends can have a significant influence on us as well. If we insist on friendship with those who mock what God considers important, we will be tempted to adopt more and more of their thinking. Those who have careless attitudes toward God are no different from those who outright mock Him.

**Day 2, Verse 2-** *but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law, he meditates day and night.*

The more we delight in God's presence the more fruitful we will be. We can learn how to follow God by meditating on His Word. Spend time reading, praying, and reviewing what you read in the Word. Understanding God's Word is the first step towards applying it to our everyday life. If you want to follow God more closely, you must take time to know what He says. The Law of the Lord refers to all Scripture God reveals to us His will, His absolute truth, His love for us, and His divine nature. The more we

know God's Word the ore resources we will have to guide us daily.

**Day 3, Verse 3** - *"He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers."*

Prosper does not mean God's people will have immunity from failure or difficulties. It does not guarantee health, wealth, and happiness. What does the Bible mean when it says prosper? When we apply God's wisdom, the fruit we bear will be good. Just as a tree that soaks up water and bears luscious fruit, we are to soak up God's Word and produce actions and attitudes that honor Him. To achieve anything worthwhile, we must have God's Word in our hearts.

**Day 4, Verse 4** – *"The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away."*

Chaff was removed by a process called threshing and winnowing after plants were cut. The plants were crushed by a threshing sledge and then the pieces were thrown into the air. Chaff is very light and would be carried away by the slightest wind while the good grain fell on the ground. The chaff is a symbol of the faithless life that just drifts along.

Good grain is a symbol of a faithful life that God can use. Chose His direction and your life will be fruitful!

**Day 5, Verse 5** - *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous*

God cannot condone even the smallest sin in our lives. How do we enter God's presence? If we wait until we are sinless and perfect, we would never go in. God's faithful love and the blood of Jesus have opened the door for us! We will stand in the judgement by the Blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.

**Day 6, Verse 6** - *for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

What joy to know that God is watching the path we walk! Nahum 1:6-8 says, "*Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him. 7 The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him.*" To those who refuse to believe, God's punishment will blaze like fire, there will be no safe place to go in that day. But for those who love the Lord and have a right

relationship with Him, He will provide refuge for them! His care and protection are close by us in our times of trouble! What joy to know that God is watching the path we walk!

## **Disciplines of a Disciple: Lesson 2- Living and Fulfilling the Word**

### **Matthew 3:15–4:4 (NASB95)**

**15** But Jesus answering said to him, “Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he \*permitted Him.

**16** After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,

**17** and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

**4:1** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

**2** And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

**3** And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

**4** But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘**MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.**’ ”

The first recorded words of Jesus in Matthew sets the tone. Jesus has come to fulfill all righteousness, which is a key concept in the book of Matthew. Righteousness is fulfilling the will of God in its fullness. The promised Immanuel (God with Us, Matt 1:23), who is God, has come in the flesh and is baptized saying He is one of us. It is the same identification we have with Jesus when we are baptized. We identify with Christ in baptism saying, “buried

in His death and raised in His likeness.” It is only by Jesus and His incomprehensible Incarnation (fully God and fully human) saying He is one of us, and us saying we are of Him that salvation is even possible. It is necessary that Jesus fulfilled all righteousness to reconcile the broken relationship between mankind and the Lord. Emphatically affirming Jesus’ authority and mission, the heavens open up, the Spirit descends on Him, and a voice out of the heavens is heard, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

**\*Why is baptism the essential first step in our right relationship in active obedience to the Lord?**

Matthew wastes no time between Jesus’ baptism and His temptation in the wilderness linking the two stories powerfully within their context. Immediately after the Lord’s affirmation of His Son, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He fasts for 40 days. Jesus is being identified with Israel’s history as Israel wandered the wilderness for 40 years. Matthew repeatedly links Jesus’ ministry to Israel’s history. Jesus’ family flees their home and stays in Egypt as in the story of Joseph and now Jesus is in the wilderness. The difference is where Israel failed to fulfill the word of the Lord, The Lord’s beloved Son triumphs.

**\*Group Discuss the 40 days of Jesus and 40 years of Israel in the wilderness and Jesus fulfills the Word of the Lord where others failed.**

Here in the wilderness, the tempter focuses on Jesus’ sonship, which also played a critical role in Jesus’ baptism. The tempters’ “if” might better be understood as

“since” in verse 3 because Satan is not calling into question Jesus’ sonship, but the nature and privileges of it. Undoubtedly, Jesus would have had the ability to turn the stones into bread, as the tempter suggested. However, Jesus did not use His Messianic authority for His own convenience, but to solely fulfill the will of His Father. Jesus answers the tempter with Scripture saying, **“It is written”** and then quotes Deuteronomy 8:3. In fact, every Scripture quoted by Jesus here is contained in Deuteronomy chapters 6-8 which was given to Israel while they were in the wilderness. While bread and food are necessary for life, it is not enough. Jesus knows that fulfilling the word of God has higher priority than even our most basic needs of food. Jesus tells His disciples something similar in John 4:34, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.” Jesus in His temptation exemplifies and fulfills the greatest commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5 ““You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Here Jesus shows His heart’s devotion, as He doesn’t satisfy His own will and desires, but the will of His Father.

**Matthew 4:5–7 (NASB95) 5 Then the devil \*took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and \*said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written,**

**‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’; And ‘ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’ ”**

**7 Jesus said to him, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’ ”**

After the devil fails to entice Jesus to save Himself by His own Messianic authority, he takes Jesus to the top of the temple. Again, He calls into question the nature of Jesus’ sonship saying, “If You are the Son of God.” He tells Jesus to throw Himself down and interestingly uses the same introductory formula Jesus uses for Scripture, “**it is written.**” Before, Satan tempts Jesus to save Himself, now he wants Jesus to force God to rescue Him. Modern readers should take special care to not use Scripture the same way Satan does. Satan tries to use Scripture to manipulate God for his own purposes.

**\*Satan tempts us to act in our own selfish and fleshly desires. How do we resist those temptations and focus on the will of the Lord?**

Jesus’ response to Satan’s blatant manipulation of Scripture is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 6:16. Jesus will not test the Lord nor attempt to force His hand on any matter to serve his own self-interest. By refusing to jump, Jesus chooses to continue His path of danger and struggle, which ultimately leads to the cross. While safety, security, and comfort would have been well within Jesus’ rights and authority He doesn’t choose that path. He continues to be obedient to the will of the Father even with His life. The “soul” in Deuteronomy 6:5 is “nephesh” in Hebrew and is

better understood as “life-force.” Jesus loves and trusts the Lord with all His life.

**Matthew 4:8–11 (NASB95)**

**8** Again, the devil \*took Him to a very high mountain and \*showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory;

**9** and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”

**10** Then Jesus \*said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’ ”

**11** Then the devil \*left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

At some point, we all must ask the question, “Who is Lord?” On the surface, it seems ridiculous that Satan would attempt to get Jesus to worship him, but when all the pretenses and excuses of the human condition are stripped away, we are left with one question: “Who is Lord?” Jesus is not exempt from this central trial as Hebrews 4:15 explains, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” Satan offers wealth and power at the cost of idolatry. If only He would serve someone or something other than the Lord, Satan would grant Him a powerful and wealthy life. Is this not the same temptation we all face every day? Serve the Lord, or serve another way to get what we want? Where we have

often failed, and where Israel failed, Jesus, once again, triumphs.

Only here at the end of the three temptations does Jesus issue a command, “Go, Satan!” He then quotes Deuteronomy 6:13. Satan offers the same temptation here as he did Adam and Eve in the garden. Satan wants to take the place of God. Jesus’ rebuke of Satan speaks to the heart of all temptation, which is a failure to worship and serve the Lord your God only. In all sin, the hierarchy is messed up and puts something else in the place of the Lord. Jesus’ authority as God’s Son is displayed as Satan leaves at His command. By refusing the wealth and power of the world, Jesus shows that He wholly trusts and loves the Lord with all His might.

Jesus’ triumph in the wilderness is not accomplished by a display of power and assertion of His own rights as Messiah and the Son of God. It is done paradoxically through humility, service, and suffering. Jesus topples the world’s ideals of power and strength and to this day is a difficult concept for men to grasp. The Kingdom of God does not abide by the same rules of the world, and often these kingdoms are in conflict. Here we see a direct confrontation between God’s values and the world’s. It is the same confrontation we see in Matthew 16:23 when Jesus rebukes Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.” Peter’s intentions appear good and even noble as he rebukes Jesus for foretelling His death, but Peter’s well-meaning intentions are outside the will of God. Jesus’ Sonship and authority exist entirely inside the will of God and His obedience to it.

## Conclusion

The first lesson can be summed up by saying, “read your Bible.” This one can be summed up by “live and obey Scripture.” However, it is vital we understand that obedience must be pure and unmixed with personal agendas. We must be obedient to His Word and not employ the same tactics of Satan that twists and manipulates Scripture for his own purposes. Discipleship is not a path to worldly gain, comfort, and profit. It is to follow in the steps of Jesus who sacrificed and served with humility to fulfill the perfect will of God. Discipleship is not self-serving and selfish. As followers of Jesus, we are not called to fulfill our own desires, but only to fulfill the desires of the Lord who has called us.

## Disciplines of the Disciple Lesson 3 – “Give/Serve”

**Group Prayer Request List:**

### **Love Your Enemies – SERVE**

**(Matthew 5:43-44)** *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*

Jesus begins with “*You have heard that it was said*” to challenge the popularized words listeners at The Sermon on Mount have heard. Some words and phrases are so often repeated that we begin to take them as “gospel” when in fact they are in error or misquoted. Did you ever play the game telephone as a kid? In fact, let’s do that right now, in your group play the game telephone! **Leader start the phrase.**

How did that turn out? We see the same principle here in verse 43. The first part is a quote from Lev. 19:18 “*You shall love your neighbor*” but the second part “*and hate your enemy*” never appears in Leviticus. In fact it is quite the opposite, “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD*”. The “and hate your enemy” part of this popularized phrase is found in how scribes and Pharisees explained and applied the Old Testament command from Leviticus. Jesus

and his disciples application is the opposite of this and results in the highest of standards. Our love should extend to our enemies and those who revile us.

- **How does Loving and Praying for your neighbor and enemies equate to serving?**
- **How does this teaching and instruction from Jesus differ from popular opinions of today?**

**(Matthew 5:45)** *so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes, his sunrise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Why does a disciple of Christ need to love enemies and pray for them? Jesus answers that plainly here in verse 45, “so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.” Jesus makes the connection that a true child of Father displays his attributes here on earth. God extends love to His enemies and all of humanity. The sun does not rise for some but not others. The rain does not only fall for his children, but for His enemies as well. God manifests blessings on all of humanity indiscriminately. This is referred to by Theologians as “Common Grace” for all people. There is also a deeper everlasting Love, which is distinguished from common grace, the everlasting Love of salvation. This is what makes us a friend and child of God through Christ instead of enemies receiving his common grace.

- **Why is it better to be a son of the Father than one who is unjust and receiving only the common grace of the Lord?**

- **Is it hard at times to see evil people and enemies receiving grace, rewards and success?**

*46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, 9 what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Verse 48 sets an unattainable standard for us all, “*You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*”. How can we be perfect? We cannot and thus reminds us of our need for Christ. Anyone can love someone who is lovely or loves us back. It takes supernatural power from the Spirit of God Almighty himself to love the unlovely and our enemies. And it is important to remember that we were all once and enemy of God and oppose to his ways, and yet he still loved us! “*We love because he first loved us*”! (1 John 4:19) None of us could fulfill the law of God. The marvelous truth of the Gospel is Jesus Christ, God with us, met this standard on our behalf. Now as his disciples, we are called to LOVE and SERVE in Christ’s example.

## **Giving to the Needy – GIVE**

Just mentioning the word give or tithe and things get tense for some folks. A pastor knows preaching on tithing will stir emotions like nothing else. Why is that? Why does discussing money evoke such emotion and passion? The question is actually the answer. The truth is people are

emotionally and passionately invested and attached to money like few other things. Our relationship with money reveals much of our relationship with the Lord. Is he Lord over all in my life? Or am I so emotionally attached to money that this area is off limits.

A refusal to tithe is actually this statement, "I want eternal life at the expense of God's only begotten Son and Jesus's broken body. But not at my expense of 10% of my emotional attachment to my earnings here on earth in this life". Seems harsh said that way right? What it really boils down to is value. What do you value more? God's Word, commands, instructions and discipline or your own comfort, pleasure, autonomy and control? The discipline of the Disciple of Christ is to tithe and give to others freely from our time, talent and treasures. In Matthew Chapter 6 Jesus shows us the proper format to give. And it is much more about our own hearts than the money.

**(Matthew 6:1-4)** *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*

Interestingly "hypocrites" (Pharisees) and "you" (Disciple of Christ) both give to the needy, but only ONE of them will be rewarded by the Father in Heaven. The self-righteous

looking to be seen by others will be praised by other here on earth, but Jesus says, "They have received their reward." Jesus instructs to not even let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. Jesus tells us to trick our own minds to make sure we stay humble and do not boast of our giving. Also, notice Jesus said, "*But WHEN you give to the needy*" not "IF" you give to the needy. Giving is a command given to the Disciple of Christ over and over again! This is a discipline we MUST master with help from The Master!

When you tithe, give to the needy, help at Food Giveaway, take food to someone sick, give clothes or give time to someone who needs to talk; You do all these things unto the Lord. We do not have to publicize or make a show of it. He knows already, "*And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*" It matters not if others see or commend. God Almighty from the throne room of heaven sees, keeps amazing records, and will reward you in due season.

## Disciplines of the Disciple Lesson 4 – “Prayer/Fasting- And when you”

### Group Prayer Request List:

## 1) Prayer:

5 **“And when you pray**, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

As Jesus begins to teach on prayer, he opens with a directive of, “And when you pray.” Prayer is not an option in the teaching of Jesus, but instead understood as a daily part of our lives. The directive to pray is accompanied by a warning, to not do it like the hypocrites out in the church, streets or social media for show. Prayer instead is the lifeline of the relationship between God and man. Prayer is intimate, personal and God focused. The motive should never be to impress others or seek for ourselves. The motive is deeper relationship, intimacy, and obedience to the Lord.

**\*Does this mean we should never pray in public, church or online?**

**\*How do we stay humble and check our motives in prayer?**

7 “**And when you pray**, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

Jesus repeats the same assumption in verse 7 of, “And when you pray”. When you pray do not heap up empty phrases. Prayer is not about length, the perfect words, memorization, reciting phrases, or repeating things thoughtlessly. This is about a relationship with Him! He already knows what we need before we ask anyways. Imagine if people close to you that you love and care for only addressed you extremely formally with the same phrases daily. God paid a steep price, in Jesus Christ atonement for sin, to restore the intimate relationship He once shared with Adam and Eve. Those daily walks in the Garden of Eden are that for which God desires with us. The question is do we desire Him the same way.

**\*What does intimacy with God in prayer look and sound like?**

**\*Reading recommendation for closer relationship and more intimate prayer life with the Lord – “Desiring God” by John Piper**

## 2) The Lord's Prayer- The model, not the rule

**9 *Pray then like this*** – Jesus sets the model and format for prayer. Note he didn't say, "Pray this prayer" but instead, "Pray then LIKE this". We should be learning and modeling from this prayer, not mindlessly repeating it out of repetition.

***"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*** - Jesus begins by address God as "*our Father in heaven*" which in and of itself shows familiarity and intimacy. He does not say, "Oh distant Creator out there in universe somewhere". The word "*hallowed*" is also translated as "*blessed*". Blessed be the name of the Lord! This is the cry that God's name be blessed, honored, and glorified here on earth. This is a praise, exhalation and a call to action on our behalf as well.

**\*How do we bless the name of the Lord in prayer and daily life?**

**10 *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*** - The selfless prayer of the Fathers kingdom come! Jesus prays that heaven would literally come to earth! What a bold and radical prayer when you stop and think about it. Are we praying down God's kingdom onto earth daily? Furthermore, are we taking the steps to see that come to fruition? What does it take to see the Lord's Kingdom come to this earth? Jesus prayed it here and in the Garden of Gethsemane "Your will be done".

**11 *Give us this day our daily bread-*** Are we solely reliantly on the Lord for our daily provision? Is he the one supplying oxygen, sunlight, food, clothing, shelter and income? This

reverence comes only from the prayer of true humility. Pride is the enemy of this line of prayer! Only true humility and total subjection to Christ allows us to rely solely on the Lord and pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" and mean it.

***12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.***- Forgiveness on two fronts is the next step in this prayer. A further dive into humility and total dependence on Him. This is the acknowledgement in which we openly confess sin and our shortcomings before the Lord. This is the opposite of pride in every way. There is no justification here, nor excuse. We owe Him a debt, Jesus paid it, and we ask him to propitiate the blood of Christ on our behalf. This request is conditional interestingly enough. Jesus equates our forgiveness directly, by which the same measure we forgive others.

**\*Why does Jesus make this correlation between forgiveness from God and to others?**

***13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.***- The book of Job comes to mind when I read this line. God allowed Job to be tempted when Satan was permitted to strike down everything he owns and holds dear, and yet Job refuses to turn from the Lord. Satan also asked for Peter that he might sift him like wheat, and God allows this temptation. To be clear, God tempts no man, we are tempted by our own fleshly desires. (James 1:13-14)

This is a prayer asking God not to lead us to temptation but to instead deliver us from evil and lead us in the way everlasting. Another way might be a prayer like this from us, "Lord keep temptation far from me! Do not allow it to come to

my door! But it is does, deliver me from it oh Lord because I need you in ALL things, big and small”.

***14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others, their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.***

***\*Discuss in Groups The Lord Prayer and specifically verses 14 & 15***

### **3) Fasting:**

16 “**And when you fast**, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

You may ask yourself, “But do I have to fast?” It seems the best answer is Jesus expects it from his disciples. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives specific instructions with particular verbiage in regards to fasting.

“**And WHEN you fast**” makes it abundantly clear Jesus expects us to fast in the biblical pattern involving food. How do we know it involves food? Well he is speaking of how to present ourselves despite the physical effects lack of food may take on our bodies and it is also the type of fast he modeled in the wilderness for 40 days.

**(Luke 6:40)** *A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.*

17 ***But when you fast***, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Disciples of Christ are expected to fast because our teacher did. When in doubt or confusion I tend to go by one simple biblical rule, if it is good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for me.

If Jesus preached the gospel, so will I.

If Jesus cared for those in needs, so will I.

If Jesus gave his life in love for others, so will I.

If Jesus fasted, then so will I.

Fasting should not be a question of IF, but instead WHEN and how long. This is what our Lord and Savior expects and requires of us.

He also gives clear directions not to draw attention to ourselves during the fast. The fast is not to outwardly boast in our holiness, but instead the opposite. We are to grow in relationship with the Father in secret. Some things are just between the Lord and us.

## **Disciplines of the Disciple: Lesson 5- Self-Control and Kindness**

### **1 Corinthians 9:1–6 (NASB95)**

**1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?**

**2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.**

**3 My defense to those who examine me is this:**

**4 Do we not have a right to eat and drink?**

**5 Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?**

**6 Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working?**

How often do we sound like Paul in these six verses when we are deprived of something we believe we have a right to? Though we would often appeal to our status to get what is rightfully ours, Paul deliberately uses this rhetoric as an example of self-sacrifice. The answer to most of these rhetorical questions is an obvious, “Yes.” Paul, as an apostle and the one who started the church in Corinth, has every right to be set up comfortably by the Corinthian church. He should not have to make tents to provide for himself while he ministers to the church, but he does anyway. Rightfully, the church should provide all of Paul's needs, but as we find out he refuses all compensation. Out of context, these six verses could appeal to any of us who seek vindication from mistreatment and/or others' bad behavior. In context, what Paul does with his rights should

be jarring to our Western culture that emphasizes our rights and liberties.

### 1 Corinthians 9:11–12 (NASB95)

**11** *If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?*

**12** *If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.*

Why doesn't Paul insist on his rights? So that he **“will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.”** His first priority as a minister is to preach the Gospel as effectively as possible. That takes priority over his rights and comforts. Paul is concerned if he and Barnabas took any compensation it could open them up to a number of accusations or associations among the Corinthian people. Thus why he made tents with Aquila and Priscilla while in Corinth (Acts 18:3). Paul did not believe it was wrong to accept support for his ministry as evidenced in 2 Cor. 11:8 and Philipppians 4:14-16. However, he felt it was necessary to refuse compensation in Corinth as well as Thessalonica (1Thess. 2:5-10). The culture and circumstances were different between the Corinthians and the Macedonians (whom he accepted support from).

The first accusation Paul avoided is he preached the Gospel for money. Common in the Mediterranean were traveling teachers who would travel from city to city, accepting fees and patronage along the way. Paul was careful to not make his calling a professional career. Paul deliberately didn't exercise his “rights” to display his pure intentions with the Gospel. The preaching of the Gospel was not a way to pay his bills. The intent and purpose of the Gospel took priority over even Paul's basic needs. Paul did

not want to be identified with anyone in the “preaching business,” especially the Sophists who were known for bilking money from patrons.

Secondly, there may have been some in Corinth who had an interest in hiring Paul as an “in-house teacher.” It was common among the social elite of the time to hire teachers and philosophers exclusively in their homes. This was done for their own education and also as a status symbol. Much in the same way a TV company will buy exclusive rights to a show or event, you have to go to their house to hear this teacher. While this may have been a good opportunity for Paul personally, it would conflict with his mission to preach the Gospel and plant churches throughout Asia Minor. Also, the exclusivity of this position would cut Paul off from lower social classes. Paul was deliberate in his preaching to be accessible to all people. The Gospel is not exclusive in its invitation but inclusive. Thus, Paul would not use the Gospel to elevate his status.

**Group Discussion: Why is it hard to set your rights aside? How can being insistent on your rights interfere with the Gospel? How can taking “good” opportunities interfere with the Gospel?**

### **1 Corinthians 9:18–23 (NASB95)**

**18** *What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.*

**19** *For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.*

**20** *To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as*

*under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law;*

**21** *to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.*

**22** *To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.*

**23** *I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.*

Paul did not live however he wanted. He modeled a consideration that was in short supply in ancient Corinth and modern society. To summarize these verses, the inconsiderate attitude of, "I do what I want" is repelling, especially if you are claiming to be a Christian. How effective would Paul's preaching to the Jews be if he was at the same time eating a ham sandwich? It is important to remember that this chapter follows up Paul's teaching on eating meat sacrificed to idols. His conclusion is we know those idols don't hold power, but don't eat it in front of those with a weaker conscience. The key to Paul's argument in this chapter is, "be kind, be considerate of others."

Though Paul is a free man, he makes himself a servant to all. The word used in verse 19 is specifically a house steward (*oikonomos*) and is the same word used in 1 Cor 4:1-2 where Paul says we are "**stewards of the mysteries of God.**" Paul is dismissing any idea that a minister is some kind of master or overlord in the church, especially since the apostle who planted the church is calling himself a slave. Ministry should never be about titles, positions, and elevating your status, it's about the needs of others. When Paul ministers, he purposely puts himself on the same level of those he ministers to. Thus when

preaching to the Jews, he becomes one so he might win them. To those without the law, he becomes like them, to the weak, he becomes weak. Paul deliberately **“becomes all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.”** Paul is setting the example to be self-sacrificial for others. We are to be considerate of others and the circumstances they are in. When we preach the Gospel, we need to bridge the gaps and be willing to give up our comforts and liberties. If our rights ever get in the way of the Gospel, we need to be willing to set those aside.

Paul is telling the Corinthian church in an eloquent way to not be inconsiderate jerks. Don't be obnoxious with your liberties to the point of turning others away from the Gospel. Don't say you are “blessed and highly favored” and be combative and inflexible about all your rights and what is rightfully yours. If you drink, don't drink in front of recovering alcoholics or those who think it's wrong. If someone follows kosher dietary rules, be kosher while you are with them. Respect and consideration goes a long way towards how someone will receive the Gospel from you. If you have Christian bumper stickers or the Jesus fish on your car (even if you don't!), don't drive like a demon. All these “me first” attitudes and actions are a reproach to your testimony and can only hinder how well others can hear from you. Be considerate; be kind, because that is the servant attitude that Christ has with us.

**Group Discussion: How can we be Christians that are more considerate? What gaps have you had to fill in order to share the Gospel with someone?**

**1 Corinthians 9:24–27 (NASB95)**

**24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.**

**25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.**

**26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;**

**27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.**

To conclude this argument, Paul uses a metaphor of an athletic competitor. To be successful they must **“exercise self-control in all things.”** Everything Paul does is for the purpose of the Gospel and he will not waste time and energy on anything that could prevent him from achieving his goal. Therefore, he will sacrifice whatever comfort he has to for the sake of the Gospel. It is self-control in all things, not just when or what he feels like. The runner must be disciplined and run regardless of weather and circumstance. He must have a plan in his training to prepare for the race. If he doesn't, then one who did prepare will easily overtake him. Likewise, a fighter must train and do the things that aren't comfortable to prepare his body for the upcoming fight. If these guys do it for a perishable crown, how much more committed should a follower of Christ be for an imperishable one? We should have self-control in all things and constantly consider others around us. Otherwise, those people might discount our testimony and message. If we believe in Christ, we should live every moment like we do. Every day we should be disciplined and commit ourselves to Bible reading, prayer, giving and servanthood. We train and discipline ourselves for the sake of the Gospel. With self-control, we put aside any hindrance to our goal.

How does this apply to modern Christians? We should refrain from anything that is a stumbling block for

others to hear the Gospel. The Gospel must take priority over contentious arguments and actions. Rarely are souls saved from an argument about current events, and I've never seen someone accept Christ from someone refusing to wear a mask or demanding others wear one. Paul is instructing Christians to be deliberate and **“do all things for the sake of the Gospel.”** The Gospel preaches Jesus Christ who is the ultimate example of selfless love that **“bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:7).** It is not a coincidence that the famous love chapter shortly follows Paul's instructions to the Corinthians about being considerate in many areas. Jesus being God in the flesh did not selfishly seek his own, though He has every right to, but gave Himself freely. Likewise, as Christians we should follow Him and give ourselves freely to others. This is our calling! This is our message! Everything else is wasted motion and energy. The ultimate goal for the disciple is this: to be an accurate witness for Jesus.

**Group Discussion: How is self-control and kindness linked for Paul in this chapter? How does this apply for the modern Christian?**

