



**THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**  
**FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES**  
**ACTS 1:12-26**  
**01-24-21**

**All = bold sections – read together**

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

*Sung together = italics*

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

**Reflect – Affirmation #3**

Because **consistently engaging scripture is key to knowing God**, we will consistently and continually preach, teach, pray and create opportunities for people to learn to read the Bible as the primary means of discovering truth and hearing from God.

**Welcome**

Good Morning Community CRC! As we gather and prepare to worship together, take a moment to thank God for one thing that you experienced this past week. The Christian life is one that is marked by thankfulness that is shaped by the **love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit** known and experienced in daily life.

**Call to Worship** – Psalm 42 -- TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A MASKIL OF THE SONS OF KORAH

What do you thirst for? What do you long for? What do you desire most? David desires God most but he is down in the dumps. So, he stirs up hope by remembering the past. He remembers past times of joy and times of turmoil and he questions why in the world would he be in the dumps. His remedy is hope in God. Are you in the dumps? Read this Psalm and ignite your hope in God as your joy and comfort and security and love.

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As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"

**These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.**

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

**Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and your waves have gone over me. By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.**

I say to God, my rock: "Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"



**Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.**

**Song** – Praise To The Lord Almighty -- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J79tiOt6Sjk&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J79tiOt6Sjk&feature=emb_title)

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty  
The King of creation  
O my soul, praise Him  
For He is thy health and salvation  
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near  
Praise Him in glad adoration  
  
Praise to the Lord  
Who o'er all things so wonderfully reigneth  
Shelters thee under His wings  
Yea, so gently sustaineth  
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been  
Granted in what He ordaineth  
  
Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him  
All that hath life and breath  
Come now with praises before Him  
Let the 'amen' sound from His people again  
Gladly for aye we adore Him*

**Christ Candle** – Central African Republic (from Open Doors World Watch List 2020)

We light the Christ candle as a visible sign of God's presence with us; that he has come as light into a world of darkness. We light the Christ candle to remind ourselves that Jesus is the light and that in him we become light too. We are never a light on our own. The light we have and can offer to others is the light of Jesus of Nazareth. May we be God's light in 2021.

Jesus of Nazareth said that to be a Christian means to be maltreated for his name's sake (Matthew 5:11) and the apostle Paul said that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Mistreatment as a disciple of Jesus is not a matter of *if* but a matter of *when* and a matter of *degree*. Hope is a vital aspect of being a disciple of Jesus. This is especially true under heavy persecution. In America, the land of religious freedom, we have it pretty easy in that there is minimal outright persecution against Christians. **May we make the most of our religious freedom to honor Christ and give credible and coherent witness to him! At the same time, may we be aware of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who don't share the same freedom that we do. The 24th place that is most challenging to be a disciple of Jesus is the Central African Republic.**

Of the 4.8 million people living in the Central African Republic, 3.6 million are Christians (yes, you read that right!). Unlike all the rest of the countries we have read about so far, this one embraces Christianity. However, the Central African Republic has been embroiled in conflict since 2013. Most of the country remains occupied by armed militia groups, with numerous rebel splinter groups targeting Christians specifically. Over the last year, fighting and attacks have intensified, forcing an increase in the displacement of tens of thousands of people from their homes – the highest number since 2014. Christian leaders who publicly denounce the violence endure threats on their lives.



Prayer Points: Pray with Christians targeted by rebel groups and Muslim terrorists. Pray that they will know God's peace and His provision in the midst of earthly chaos and loss of homes. Pray for God's protection over Christian leaders and their families, as they minister to their congregations in the face of threats and conflict. Pray with new believers who face threats by family members and are ostracized by their communities.

**Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His light!**

**Song** – Turn Your Eyes -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJDELcuYX3g>

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus  
Look full in His wonderful face  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace*

*Turn your eyes to the hillside  
Where justice and mercy embraced  
There the Son of God gave His life for us  
And our measureless debt was erased*

*Jesus, to You we lift our eyes  
Jesus, our glory and our prize  
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true  
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You*

*Turn your eyes to the morning  
And see Christ the Lion awake  
What a glorious dawn, fear of death is gone  
For we carry His life in our veins*

*Jesus, to You we lift our eyes  
Jesus, our glory and our prize  
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true  
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You*

*Turn your eyes to the heavens  
Our King will return for His own  
Every knee will bow, every tongue will shout,  
'All glory to Jesus alone!'*

*Jesus, to You we lift our eyes  
Jesus, our glory and our prize  
We adore You, behold You, our Savior ever true  
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You  
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You*

**Song** – How Deep The Father's Love For Us -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iw01L-gfmN4>

*How deep the Father's love for us  
How vast beyond all measure  
That He should give His only Son*



*To make a wretch His treasure  
How great the pain of searing loss  
The Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory  
Behold the man upon a cross  
My sin upon His shoulders  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
Call out among the scoffers  
It was my sin that held Him there  
Until it was accomplished  
His dying breath has brought me life  
I know that it is finished  
I will not boast in anything  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ  
His death and resurrection  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer  
But this I know with all my heart  
His wounds have paid my ransom*

**Offering** – Resonate Global Mission

Resonate Global Mission (Home Missions and World Missions combined in 2017 to create this new agency) is a missions agency established by the Christian Reformed Church. Resonate has helped the church's congregations take part in fulfilling the Great Commission for more than 125 years. The work of Missionaries has grown the global Church in amazing ways. Resonate continues to do its part both in North America and around the world by sending missionaries, planting churches, developing missional leaders and changing lives in Christ.

**We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.**

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

**Youth Celebration** – A prayer...

**Dear Lord, we pray for this new generation, the young men and women of today. Shine your truth into their hearts as they hear you in music, see you in art, and experience you through the love and care of family, friends and teachers. Build your hope into their lives as they encounter the power of nature, the majesty of the oceans, and the beauty in creation. Sow your wisdom into their minds as they read the Bible, discuss deeper issues of life, or encounter hardships or difficulties. Weave your love into their dreams as they find vision in their interests, opportunities for their talents, and aspirations for their abilities. Amen**

**Scripture Reading** – Acts 1:12-26

We are in our third week of the series, Acts of the Holy Spirit as we journey with Luke as he shows us



what we need to know about the birth of the Church and how we are to be faithful and Spirit-ed witnesses of Jesus of Nazareth today. This week may seem to be a random passage with no easily discernable doctrine or great truth or principle of example to learn from.

**Gospel Message** – Foundational Practices

In order to become physically fit (where fitness is not so much about muscle strength or size, but about your bodies endurance and efficiency), there are two major components that are essential: Eating well (diet) and cardiovascular exercise. If one of these two components are missing or poorly done, physical fitness will not happen well. In the same way, there are two vitally important ingredients for spiritual fitness: scripture reading and prayer. This is the diet and exercise of a healthy Christian life. You cannot and will not be spiritually fit without engaging God’s word (reading the Bible) and communicating (both talking and listening) with him (prayer) on a regular basis.

Our passage is dealing with the disciples as they wait for Jesus of Nazareth to send them the promised Holy Spirit (we’ll look at this next week). Instead of idling their time away, they gather together in the upper room and pray. Peter also addresses them through scripture in order to fill the spot that Judas abandoned so that the number of disciples would once again be 12 and reflect the twelve tribes of Israel. The two practices that occupied and directed the disciples after Jesus’ ascension was reading God’s Word and praying. If the foundation of the Church is the teachings of the apostles based on their apostolic witness and Jesus of Nazareth is the Chief Cornerstone, then these are the two foundational disciplines that they practiced. They are to be our foundational practices as well today.

Having said that, what is your current experience with the disciplines of reading and praying? That is, what does a normal week look like for you? How and how often do you pray and read? Take a moment to summarize these habits in the space given.

The following way of communing with God through scripture and prayer is designed to help facilitate our ability to hear and experience the presence of God in our daily life. Its purpose is to teach or augment the skills of listening, hearing and recognizing the voice of God spoken into our life through his Word. It is a bit lengthy and detailed. That is intentional so that we can have all the information in one place. Thus, it may take us a little bit longer to go through this. Feel free to do it in two or more sittings if necessary. Hopefully, it will become a helpful resource to augment our communion with God.



Please take note: The method or technique I'm about to share is NOT primarily about garnering more information from scripture but about being transformed by it. The Bible is not to be read just to inform us but form and transform us into the people God designed us to be in Jesus. The ultimate goal in discipleship training is for us to be able to converse with God and be led by the Spirit anytime, anywhere and under any circumstance in accordance with who we are and who God is. That is, we are able to be in the presence of God, hear his voice and trust him in whatever he calls us to do or be in any given situation. For example, when we are well trained in this discipline we will be able to be driving to work or in a board meeting or in conversation or mowing the lawn or listening to music or changing a diaper and be able to engage God in conversation and be led by his Spirit.

A principle: You cannot and will not be spiritually fit without engaging God's word (reading the Bible) and communicating (both talking and listening) with him (prayer) on a regular basis

### **Praying Scripture**

The method of training suggested for praying and reading the Bible is a unified one. Praying and reading the Bible go hand-in-hand and are not entirely separate things. Transformative prayer is filled with scripture and transformative reading of scripture is saturated with prayer. Prayer without God's word is often shallow and suspect to childish error. It is without proper context and is presumptuous because it speaks without first listening. Reading God's word without prayer is impotent and lifeless. Together they convey truth and power and vitality and proper orientation.

There is one approach that is more wholistic than any other I know. I call it "Praying Scripture" and it seeks to wed prayer and reading in a holy union that brings you into awareness of the presence of God in your daily life. The goal of praying scripture is to draw our story into God's story and to respond to what God is already involved in. Praying scripture is an ancient, time tested approach to the Bible that is decisively more concerned with how deep scripture gets into us than how deep we get into scripture. That is, it is more concerned with how deep we read than with how much we read.

*[Praying Scripture] invites us to experience "the power of the word of God in scripture to speak to the most intimate depths of our hearts, to gift and challenge and change us, and to promote genuine spiritual growth and maturity."* -Thelma Hall

In regards to reading the Bible, Thomas Merton says that it "requires two levels of understanding: first, a preliminary unraveling of the meaning of the texts themselves . . . which is mainly a matter of knowledge acquired by study; then a deeper level, a living insight which grows out of personal involvement and relatedness . . . Only on this second level is the Bible really grasped."

The task of acquiring information is simply the 'front porch' of spiritual reading. Hearing God speak into your life is entering into the home and dining together with him.

*We do not always realize what a radical suggestion it is for us to read to be formed and transformed rather than to gather information. We are information seekers. We love to cover territory.* -Macrina Wiederkehr

I have worked with hundreds of people, helping them read and pray more effectively. The number one obstacle to being better prayers and readers is seeking information instead of transformation and conformation to the image and likeness of Jesus of Nazareth. Information only requires the mind and can



leave you unchanged. Transformation requires both mind and heart. The difference is significant. You may intellectually know a lot about a person by reading about them or learning about them from others, but until you actually interact with them and develop a relationship with them, your understanding of them is severely limited to the mind. It is the difference between reading about a famous coach and actively training under the coach.

What happens with the intellectual approach is the production of skilled information gatherers but poorly skilled discipleship growers. In other words, a disconnection is manufactured between what is read and what is lived out on a daily basis. You will learn to read to know, not incorporate. For many, the reading of scripture simply does not inform daily living. This is disastrous because information gathering is generally impersonal and therefore nurturing a relationship with God through his Word is rare.

God's word is more like a love letter than a newspaper. It is not meant to simply give you knowledge about life but the power to be transformed into a person who experiences life as it is actually meant to be experienced. Praying scripture matures us more into the image of Jesus who is the image of God. Knowledge is potential power to change. Take a few moments and discuss how you would approach a love letter differently than you would a newspaper. If you are the creative type, draw a picture that reflects what you are thinking and feeling. What image or images best capture the difference for you?

This love letter approach to God's word is best captured by the ancient dance of praying scripture.

### **Praying Scripture**

Praying Scripture has traditionally been taught to be comprised of four parts: listening, understanding, responding and resting. Each word will be unpacked shortly. In addition to these four historical components, I will present praying scripture with a fifth: focusing. In our fast paced and highly mobile society, you may find it difficult just to find time to pray scripture let alone spend the necessary time it takes to engage it well. Focusing becomes a necessary first step to enter fully into the experience of praying scripture.

#### **◆ 1 ◆ *Focusing: Acknowledging and receiving God's presence***

Purposefully entering into prayer and listening to hear God's voice speak into your life through his Word requires you to collect your scattered thoughts and bring them under submission to your desire to experience the presence of God. This requires you to "quiet" or "still" your mind and heart before God. It is often called "focusing" because this practice brings you into a state of singular being or to a place of being that is focused on the single purpose of experiencing God. Focusing seeks to slow you down and bring you to a place where your soul can listen to God and respond in appropriate ways. It is an intentional practice of concentration that enables you to better communicate with God. The following suggestions are given to help you learn the art of focusing. Choose one that best fits your design or come up with one yourself if you do not already have a method of centering. In your centering, pray specifically for God to speak to you through his word and that you would hear his voice and recognize it. This is vital!

- Pray the "Jesus" prayer slowly & repetitively until you are focused & attentive to God:

*Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*



- Take up a posture that helps you focus on your relationship with God. You may want to kneel or bow down. You may want to stand up with outstretched arms. You may want to dance. You may want to hold out your hand or hands. Let the message of the posture help you focus your thoughts toward God.
- Center on God via the five senses. Light a candle or smell a certain fragrance or feel a little stone or hear a certain sound. Pay attention to the Creator of these things. Let go of all the other senses or thoughts.
- Explore your own ways of centering. Be creative. Find what is helpful and use it.

Focusing can take anywhere from a few seconds to hour or longer. Once you are centered and have “let” Jesus in the door (Revelation 3:20) begin to read his word. Remember, in whatever you do to center, make time to pray specifically for God to speak to you through his word and that you would hear and recognize his voice.

### ◆ 2 ◆ *Listening: Reading God’s Story*

Begin to read the selected passage with the intention of hearing God speak. A Bible reading calendar is a helpful tool here (one is provided at the back of this manual). The calendar helps you out in two particular ways. First, it keeps you from “lucky-dipping” or “hop scotching” through the Bible and missing the story line and themes of chapters, books and places you would not normally go to read. Second, it helps you gain contextualized information to guide your formation. That is, reading through a book allows you to keep the story line flowing forward and keeps you “up to date” on what the current passage is talking about which is crucial to correctly understanding the text at hand. If you choose not to use a calendar, then pick a book of the Bible to read and read all the way through it before going on to something else. It is very important to maintain stability in your reading to appreciate the full picture the book paints.

There are three things to keep in mind as you read the Bible: observation; contextual interpretation; contemporary interpretation.

#### **A. Observation (What is this text saying?)**

**Seeing is not the same as observing.**

You may see things daily yet not be able to describe them. You may limit your thinking to stay within the box when “outside the box” thinking is required. Reading the Bible requires your studying it with keen observation and not merely seeing it from a narrow, limited or peripheral perspective. Gold miners know exactly what clues to look for when they are digging for gold. They do not waste time randomly digging and ignoring the signs in front of them. Likewise, there are six clues or signs disciples look for whenever they read a text in order to maximize their chances of correctly hearing what the author intended. They look for and ask:

- 1.) Is something emphasized?
- 2.) Is something repeated?
- 3.) Is something related?
- 4.) Are there things that are compared or contrasted?
- 5.) Are there any life principles?
- 6.) What is the “big picture?”



All six of these questions are looking for clues as to what the author's key points might be. Things that are repeated, emphasized, related, compared, or life principles and themes revealed all deserve special attention because they are signs to the author's intent with the passage. For example, John 1:1 says,

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

"Word" is repeated three times in one verse. You can bet John wants you to key in on this important word. And with a little digging in a Bible dictionary, you find this word is loaded with meaning and significance. Most importantly, you find out "Word" is probably referring to Jesus. Spend about ten minutes studying the following passage and build as much information on it as you can. Write the information/questions around the text where appropriate. Your goal here is to build as much context as possible. The best way to do this is to ask questions and carefully add information you already possess. For example, from a previous study time you might have learned that Jews and Samaritans hated each other. When you read the following passage from Acts 1:8, you will realize that the inclusion of Samaria in the list is very important.

But you will receive power  
when the Holy Spirit comes on you;  
and you will be my witnesses  
in Jerusalem, and in all Judea  
and Samaria,  
and to the ends of the earth.

The observations and questions you can come up with regarding just this one passage are substantial:

- 1) Who will receive power?
- 2) For what purpose?
- 3) When?
- 4) Why?
- 5) What kind of power?
- 6) What does "but" contrast with?
- 7) What does it mean to "receive" power?
- 8) Is it received like a gift?
- 9) Is the power permanent?
- 10) What is the significance of the list of names?
- 11) Who is the Holy Spirit?
- 12) What does it mean to be a witness?
- 13) Whose witness?
- 14) Where do I witness?



These are only a few questions you can ask of the verse. And each question will lead you deeper into the text. Sometimes you will hit a dead end or not be able to answer the question as well as you would like or run into something you do not understand. This is ok and normal as long as you are searching to understand God's message correctly. Be patient. Your answer may be found in something you read later or in a future sermon or conversation. Maybe God wants you to wrestle with the question for some time to let it sink in with all its ramifications and implications. The point is, you do not have to have an answer for every question you have.

## **B. Contextual Interpretation (So What?)**

The next question to ask of a passage is, "What does it mean?" Not for today but for the time and within the context it was written. What did it mean to the people to whom it was originally written? In discovering the meaning of a text, it is necessary to look at five important things.

### 1) Content

This should be pretty clear if you have done your homework in the observation section. You will have already barraged the text with questions and should have a basic understanding of what the author is trying to say.

### 2) Context

The context (the verses or chapters immediately preceding and following the passage in question) is the key to correctly interpreting a passage. It makes sure the interpretation falls within the bounds of what the author intended. Perhaps this is the most important overlooked step in reading the Bible. In fact, every large cult is built upon a violation of this principle. It is easy to take something out of context to make it say what you want. The problem is that you can do the same thing with any Bible text if you are not careful. The goal here is to let the context help you interpret what the text is truly saying.

### 3) Comparison

Sometimes if the context does not help out much in interpreting the text, this step will shed some light. It involves finding other passages (preferably by the same author) on the same topic or using the same word or words you have a question about. Comparison acts as a safety net for when context is insufficient. A concordance is the best tool to use for finding comparable texts based on a certain word or phrase.

### 4) Culture

Have you ever read a passage in the Bible and struggled with understanding why or what the people were doing? Most of these instances can be clarified by understanding the cultural context behind the story. In John 13:5 you can read the story of Jesus washing the disciple's feet. Reading this the first time and without any information on the customary practices of that time, you will be hard pressed to understand what this has to do with your life today.

Doing a little digging in appropriate places (more on this in a moment) reveals that it was a customary practice for the host to have a servant wash the feet of the guests as a sign of respect and honor. Guests often had dirty feet because they traveled on foot over dirt roads in sandals. The fact that no one had volunteered to wash anyone else's feet demonstrates the disciple's pride. They were above the menial



ritual of foot washing! But Jesus makes it clear that this attitude is not appropriate when he, the Master Teacher, gets on his own knees to wash their feet. You then begin to realize Jesus is radically demonstrating the principle of loving others as you would love yourself. You have now gotten a handle on at least a partial interpretation of this important text.

For this step you will need a Bible that has information regarding the relevant culture to each book in the Bible. The *ESV Study Bible* does this. But a more complete source would be a book that is dedicated solely to giving the background cultural information for each passage in scripture. An example of this is the *IVP Background Commentary*.

#### 5) Consultation

This step involves looking up secondary resources like a concordance, Bible dictionary, atlases and/or commentaries. A great resource today is Bible software. Many of these software programs contain several Bible versions, a couple of commentaries by well-respected and trusted theologians, Greek and Hebrew language help and an assortment of supportive books and programs to make reading more productive and effective (diving deeper into experiencing God's presence through his word).

Again, invaluable information may be found in these resources that cannot be found elsewhere. There is no reason why anyone in today's society with a computer at home cannot have adequate resources available to correctly interpret the text. My recommendation is the user-friendly software, Logos Bible Software. This is a high powered, very easy to use and extremely expandable program in which you can build an interactive library and journaling center.

#### **C. Contemporary Interpretation (Now What?)**

Finally, and only after the first two questions are asked, do you move to the third question, "What does this text say to life today?"

This question can be unpacked by nine other questions:

- 1) Is there an example to follow today?
- 2) Is there a sin to avoid today?
- 3) Is there a promise to claim today?
- 4) Is there a prayer to repeat today?
- 5) Is there a command to obey today?
- 6) Is there a condition to meet today?
- 7) Is there a verse to memorize today?
- 8) Is there an error to confront today?
- 9) Is there a challenge to face today?

Again, the point of reading the Bible is not for your personal entertainment or intellectual stimulation or for you to "do the right thing" but to change you into a person who can experience a life-giving relationship with Jesus. You can do all the observing and interpreting and it won't make a bit of difference



if you don't ask and apply the important questions above. You must act on what you have read in your day-to-day decisions at home, work or wherever your unique situations find you. Understanding how the text relates to the world today is a big step towards the word of God making a personal difference in your life.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:10:

*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*

We cannot apply God's truth from your own resources. It is only by the Holy Spirit working in us that we can experience the magnificent promises in scripture in our relationship with Jesus and with those around us. We decide to act and do it and God gives us the grace to decide it and to do it. Yes, this is a magnificent and beautiful paradox of life and this is what is at the heart of the next component of praying scripture.

### ◆ 3 ◆ **Understanding: Praying scripture with the mind**

*Listening informs understanding.* After contemplating the Word of God in *listening*, you now move into pondering how this message relates to you or how you fit into the story of the message of the text. While *listening* seeks to realize the general meaning of the text, understanding seeks to understand it within the context of your life. In *understanding*, you chew on God's word for extended periods of time, sometimes throughout the day or week until it sinks into and informs your heart, that is, the core of your being. This is where the word of God begins to "dwell within you" (Colossians 3:16). You make your home with God's word by inviting him to stay with you throughout the day. You continue your conversation with Jesus but at a deeper level now, "What are you teaching me?" becomes "What does that look like to me in my day-to-day existence?" The word of God starts to become your words as you seek to find the connection from scripture to the everyday circumstances you find yourself in.

One way to do this with intentionality is to ask God to reveal the area of your life this passage is applying to and what he is asking you to do, think, feel or be based on his Word. Is he speaking to your marriage, family, job, friends? Is he convicting you of unconfessed sin or new ways to see yourself, God or others? Is he showing you new ways to connect with those around you in life giving ways? Is he asking you to know and experience his love and care at that very moment? These two (what area of life and what are you to do, think, be or feel) questions will guide you into hearing God's words for you today. Ponder these questions with Jesus. Know his presence with you through the Holy Spirit. Talk to him. Listen to him.

Caution! If you are hesitant to approach scripture in this way because you "fear" what God might ask you to do then consider the following truth: God is not always asking you to go and do something. Often times he is asking you to think about something or feel something or be something. You may think he will ask you to go to Africa as a missionary or sell your motorcycle or quit your job or give all your money to the poor or something else of great magnitude, but most of the time he is taking baby steps with you and simply asking you to hear him speak into all spheres of your life –thoughts, actions, feelings and being. Therefore, be open to hear God speak into your life at various levels. He may be simply asking you to feel loved for the next 30 minutes without interruption. You may have been so busy lately that you have not been receptive to his loving presence and God wants you to feel his love. That might be what you hear God speak to you that day: remember and experience my love for you right now – be with me and enjoy my presence for within my presence is joy unspeakable.



Hearing God speak into your life will always stir emotions and feelings. When you hear the words of God and allow them to begin to inform not just your mind, but your heart as well, you will react with feelings. You will feel happy, sad, confused, encouraged, hopeful, excited, eager, concerned, loved, valued, joyful, peaceful, cared for, understood etc. When this happens, you engage the third component of praying scripture – responding.

#### ◆4◆ **Responding: Praying scripture with the heart**

*Understanding* informs *Responding*. When your heart has been stirred, a different kind of praying begins: prayer of the heart. The experience of Jesus moves from your head to your heart. Suppose the message was *love your neighbor*, the area of your life *the neighbor across the street* and the action step to *introduce yourself to them*. But, you do not get along well with this neighbor and are anxious about what God is asking you to do. Tell this to God. Let Him know what you are feeling and thinking. Ask him for the characteristics you will need to make the encounter a life giving one through the Holy Spirit – grace, wisdom, truth, patience, gentleness, kindness, self-control etc. You may also want to pray for this particular person or family – that they will have a receptive heart, will be gracious, will be open etc. Or, it may be God is asking you to be more patient with a particular situation in life but you have a hard time with being patient. Describe your struggle to him and ask for a spirit of patience. Ask God for the ability to wait and trust his leading and direction and love for you as an individual. Or, it may be that God is asking you to just receive his love at that moment and you have a hard time just being still for more than five minutes.

If you have trouble identifying or dealing with your emotions, you're not alone. In general, people can be divided into two types: those who make decisions based on logic (the mind) and those who make decisions based on feeling (the heart). Thinkers make decisions based on what is right while feelers make decisions based on how they feel or how others will feel. Neither is right or wrong. The truth is you need a healthy balance of the two although you will always tend to favor one over the other. Those who struggle with feelings are the thinkers and those who struggle with thinking are the feelers. Generally speaking, feelers have trouble with the *listening* and *understanding* parts while thinkers have trouble with the feelings part.

Thinkers, checkout the list of feeling words few pages ahead. Take some time and familiarize yourself with them. You will most likely need to review it frequently by asking yourself, "What three of four words best describe the way I am feeling right now?" Take the words and let yourself feel them. Train yourself to acknowledge and dive into your feelings. Thinkers, you tend to fear feelings because they are uncontrollable. But it is only when you let them take you into depths of the beauty of scripture that they take on life – much like a coloring book that has been colored in. Feelers, you already have been challenged by the first two sections of praying scripture. Keep working at it, you'll train your brain to use more of its ability to think through things.

#### ◆5◆ **Resting: Too deep for words**

Responding lends itself to resting. *Resting* is a difficult place to describe. It is not the same as *understanding* for *understanding* is simply about the mind. *Resting* on the other hand is a whole lot more: It is simply being in the presence of God without any agenda other than to experience his closeness. There is no trying to understand. There is no dialoguing about how you feel. All that has already taken place and



now it is time just to be with God – infinite peace and joy and comfort. Resting then is essentially renewal, play, a Sabbath in God’s presence.

*When [responding] has played out in all its fury, angst, or exuberance, we come to a place of rest in God. There are no expectations, no demands, no need to know, no desire but to be in the divine presence, receptive to whatever God desires to do with us. Here we allow ourselves simply to be, welcoming God’s own way of being with us in a “Now” that transcends time. -Marjorie Thompson*

Psalm 131:2 best captures this holy place:

*Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet like a child in its mother’s arms, as content as a child that has been weaned.*

The picture of a child finished nursing and gently resting on its mother is a beautiful picture of *resting*. It is here you find your deepest peace and find your deepest source of nourishment. It is here where you are primarily renewed and revitalized. It is here where your relationship with Jesus is taken to a deeper experience. And, it is here where few ever consistently reach. The reasons are various: ignorance; busyness and business; apathy; denial; and fear are a few.

Imagination is a key component of resting. Imagine your most peaceful and restful place to be. Then invite God to be there with you. Allow him to take the lead from there. Let him speak first. Let him walk first. Let him stop first. Simply follow, listen and be with him. For example, your place of peace may be on the beach at sunset. See yourself with him (or better yet, feel yourself with him since God is spirit and unseen and you have never seen Jesus. You can use the images painted of Jesus as a starting point if your wish) as you stand on the warm sand, feeling the ocean breeze on your face. Enjoy being in his presence. He may lead you on a walk or sit down and watch the sun set together. He may embrace you or talk to you or be silent with you. You can feel comfortable to let God can do whatever he wants because he is both perfectly good and perfectly loving toward you.

Some of you (most likely the thinkers) are getting very uncomfortable here. This is most likely because you see the inherent danger of using the imagination. This aspect of being with God can potentially degenerate into a self-serving fantasy that borderlines being (or simply is) blasphemous and heretical. While this certainly can happen, the baby does not have to be thrown out with the potentially dirty bath water. While caution is certainly advised, I encourage you to develop your imagination with God. At first you will need to check that what you are feeling and thinking is God-centered and biblically sound. After you become well accustomed to God’s presence, you will easily distinguish it from your own or that of the Enemy. Bottom line is that you do not want to miss out on this vital and life changing experience with God because of potential abuse. If this type of thinking ruled, no one would approach scripture for fear of misinterpreting it. Trust that God wants you to abide in him and he in you every moment of every day.

Please note that breaking down listening to and talking to God into these five components can make it seem like a difficult thing to do while in fact you do it many times a day. It is similar to normal everyday conversation. When you enter into a room to talk with a friend you first center by finding them in the room and locking eyes and greeting them with a hug or “hello” (focusing). Then you begin to converse and you hear what she has to say to you and unconsciously begin to interpret what is being said so that you understand her (listening). Then, again unconsciously, you apply what she said to you personally (understanding). How does this affect me? You may need to think about what she has said for a while and



think through the various ramifications. Then, if you are comfortable with your friend, you will let her know how you feel based on what you heard and how it affects you (responding). You will let her know if you are confused or encouraged or hopeful or scared. And finally, you will just hang out with her with no agenda (resting). This last phase happens more readily the closer you are with a person; where you can just be with each other and still experience the value and presence and comfort of the other.

### **The Value of Training In Praying Scripture**

The value of training in praying scripture is it gives you the sacred rhythm of practicing the presence of God in its fullest sense. All aspects of engagement with God are present: Mind, heart and soul. It is a perfectly balanced approach that trains you to speak with God and listen to him in a life-giving way. Without a comprehensive approach, you will tend to fixate on what you do well or what is easy to you and not develop the other aspects of praying scripture. Thinkers will be unbalanced in *responding* and *resting*. Feelers will be unbalanced in the interpreting aspect of *listening* and the work of *understanding*. The point is to develop a healthy rhythm of communicating with God through training that facilitates a natural ability to commune with him anytime, anyplace in any circumstance outside of training.



**AFFECTIONATE**

compassionate  
friendly  
loving  
open hearted  
sympathetic  
tender  
warm

**CONFIDENT**

empowered  
open  
proud  
safe  
secure

**ENGAGED**

absorbed  
alert  
curious  
engrossed  
enchanted  
entranced  
fascinated  
interested  
intrigued  
involved  
spellbound  
stimulated

**INSPIRED**

amazed  
awed  
wonder

**AFRAID**

apprehensive  
dread  
foreboding  
frightened  
mistrustful  
panicked  
petrified  
scared  
suspicious  
terrified  
worried

**EXCITED**

amazed  
animated  
ardent  
aroused  
astonished  
dazzled  
eager  
energetic  
enthusiastic  
giddy  
invigorated  
lively  
passionate  
surprised  
vibrant

**EXHILARATED**

blissful  
ecstatic  
elated  
enthralled  
exuberant  
radiant  
rapturous  
thrilled

**GRATEFUL**

appreciative  
moved  
thankful  
touched

**DISCONNECTED**

alienated  
aloof  
apathetic  
bored  
detached  
distracted  
indifferent  
numb  
removed  
uninterested  
withdrawn

**JOYFUL**

amused  
delighted  
glad  
happy  
jubilant  
pleased  
tickled

**PEACEFUL**

calm  
clear headed  
comfortable  
centered  
content  
equanimous  
fulfilled  
mellow  
quiet  
relaxed  
relieved  
satisfied  
serene  
still  
tranquil  
trusting

**REFRESHED**

enlivened  
rejuvenated  
renewed  
rested  
restored  
revived

**PAIN**

agony  
anguished  
bereaved  
devastated  
grief  
heartbroken  
hurt  
lonely



Community CRC

Oakdale

**ANNOYED**

aggravated  
dismayed  
disgruntled  
displeased  
exasperated  
frustrated  
impatient  
irritated  
irked

**ANGRY**

enraged  
furious  
incensed  
indignant  
irate  
livid  
outraged  
resentful

**AVERSION**

animosity  
appalled  
contempt  
disgusted  
dislike  
hate  
horrified  
hostile  
repulsed

**CONFUSED**

ambivalent  
baffled  
bewildered  
dazed  
hesitant  
lost  
mystified  
perplexed  
puzzled  
torn

**DISQUIET**

agitated  
alarmed  
discombobulated  
disconcerted  
disturbed  
perturbed  
rattled  
restless  
shocked  
startled  
surprised  
troubled  
turbulent  
turmoil  
uncomfortable  
uneasy  
unnerved  
unsettled  
upset

**EMBARRASSED**

ashamed  
chagrined  
flustered  
guilty  
mortified  
self-conscious

**FATIGUE**

beat  
burnt out  
depleted  
exhausted  
lethargic  
listless  
sleepy  
tired  
weary  
worn out  
miserable  
regretful  
remorseful

**SAD**

depressed  
dejected  
despair  
despondent  
disappointed  
discouraged  
disheartened  
forlorn  
gloomy  
heavy hearted  
hopeless  
melancholy  
unhappy  
wretched

**TENSE**

anxious  
cranky  
distressed  
distraught  
edgy  
fidgety  
frazzled  
irritable  
jittery  
nervous  
overwhelmed  
restless  
stressed out

**VULNERABLE**

fragile  
guarded  
helpless  
insecure  
leery  
reserved  
sensitive  
shaky

**YEARNING**

envious  
jealous  
longing  
nostalgic  
pining  
wistful

	<b>The Law</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>Psalms</b>	<b>Poetry</b>	<b>Prophecy</b>	<b>Gospels</b>	<b>Epistles</b>
<i>Wk</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>(Sunday)</i>
1	Gen 1-3	Josh 1-5	Psalms 1-2	Job 1-2	Isa 1-6	Matt 1-2	Rom 1-2
2	Gen 4-7	Josh 6-10	Psalms 3-5	Job 3-4	Isa 7-11	Matt 3-4	Rom 3-4
3	Gen 8-11	Josh 11-15	Psalms 6-8	Job 5-6	Isa 12-17	Matt 5-7	Rom 5-6
4	Gen 12-15	Josh 16-20	Psalms 9-11	Job 7-8	Isa 18-22	Matt 8-10	Rom 7-8
5	Gen 16-19	Josh 21-24	Psalms 12-14	Job 9-10	Isa 23-28	Matt 11-13	Rom 9-10
6	Gen 20-23	Judges 1-6	Psalms 15-17	Job 11-12	Isa 29-33	Matt 14-16	Rom 11-12
7	Gen 24-27	Judges 7-11	Psalms 18-20	Job 13-14	Isa 34-39	Matt 17-19	Rom 13-14
8	Gen 28-31	Judges 12-16	Psalms 21-23	Job 15-16	Isa 40-44	Matt 20-22	Rom 15-16
9	Gen 32-35	Judges 17-21	Psalms 24-26	Job 17-18	Isa 45-50	Matt 23-25	1Cor 1-2
10	Gen 36-39	Ruth	Psalms 27-29	Job 19-20	Isa 51-55	Matt 26-28	1Cor 3-4
11	Gen 40-43	1Sam 1-5	Psalms 30-32	Job 21-22	Isa 56-61	Mark 1-2	1Cor 5-6
12	Gen 44-47	1Sam 6-10	Psalms 33-35	Job 23-24	Isa 62-66	Mark 3-4	1Cor 7-8
13	Gen 48-50	1Sam 11-15	Psalms 36-38	Job 25-26	Jeremiah 1-6	Mark 5-6	1Cor 9-10
14	Ex 1-4	1Sam 16-20	Psalms 39-41	Job 27-28	Jeremiah 7-11	Mark 7-8	1Cor 11-12
15	Ex 5-8	1Sam 21-25	Psalms 42-44	Job 29-30	Jeremiah 12-16	Mark 9-10	1Cor 13-14
16	Ex 9-12	1Sam 26-31	Psalms 45-47	Job 31-32	Jeremiah 17-21	Mark 11-12	1Cor 15-16
17	Ex 13-16	2Sam 1-4	Psalms 48-50	Job 33-34	Jeremiah 22-26	Mark 13-14	2Cor 1-3
18	Ex 17-20	2Sam 5-9	Psalms 51-53	Job 35-36	Jeremiah 27-31	Mark 15-16	2Cor 4-5
19	Ex 21-24	2Sam 10-14	Psalms 54-56	Job 37-38	Jeremiah 32-36	Luke 1-2	2Cor 6-8
20	Ex 25-28	2Sam 15-19	Psalms 57-59	Job 39-40	Jeremiah 37-41	Luke 3-4	2Cor 9-10
21	Ex 29-32	2Sam 20-24	Psalms 60-62	Job 41-42	Jeremiah 42-46	Luke 5-6	2Cor 11-13
22	Ex 33-36	1Ki 1-4	Psalms 63-65	Prov 1	Jeremiah 47-52	Luke 7-8	Gal 1-3
23	Ex 37-40	1Ki 5-9	Psalms 66-68	Prov 2-3	Lament.	Luke 9-10	Gal 4-6
24	Lev 1-3	1Ki 10-13	Psalms 69-71	Prov 4	Ezekiel 1-6	Luke 11-12	Eph 1-3
25	Lev 4-6	1Ki 14-18	Psalms 72-74	Prov 5-6	Ezekiel 7-12	Luke 13-14	Eph 4-6
26	Lev 7-9	1Ki 19-22	Psalms 75-77	Prov 7	Ezekiel 13-18	Luke 15-16	Phil 1-2
27	Lev 10-12	2Ki 1-5	Psalms 78-80	Prov 8-9	Ezekiel 19-24	Luke 17-18	Phil 3-4
28	Lev 13-15	2Ki 6-10	Psalms 81-83	Prov 10	Ezekiel 25-30	Luke 19-20	Col 1-2
29	Lev 16-18	2Ki 11-15	Psalms 84-86	Prov 11-12	Ezekiel 31-36	Luke 21-22	Col 3-4
30	Lev 19-21	2Ki 16-20	Psalms 87-89	Prov 13	Ezekiel 37-42	Luke 23-24	1Thes 1-3
31	Lev 22-24	2Ki 21-25	Psalms 90-92	Prov 14-15	Ezekiel 43-48	John 1-2	1Thes 4-5
32	Lev 25-27	1Chr 1-4	Psalms 93-95	Prov 16	Dan 1-6	John 3-4	2Thes
33	Num 1-4	1Chr 5-9	Psalms 96-98	Prov 17-18	Dan 7-12	John 5-6	1Tim 1-3
34	Num 5-8	1Chr 10-14	Psalms 99-101	Prov 19	Hosea 1-7	John 7-9	1Tim 4-6
35	Num 9-12	1Chr 15-19	Psalms 102-104	Prov 20-21	Hosea 8-14	John 10-12	2Tim 1-2
36	Num 13-16	1Chr 20-24	Psalms 105-107	Prov 22	Joel	John 13-15	2Tim 3-4
37	Num 17-20	1Chr 25-29	Psalms 108-110	Prov 23-24	Amos 1-4	John 16-18	Titus
38	Num 21-24	2Chr 1-5	Psalms 111-113	Prov 25	Amos 5-9	John 19-21	Philemon
39	Num 25-28	2Chr 6-10	Psalms 114-116	Prov 26-27	Obadiah	Acts 1-2	Heb 1-4
40	Num 29-32	2Chr 11-15	Psalms 117-118	Prov 28	Jonah	Acts 3-4	Heb 5-7
41	Num 33-36	2Chr 16-20	Psalms 119	Prov 29-30	Micah	Acts 5-6	Heb 8-10
42	Deut 1-3	2Chr 21-24	Psalms 120-121	Prov 31	Nahum	Acts 7-8	Heb 11-13
43	Deut 4-6	2Chr 25-28	Psalms 122-124	Eccl 1-2	Habakkuk	Acts 9-10	James 1-3
44	Deut 7-9	2Chr 29-32	Psalms 125-127	Eccl 3-4	Zephaniah	Acts 11-12	James 4-5
45	Deut 10-12	2Chr 33-36	Psalms 128-130	Eccl 5-6	Haggai	Acts 13-14	1Pet 1-3
46	Deut 13-15	Ezra 1-5	Psalms 131-133	Eccl 7-8	Zech 1-7	Acts 15-16	1Pet 4-5
47	Deut 16-19	Ezra 6-10	Psalms 134-136	Eccl 9-10	Zech 8-14	Acts 17-18	2Pet
48	Deut 20-22	Neh 1-4	Psalms 137-139	Eccl 11-12	Malachi	Acts 19-20	1John 1-3
49	Deut 23-25	Neh 5-9	Psalms 140-142	Song 1-2	Rev 1-6	Acts 21-22	1John 4-5
50	Deut 26-28	Neh 10-13	Psalms 143-145	Song 3-4	Rev 7-11	Acts 23-24	2John
51	Deut 29-31	Esther 1-5	Psalms 146-148	Song 5-6	Rev 12-17	Acts 25-26	3John



52	Deut 32-34	Esther 6-10	Psalms 149-150	Song 7-8	Rev 18-22	Acts 27-28	Jude
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**Communion Meditation**

*Professing:* (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.  
 We believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
 Born of the virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
 Was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead.  
 On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven  
 Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
 He will come to judge the living and the dead.  
 We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,  
 The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
 The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

*Proclaiming:* 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, “this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, “this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins.”

**Remember and believe that the body & blood of Jesus was given & shed for the forgiveness of sins.**

**Song** – Ancient of Days -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJUtaW21qAM>

*Though the nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall  
 There is still one King reigning over all  
 So I will not fear for this truth remains  
 That my God is, the Ancient of Days  
 None above Him, none before Him  
 All of time in His hands  
 For His throne it shall remain and ever stand  
 All the power, all the glory  
 I will trust in His name  
 For my God is, the Ancient of Days  
 Though the dread of night overwhelms my soul  
 He is here with me, I am not alone  
 O His love is sure, and He knows my name  
 For my God is, the Ancient of Days  
 None above Him, none before Him  
 All of time in His hands  
 For His throne it shall remain and ever stand  
 All the power, all the glory  
 I will trust in His name  
 For my God is, the Ancient of Days*



*Though I may not see what the future brings  
I will watch and wait for the Savior King  
Then my joy complete, standing face to face  
In the presence of the Ancient of Days  
None above Him, none before Him  
All of time in His hands  
For His throne it shall remain and ever stand  
All the power, all the glory  
I will trust in His name  
For my God is, the Ancient of Days  
For my God is, the Ancient of Days*

### **Sending as Disciples of Jesus**

The apostle Paul often spoke in terms of athletic training in regards to maturing as a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth:

#### **1 Corinthians 9:25–27**

Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

#### **1 Timothy 4:7–8**

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

May we, like Paul train to mature as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth that image his love and grace and truth and mercy to others as has to us – humbly, sacrificially, generously, selflessly, patiently and peacefully.

May we pray scripture daily, wherever we are so that we might practice the presence of God in our lives through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

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**We are sent out by God into the world as his witnesses. As we go, may we know with our minds and believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths the gospel of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. And may we live in a manner worthy of that Good News at work, at home, at school and in our neighborhood to the glory of God and through the person and power of the Holy Spirit.**