

SMALL GROUP ESSENTIALS

| THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

 **GROUPS**

THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

Discipline in today's world seems to depend on the season of life for many people. Some seasons people can display tremendous discipline to workout, practice healthy eating habits, or give back to the community. Yet, as the season changes discipline can vanish as if there was no discipline at all. At Rush Creek we desire to equip our small groups with clarity on what a disciplined life in Christ should look like. We recognize people and their circumstances are different and change over time. However the disciplines addressed in this module reach across all circumstances and seasons of life.

THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

| Prayer

by Barry Parker

Leader: While there is research used in this lesson about a leader's role, reinforce to the group that it applies to group members as well. Modeling their life after the leader is a biblical model for discipleship. As you pray, you will model a praying life. Group members should follow your model. Also, there is a fun activity in the dream section that is designed to be completed during your group time.

Group Member: Jot down statements or phrases that stand out to you in the lesson this week. Posture your heart for full participation as you read through the assigned Scriptures. Be ready to share responses to any questions in the lesson and fully participate in dream group activity.

DISCOVER

Prayer in the Christian life is a paramount discipline for every believer to develop. It will not take long for a person to recognize how weak and inept they are on their own and reach out for Spiritual guidance to help them face the many challenges of following Jesus in a world that never seems to sleep.

In the book, *Small Groups Big Impact* researchers Jim Egli and Dwight Marable, report that prayer in the life of a small group leader is the most important and effective element in developing a healthy, growing group. In their book they write:

"Our research reveals that leaders with a strong prayer life have groups that are more than four times more fruitful evangelistically." Wow! "four times more fruitful!" They also add that "Few leaders realize that lesson preparation makes a negligible difference in group health and growth, but prayer makes a big difference. It is much more important to prepare you

heart than it is to prepare your notes!" The evidence is clear from their research that prayer makes the difference, it's does not matter how educated, how dynamic your personality or how much time you spend in preparation for your lesson. The difference is how much you fervently pray for the people in your care as a shepherd. Now, this is great news for leaders. But what if you are not a leader. What is your role? To follow the example set by your leader.

DEVELOP

It's impressive to hear from passionate, well informed, well documented and studied writers such as Jim Egli and Dwight Marable about the importance of a leader who prays for his small group but now, let's read into the life of the greatest small group leader that has ever lived (Jesus) and see how He exhibited prayer to produce a productive small group that changed the world. As we examine Jesus' prayer life in Scripture we will find that Jesus prays:

Often.

READ LUKE 5:16 & MARK 1:35

Notice the descriptive words used "very early", "while it was still dark" It feels as if Mark is making a point that Jesus found it necessary to be very intentional so that He could spend ample time alone with His Father before the rest of the world began to pull and demand His attention. Again, in Luke 6:12 we see Jesus spending an extended time exhibiting prayer in the decision of who would be His disciples. "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the night in prayer to God" As we can see from these passages and others Jesus is setting an example that demonstrates the importance that building a rhythm and discipline of spending time with the Father should be a priority in our everyday experience.

With Others.

As we read in the Gospels we see in the Bible several instances where Jesus models the importance of praying with others like in Luke 9:28 when Jesus reaches out to His inner circle of disciples and invites them to join Him in prayer "[Jesus] took Peter, John and James with Him and went onto a mountain to pray." Jesus also said these words about corporate prayer in Matthew 18:19 "if two of you agree on earth

about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.” And Following Jesus’ example in corporate prayer, the newly formed church in Acts 1:14 underscores the importance of believers praying with one another when it states “They all joined together constantly in prayer...” and then in Act 2:42 a scripture that captures the essence of what we desire to reproduce in our Rush Creek groups “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers”

For Others.

READ JOHN 17:9

In this prayer we are able to see that Jesus is modeling for us what was documented in the book, Small Groups Big Impact; that prayer is the most powerful tool we can use to ensure the effectiveness, growth and health in our small group. Jesus was asking His Father through the Holy Spirit to ignite His small group after His departure so that they would carry out His mission in the world and to draw all people to himself.

For the Future.

READ JOHN 17:20

So in the same way, we should pray as Jesus, not only for the precious lives that Christ has entrusted to us during this season but also that we should cast our vision out into future generations of our groups and pray for names and faces we may never even know, that God would multiply our investments beyond our wildest dreams and saturate the Metroplex with groups.

DEEPEN

What are some specific prayers that God has answered in your life?

What does your prayer life look like? Write down how often, when, where, what do you pray about.

In what way does the book *Small Groups Big Impact* change the way you pray for your group?

In what way does the Scripture about Jesus’ prayer life challenge your current prayer life?

DREAM

Divide your group into two teams and give each team their assignments.

Team 1 Assignment

Make a list of creative ideas our group can pray as individuals for each other throughout the week.

Team 2 Assignment

Make a list of creative ways our group can experience prayer time together.

After 10 – 15 minutes of discussion reunite your group and share the ideas and how the group will execute the new ideas into the rhythm of your group life.

THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

| Bible Study

by Cole Guidroz

Leader: This lesson is loaded with questions. During your group meeting spend the majority of time gently encouraging people to share their reflections from the lesson.

Group Member: Jot down statements or phrases that stand out to you in the lesson this week. Posture your heart for full participation as you read through the assigned Scriptures. Be ready to share responses to any questions in the lesson and fully participate in dream group activity.

DISCOVER

When we remember our aim of a small group is to be transformed more and more into Christ's image by each partner doing their part to love and maintain unity within the group, it shouldn't come as a shock that God has left us with some amazing practices to achieve this goal. Bible Study is one of these practices. God has given us His word (2 Timothy 3:16-17) to be our source of life, transformation, revelation of Himself, and guide on how to become a kingdom citizen. Think about it, God Himself has established a book, written throughout history, that has the ability to reveal God and transform our lives.

Pause. Take 2-3 deep breaths and reflect: Does your life really feel transformed by God?

If your spouse wrote you a love letter and left it on the counter, you better believe you are going to cherish those words and read them over and over again. Why? Because the one who authored the letter is valuable to your heart and reading it stirs your affections for them. God has written a love letter composed of 66 books spanning the course of history, so we can know Him and be amazed at His love towards us. We need to employ this practice

into our daily lives so that our affections and our hearts are being transformed into His image. We cannot know God truly apart from His Word. This is the very thing He has given us to reveal Himself to humanity so they can be saved and grow into a deeper relationship with Him. (Romans 10:17). Just as it is impossible for me to know my wife better if I do not spend time listening as she reveals her heart to me, it is impossible to get to know God better and grow my faith in Him without listening to His Word regularly. Are we willing to make time to spend with Him in His Word ?

Write down things in your life that can prevent you from making Bible study a priority.

DEVELOP

READ MATTHEW 4:4 & MATTHEW 7:24-27

The Bible has been a book under scrutiny for all of history because of the authority it claims about itself. If it is from God, then we must listen to it. However, if it is not, it is just another book to discard. Research from scholars have proven repeatedly that the Bible is one of the most well-preserved historical books in history. Here is a simple comparison of reliability in the preservation of the Bible:

Most of us believe that the work of Aristotle or Caesar are accurate translations of the original account. However, we only have about 7-15 translations of these writings. The earliest of which is found in the 8th century. However, researchers have found around 5000 Greek manuscripts, 8000 Latin manuscripts, and another 1000 manuscripts in differing languages like Coptic of the Biblical text.

Dr. Daniel Wallace puts it this way regarding the Bibles accuracy, "We have an embarrassment of riches before us that are simply waiting to be uncovered." An embarrassment of riches are before you! God has preserved His word so that His people could know Him and be transformed into His image by His word. Matthew 4:4 says we cannot live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of

the Lord. What He is saying is that even the most mundane thing that gives life, bread, is not enough to satisfy and provide you with the true life we all seek. While God provides bread, He has provided us something even greater, His Word to give us life and sustain our hunger for God. The Word of God is the most valuable thing given to us to find and maintain true life that is fulfilling and pleasing to the Lord. Any other foundation you build your life and time on will crumble.

What could happen to this source when you face adversity?

How could Isaiah 40:8 encourage you to consider the reliability of the Word of God?

How much time do you spend feasting on God's word to give life and transform your heart? This reveals where our source is based on where our time and treasure lie.

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16 & 2 TIMOTHY 2:14-17 & ROMANS 10:14

One of the hardest things about practicing is the consistency to keep doing that practice when so many other things desire our attention. You may have said something like this, "I want to study the Bible more, but it is boring. I just don't understand it. I can't find the time. I fall asleep or get distracted by other things and can't focus." This is a real struggle, but one that must be fought. From what these verses teach, what is at stake is not just a small time with God, but our very hearts being transformed by God and being deceived by fading things of this world.

Notice the benefits of the word are able to make you complete in Christ lacking in nothing, studying God's word grows our faith from hearing the word of God, and it instructs us in the way we should go. Isn't that what we all want? We want to be pleasing to God, know and believe God more than we do now, and be walking the right direction towards His coming Kingdom. The Word promises all of those things by simply sitting and meditating on it daily. However, notice what 2 Timothy 2:22-24 says some will do instead of meditation and guarding their hearts with the Word's instruction. They will enjoy empty gossip, unfruitful conversations, and will produce ungodliness. Simply put they will lead lives further

away from pleasing God by not guarding and re-teaching themselves the Word of God.

Check your social media timelines. It is full of people having fruitless conversations that are simply being held for empty chatter and ungodliness. We must protect our minds and our hearts from being transformed into the world's image and more into God's image. This is only done through daily meditation of God's Word and letting it sink into our hearts and convict us to then practice it. How much we read the Word directly shows how much we delight in God.

What time is most available for a quiet/un-distracting place to read the Bible?

How do you view your time reading your Bible? Is it simply a duty of trying to find some answer to life's problems, or a delight in coming to know God better? What is the hardest part of studying the Bible personally? How can this be addressed?

Do you find yourself being simply a hearer of the word or someone who actually acts on what they read?

Do you have a Bible reading plan that you follow? If not, we recommend starting in the Gospel of John or picking up our Pathways books to learn to read scripture along with a study guide.

DEEPEN

How often do you spend studying your Bible?

How do you view the Bible?

What are your greatest obstacles with studying the Bible?

What are the benefits to studying the Bible?
Do you spend more time in unfruitful chatter than the Word of God?

What is one area you have read recently that is challenging you?

DREAM

Many people do not study the Bible because they were never taught how. Unfortunately, some one may simply tell them they should be studying Scripture without actually teaching them simple steps how to get the most out of their time in the Word.

Here are simple steps to help any Bible study time:
Read Acts 1:8 and follow these steps.

Observe: Find and connect the different details of the text by asking questions through observation.

This is where we get to be like the Great detective, Sherlock Holmes. One of his famous quotes speaks highly to why we get so little out of our study of the word. Holmes says to Dr. Watson when asked how he managed to solve the case, "You see Watson, but you do not observe." We have read, or seen, the Scripture many times but never observed or asked questions about the text. We do this by going to a text and being a detective. By asking questions of the text and seeing the connecting lines.

Test your observation skills in two ways:
Ask how many stoplights do you go through to get from your house to small group meeting? This should reveal how little we pay attention and observe our surroundings on a normal basis.

Take Acts 1:8 and for 5 minutes down observations from the text. Examples could be anything from Jesus is the one speaking to the disciples, the reason they receive the Helper, or where the power comes from and for what purpose. When we ask these questions, we are engaging the text instead of just reading a text on autopilot and missing the value of it.

Interpret: What did God originally intend with this text? How did they read this text?

This stage is after you observe the meaning and details of the passage of scripture to ask, "What did this passage mean to the original audience?" This requires some work but pays off for the application later. When we interpret the passage in its original context we see what God originally intended us to know and gain instead of things we want the text to say. Remember this is God's word to us, not our thoughts on God's word. You can interpret the meaning through a few simple questions.

Who is speaking and who is the audience? Ex: Acts 1:8, Jesus to the Disciples. What is the settings culture and tone? Ex: Jesus just rose from grave and is giving last word to the men who followed Him for 3 years. How does this passage fit within the context of the chapter and book? The rest of Acts is about the Disciples fulfilling this command given by Jesus and being a witness through the power of the Holy Spirit to the world.

What is the central idea with the passage? Jesus is giving the Disciples a Helper so that His disciples can be His witnesses to the world.

Apply: How does the text apply to our lives now? What should I change about my life?

Now the fun part begins! However, this is also the part many people want to automatically jump to because people simply want to know what the passage means to them. However, we cannot apply what God is saying to us without fully knowing what God was

THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

| *Solitude*

by Clayton Carver

Leader: During your group meeting spend the majority of time gently encouraging people to share their reflections from the lesson. Perhaps build in time to practice solitude during your group meeting. There are some suggestions in the dream section.

Group Member: Jot down statements or phrases that stand out to you in the lesson this week. Posture your heart for full participation as you read through the assigned Scriptures. Be ready to share responses to any questions in the lesson and fully participate in dream group activity.

DISCOVER

When you think of “rest,” what comes to mind? Do you normally envision loud, chaotic places and moving at 1,000 MPH? Think of when you sleep. Most of us sleep in a place that triggers as few of our senses as possible – a dark room with little or no noise. We turn our phones off or leave them in another room. We shut out the world as much as we can for a time so that we allow our minds and bodies to recharge.

Just like our bodies need this sort of intentional effort to recharge, our souls need the exact same thing. Our souls need to be able to withdraw from the daily, hectic routines of our lives and rest with our Maker. The spiritual discipline of silence and solitude are what allow us to build intimacy in our relationship with God, just as it allows us to build intimacy in any other relationship. When Solomon wanted to build intimacy with his wife, he beckoned her, “Come away with me, my beautiful one” (Song of Sol. 2:10). We are the bride of Christ, and He longs to have a personal relationship with us.

DEVELOP

Scripture gives us multiple reasons to value the discipline of silence and solitude:

To remove distractions.

READ MATTHEW 14:23

Jesus was constantly being followed by large crowds of people, and rightfully so. He was doing miraculous things that no one had ever seen before. He had the power to meet any and every need that people brought to him. And yet, he felt it necessary, on multiple occasions, to send people away so that he could be alone with the Father. Did He need to do this? The bigger question is do we need to do this? The answer is most definitely yes. Jesus knew this and was setting an example for us to follow.

As an act of faith and worship.

READ HABBAKUK 2:20 & PSALM 46:10

Most of us think of worship as being something active on our part. However, the Bible teaches us that we can express just as much faith and just as much worship by taking less action. Your world is moving faster than you can keep up. You have problems, needs, responsibilities, people counting on you to come through. All the while, God wants to know, “Do you trust me?” Perhaps the question he is asking you is, “Have you forgotten me?” Taking time out of our day, especially when you don’t think you have that time to give, is itself an act of worship by showing God that he is the most important part of your life and you are trusting him to take care of you.

To discern the voice of God .

READ 1 KINGS 19:11-12

This is what happened to the prophet Elijah after he fled for his life. He ended up on Mount Sinai, the same mountain where the Lord had spoken to Moses. First, God sent a wind, then an earthquake, then a fire. But the Lord chose not to speak through those avenues, although he had done so before. Instead, he spoke to Elijah through a whisper.

The point of this passage is not that God only speaks through whispers. All of the events leading up to the whisper are ways in which God had spoken to people

THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

| *Journaling*

by Stan Rogers

Leader: During your group meeting spend the majority of time gently encouraging people to share their reflections from the lesson. Perhaps build in time to discuss more specifically the struggle to journal.

Group Member: Jot down statements or phrases that stand out to you in the lesson this week. Posture your heart for full participation as you read through the assigned Scriptures. Be ready to share responses to any questions in the lesson.

DISCOVER

Journaling is modeled in Scripture throughout the psalms as David expresses his many ups and downs in His walk with the Lord. The prophet Jeremiah recorded the fall of Jerusalem and his thoughts about it in the book of Lamentations. Keeping a record of our own Christian pilgrimage can not only help us grasp more fully God's work in our lives but can leave a rich heritage for our children, grandchildren, and future generations. 1 Corinthians 1:3-7 speaks of how we can share with others the comfort we receive from Christ, so they may also know the blessing of being His.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

By documenting the way God comforts and provides for us in our various trials, we can leave a road map of help for loved ones and friends. In *Spiritual Disciples for The Christian Life*, Donald S. Whitney states: "Through the knowledge of ourselves and our condition, we are aroused to seek God. A journal can be the means by which the Holy Spirit shows us areas of sin or weakness, the emptiness of a path we have chosen, insight into our motives, or other things that can transform the journal page into an altar of seeking God."

As we develop a habit of writing down the victories and defeats within our walk with Christ, we come to understand our own tendencies and are able to press more deeply into the Lord for help, comfort, and guidance. John Calvin, theologian, pastor, and reformer in the Protestant Reformation, says this about journaling: "Without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God."

We are exhorted in Psalm 103:2: "My soul, bless the Lord, and do not forget all His benefits." A great way to "not forget" the benefits and provisions of the Lord is to keep a journal. English philosopher and statesman, Francis Bacon, chides: "If a man write little, he had need have a great memory." God commands the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 8:2: "Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way. He guided you in the desert for these 40 years." Much of life is a "desert" and journaling about God's provision and protection can be a great way to "remember how the Lord your God led you all the way."

DEVELOP

Asaph records in Psalm 77 a heart-invoking journal, illuminating his own distresses and trials, in the shadow of the recorded "journal" of how God provided for the children of Israel through the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Consider how beneficial our own personal expressions of trials and God's provision and manifestation could impact future generations.

READ PSALM 77:1-6: In the day of trouble, I will turn to the Lord.

As you reflect on the words of the Psalmist, you can almost hear the desperation in his voice. How often do we cry out to the Lord, desperate for Him to hear us? Often our cry is focused on the immediate problem at hand. We forget that God is not as concerned with our happiness as our holiness. The trials and struggles we face are to lead us into relational intimacy. We are interested in a quick fix. God is interested in deepening roots so that when hard times come, the Living Waters of Christ will sustain us.

READ PSALM 77:7-9: In the day of trouble, I will lay my questions before the Lord.

As in any relationship, authenticity is key. Our questions, doubts, and fears can and should be laid

before our heavenly Father. He knows them already. Journaling truthfully about them is to our benefit as it leads us to understand, acknowledge, and work through our deepest longings and anguishes. As we entrust them to God, He will lead and guide us.

READ PSALM 77:10-20: In the day of trouble, I will turn to your written record and remember.

God’s power and sovereignty are best displayed through His children who trustingly follow Him. It is easy for us to follow God during sunny, tranquil days but without the storms and trials of life, our faith would not grow, nor would we see God’s miraculous hand stretched out to deliver us. It’s funny if you think about the contrast between how we would like our lives to go—without conflict or uncertainty, and the entertainment we enjoy watching. Who wants to go see a movie that is one sunny, happy day after another? No, we like drama, suspense, and climax. Why can we not step back emotionally from our own story, that God is weaving in our lives, and trust Him with the ups and downs, knowing He sees the beginning and the end. He is faithfully working out His good will and pleasure in each of us.

When I was a young boy, I loved to explore. I would explore nearby creeks for fish or crawdads for me to catch. I spent hours riding my bike down dirt trails or behind stores looking for treasures. I would climb the huge pecan tree in our back yard and could see for miles. One time, I decided I would explore the boxes hidden away in our attic. In those boxes were the usual Christmas decorations, camping supplies, and a few odds and ends my parents just couldn’t throw away.

One box was filled with my mom & dad’s high school memories. There were pictures, report cards, and a couple of “love letters” that made me laugh. In the middle of all the typical memorabilia—things that meant little to me—was a small book with the word “diary” on the front. In it, my Mom recorded various events of her life from the age of nine till sometime around her graduation. Most of her early years were filled with typical childhood memories that read more like a shopping list than memories from the heart. But as she matured from a girl to a young lady, her entries became more from her heart as she recorded intimate details.

I learned about the death of a grandma I had never met and the various relatives she lived with. I learned of best friends, occasional boyfriends, and weekend adventures long since forgotten. I was able to read about how my Mom and Dad met and the way he would come by and see her at work, the various arguments they had, and when she began to fall in love.

I have thought about that day in the attic several times over the years. I learned so much about my Mom and have treasured it ever since. She had forgotten a lot of the details she wrote passionately about so long ago. Without her written account, this treasure trove of memories would have been lost forever.

DEEPEN

What are some reasons you might keep a journal?

What are some common obstacles that might hinder you from developing the practice of journaling?

How can keeping a journal help you better meditate on Scripture and the things God is doing in your life?

What are some ways a journal might help you monitor spiritual goals and priorities?

THE DISCIPLINED LIFE

| *Rule of Life*

by Clayton Aker

Leader: During your group meeting spend the majority of time gently encouraging people to share their reflections from the lesson. Perhaps build in time to discuss more specifically their preferred area of life to strengthen. How can the group help?

Group Member: Jot down statements or phrases that stand out to you in the lesson this week. Posture your heart for full participation as you read through the assigned Scriptures. Be ready to share responses to any questions in the lesson.

DISCOVER

We are all being disciplined by something or someone, whether we know it or not. To be a disciple is to be a student, an apprentice, to learn not only what your teacher thinks, but their way of life. Through different avenues, we can be unintentionally disciplined to become someone else.

In our walk with Jesus, we are called to be intentional about our child-of-God self. Not being disciplined by music, tv shows, podcast or outside sources. But to be intentional about the one who started this good work in us, and partner with him to train ourselves in godliness, thankfully through his power (2 Peter 1:3), until the day of completion. To be intentional, to have a rule of life, where God and your walk with Jesus is a priority, will take time and laying our pride and selfishness at the feet of Jesus.

Dallas Willard once said “Our part in thus practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him. In the early time of our “practicing,” we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits—not the law of gravity—and can be broken. A new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as

we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north. If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the pole star of our inward beings.” [2]

To get to this point, where our hearts and minds continually return to God, will take time. It will take training, not trying, but training yourself. People of great faith didn’t get there overnight, but they had the discipline to let Jesus and his ways be the rule of their life.

What is a rule of life? “A Rule of Life is a pattern of Spiritual practices that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness.”

DEVELOP

It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationship with God in a casual or haphazard manner. There will be a need for some intentional commitment and some reorganization in our own lives. But there is nothing that will enrich our lives more than a deeper and clearer perception of God’s presence in the routine of daily living. William Paulsell[3]

The disciplines which we build into our rhythm of life help us to shed the “old self” and allow our “new self” in Christ to be formed. Spiritual disciplines are means of grace by which God can nourish us. Ultimately a Rule should help you to love God more, so if it becomes a legalistic way of earning points with God or impressing others, it should be scrapped. If the traditional, ancient term “rule” concerns you because it sounds legalistic, think of “rule” as a “rhythm of life.”

Rules of life will vary, depending on the season of life of a person. The disciplines/rhythms you practice and how you practice will vary. Thomas a Kempis said “All cannot use the same kind of spiritual exercise but one suits this person, and another that. Different devotions are also suited to the season.”

Take some time to look up the following verses. Pay careful attention to the invitation that Jesus is giving.

MATTHEW 4:19-20

LUKE 9:57-62

MATTHEW 11:28-30 (I encourage you to look up The Message version on this one)

JOHN 1:48-51

MATTHEW 6:33

This isn't a little invitation to a nice life. This is a radical call to give God EVERYTHING. When Jesus called those who would be his disciples, he said, "Follow me (Mt. 4:19). Live like I do (Lk. 9:58). Learn from me (Mt.11:29). See how I relate to the Father (Jn1:50). Order your life around this ONE thing, and then everything else will be aligned. Mt. 6:33)." So, you see, it matters immensely how we spend our days. The call to discipleship, to aligning our lives around the way of Jesus, is not just for "super Christians" but it is an invitation to participate in God's grand story to anyone who accepts it.

How do we accomplish this? It's all because of grace. Because of the salvation we received by grace in Jesus, that same grace empowers us to pursue God. The Apostle Peter in his second letter said "His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." (2 Peter 1:3)

Take some time to read 2 Peter 1:3-9 and write some thoughts on this passage.

Paul in his letter to the Romans expressed the importance of the way of Jesus.

READ ROMANS 5:10

We were reconciled, given right standing, by the death of Jesus. But did you catch that last part "saved by his life," the life of Jesus, the way he walked, talked, and the way he was present amongst people. When he calls us to follow him, he is calling us to learn not only what he thinks, to not only believe in who he is but to learn his unforced rhythms of grace.

A rule of life is a path that can lead us to a deeper relationship with God. It's a journey all our days, we will never get to the end, nor will be exhaust the possibilities that await us in practice. But we must begin, and no one can do it for us.

Personal Practice: Assessment, action plan, and accountability

Assessment

Before your next group time, take a few minutes to self-assess where you are at in your current situation in life-family responsibilities, work schedule, and other life circumstances. Reflect on strengths and weakness of your character.

Where are areas you see growth in your life?

Where are areas of struggles and sin habits you are holding onto?

Where do you sense that God is calling you to stretch and grow? Where do you want to change?

Action Plan

Read through a list of spiritual disciplines. What disciplines and specific practices are you attracted to and why are you attracted to them. Think through and schedule how you will practice this discipline of the coming days, weeks and month.

Accountability

You will talk over your assessment and action plan at your next group meeting.

DEEPEN

What are some things that you are unintentionally formed by? What effect do they have on your life and view of God?

What are some hindrances that keep you from being intentional and keeping your walk with Jesus a priority?
