



ESSENTIAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICES



SIMPLE HABITS.
A DEEPER LIFE.



Sunday
November 1, 2026

Psalm 1
Matthew 22:23-33
2 Timothy 3:16

Example Teaching Rhythm

Welcome and Connect: 10 Minutes

This helps people feel connected and more comfortable participating in the study and discussion.

Look Forward: 5-10 Minutes

Share any important church events, service opportunities, or upcoming group plans. Keep this brief but clear.

Look at Scripture: 25-35 Minutes

This is the main focus of Community Groups. Read the selected scripture together and guide the group through discussion questions and observations.

Prayer: 10 Minutes

Invite members to share prayer requests and praises, then pray together as a group. This is a time to support one another.

Explaining the H.E.A.R Method

The acronym **HEAR** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond**. Each of these four steps aims to cultivate an atmosphere to hear God speak.

Highlight - After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, read the passage of scripture, and highlight each verse that speaks to you.

Explain - Explain what the text means. Ask questions like:

- Who wrote this, to whom, and why? What does this reveal about God? What do the key words actually mean? What did this call the original audience to, and what does that reveal for me?

By asking questions, with the help of God's Spirit, and by using helpful study resources, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse.

Apply - Application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, work to uncover the significance of these verses and the implications they have. Ask questions like:

- What does this passage reveal about God, yourself, or the world that you need to embrace or sit with? Does this passage challenge an attitude, assumption, or habit that needs to change? Is there something to do? Is there someone to love?

Respond - Your response to the passage may take on many forms. Ask: Is there something to pray? - Let the passage shape your prayer, not just inform it. Use the "Five Daily Prayer Prompts" to guide you in your response.

Scripture Consciously captive to the Word of God

Introduction

The riddle is a good one.

A man dies without children, so by the law of Moses his brother marries the widow to raise a family in his name. That brother dies too. So does the next, all the way to the seventh, and then the woman dies. The Sadducees bring this to Jesus in the temple courts, in front of a crowd, in the last week before his crucifixion: at the resurrection, whose wife is she?

Nobody could accuse these men of not knowing their Bible. They were the priestly aristocracy, they treated the books of Moses as their authority, and the riddle is built out of Moses. They are using a command God gave to argue against a God who raises the dead.

Jesus takes two sentences to take the riddle apart. Then he asks a question of his own: "Have you not read what was said to you by God?" He quotes a line from the burning bush that these men had read their whole lives, and he says it was spoken to them.

That's where this series begins. Over four weeks we'll look at four practices God's people have leaned on for centuries: Scripture, prayer, service, and practicing his presence. Psalm 1 sits under all four, and we'll come back to it each week. Scripture comes first because the other three take their shape from it.

Today's three passages ask the same thing from three directions. Psalm 1 sets two sources of counsel against each other and describes the person who murmurs God's instruction day and night. Matthew 22 shows men who held the text and missed the One speaking it. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul, in prison and near the end of his life, tells a younger coworker where Scripture comes from: it is breathed out by God.

Martin Luther, asked in 1521 to take back his books, answered that his conscience was "captive to the Word of God." So when you open the Bible, who do you expect to be speaking, and who do you expect it to be speaking to?

Discussion Questions + Illustration

Select a question or two below to open up discussion.

- A letter, text, or voicemail you've kept... What made it worth keeping?
- When someone tells you a hard truth about yourself, what decides whether you listen?
- When you need direction, what do you consult first: a person, a search bar, your gut, a book?
- Have you ever reread a familiar sentence and suddenly heard it differently? What changed?
- Finish this sentence and compare answers around the room: "When I open the Bible, I usually expect it to..."

Around A.D. 270, a young Egyptian named Antony walked into church thinking about how the apostles left everything to follow Jesus. His parents had died, leaving him a large farm and a younger sister. That Sunday's Gospel reading was Matthew 19:21, Jesus telling a rich man to sell what he had, give to the poor, and follow him. According to Athanasius, his biographer, Antony heard it as spoken to him, though the whole congregation heard the same sentence. He gave away his land, sold his belongings for the poor, and set aside a little for his sister. He later withdrew to the desert, and others followed.

- Everyone in that room heard the same words. What was different about how Antony listened?

Highlight | Ps.1; Matt. 22:23-33; 2 Tim. 3:16

Psalm 1 sets two sources of counsel against each other. The blessed person refuses three kinds of company: the counsel of the wicked, the way of sinners, the seat of scoffers (v.1). His delight is the LORD's instruction, and he murmurs it day and night (v.2). The rest of the psalm follows two roads to their ends (vv.3-6).

In Matthew 22, the Sadducees bring Jesus the seven-brothers riddle (vv.23-28). Jesus answers in three moves. First a diagnosis: "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (v.29). Then a correction: in the resurrection people neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven (v.30). Then a question: "Have you not read what was said to you by God, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living" (vv.31-32). The crowd is astonished (v.33).

Paul tells Timothy to continue in what he learned and reminds him he has known the sacred writings since childhood, writings able to make him wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (vv.14-15). Then: all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, so that God's person may be complete, equipped for every good work (vv.16-17).

- Which verse or image stands out to you most, and why?
- Jesus quotes God speaking in the first person, "I am the God of Abraham," and says God said it "to you." Who does Jesus think is being addressed?

Explain | Consider the Context

Psalms 1 opens the Psalter, and "blessed" begins it and ends Psalm 2 (2:12), pairing them. The blessed person "meditates" (hagah), a word for murmuring: he says God's instruction aloud, day and night (Josh. 1:8).

The Sadducees' riddle uses a real law (Deut. 25:5-10) to ridicule the resurrection. Jesus names two linked failures: they know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (v.29).

At the burning bush God told Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Exod. 3:6), centuries after they died. A God who keeps that name hasn't let them go. Only Matthew has Jesus say God spoke this "to you" (v.31).

Paul wrote 2 Timothy from prison, expecting to die (4:6). The Old Testament Scriptures Timothy had known since childhood make him wise "for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (3:15). "Breathed out by God" (theopneustos) appears nowhere else in the New Testament.

- How does someone use the Bible against its own Author?
- What changes when you hear a sentence from the burning bush as addressed to you?
- Psalm 1's blessed person likely speaks the text aloud. What does that suggest about how he reads?

Apply | Discuss as a Group

The Sadducees could have passed any exam on Moses. Their trouble was the God they pictured behind the text, one who couldn't keep a promise to Abraham past the grave. We do the same when we read for a verse to fit the week and never expect to hear something we didn't ask for. Jesus hears the same lines as an address from "the God of the living."

Antony is a risky example. Jesus gave that command to one rich man (Matt. 19:22). What carries over is Antony's question, "What is this saying to me?", checked against all of Scripture and a friend who knows it.

In Psalm 1:1, wrong counsel becomes a way and then a seat, and nobody announces the move. In verse 2, the blessed person takes in one source until it comes out of his mouth. Hebrews hears Christ in "I delight to do your will" (Ps. 40:8; Heb. 10:5-10), and our delight follows his.

Paul gives Scripture four jobs: teaching, reproof, correction, training. Two stung by design, and a Bible that only encourages us has probably been edited by us. The goal is a person "complete, equipped for every good work" (v.17).

God is the God of the living, and he still speaks. We can carry his words for decades and still read them as strangers.

- When you open the Bible, are you more often listening for a word to you or looking for something to use? What's your evidence?
- Name the passage you know best. When did it last surprise you? Tell the person next to you.
- Of Paul's four jobs, which have you let Scripture do, and which have you avoided?

Respond | How should I live/pray?

Ask the Spirit to open the text. Pray Psalm 119:18, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." Jesus opened the disciples' minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45), and he still does. Then read a short passage this week asking one question: what does this show me about Jesus? He told the experts the Scriptures "bear witness about me" (John 5:39). Run the passage through HEAR and finish with a sentence beginning, "Lord Jesus, I see you..."

Give the psalm a daily place. "Meditate" (hagah) is a murmur done with the mouth (Josh. 1:8). Memorize Psalm 1:1-2 and say it aloud each morning. Read your passage aloud, slowly, twice, then carry one phrase through the day. Jesus answered each wilderness temptation with a line from Deuteronomy (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).

Let one passage reprove and correct you. Pick an area, such as money, anger, forgiveness, or a hard conversation, bring it to the text expecting to be corrected, and tell God plainly. God looks to the one who "trembles at my word" (Isa. 66:2), and James 1:22-25 says to do what you read.

Finally, read with someone. The Ethiopian official asked, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:31), and Timothy learned from his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). Choose a person, agree on a passage, and text each other one sentence a day about what you saw.

- What specific area of your life will you bring to Scripture this week, expecting to be corrected?
- Who will you read with, and what passage will you start with?

Response Tool: Five Daily Prayer Prompts

As you leave today, let these five questions carry the weight of your response into the week ahead – not as a checklist, but as an ongoing conversation with God. Introduce the five daily questions as a simple spiritual practice that can help us intentionally live out our faith in our workplaces, homes, families, and communities.

- God, where do you want me to go?
- God, who do you want me to see?
- God, what do you want me to say?
- God, what do you want me to pray?
- God, how do you want me to serve?

After this time of reflection, transition into a time of prayer requests. Allow time for members to share and, if appropriate, allow others in the class to pray for each other.

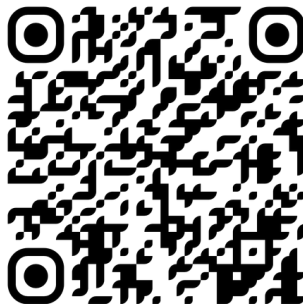
Additional Commentary

- On 'ashre ("blessed," אֲשֶׁרִי (v.1): "oh, the happiness of," opening Psalm 1 and closing Psalm 2 (2:12); makariosin the Greek Old Testament (Matt. 5:3-11). Walk, stand, sit (halak, 'amad, yashab) pair with counsel, way, seat. "Counsel" ('etsah) is a voice (Prov. 1:25, 30), and scoffers (letsim) refuse correction (Prov. 9:7-8).
- On torah (תּוֹרָה) and hefets (הֶפֶץ) (v.2): torah, from yarah, "to direct, teach," is also a parent's teaching (Prov. 1:8), given to a rescued people (Exod. 20:2). Hefets ("delight") is God's own delight in his people (Isa. 62:4) and the speaker's in Psalm 40:8 (Heb. 10:5-10).
- On hagah ("meditates," הִגָּה) (v.2): to murmur, of a lion over its prey (Isa. 31:4) and of the mouth (Josh. 1:8). Psalm 2:1 uses it for the nations who "plot" in vain: two groups muttering.
- On the Sadducees and planao (πλανᾷσθε, "you are wrong") (Matt. 22:29): they denied the afterlife (Josephus, War 2.165; Ant. 18.16-17) and angels (Acts 23:8). Their riddle builds on Deuteronomy 25:5-10. Planao means to wander off course (Matt. 18:12-13; Jas. 5:19-20). Cf. Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; Hebrews 11:17-19.
- On "said to you" (εἰπὼν) (Matt. 22:31-32): "Have you not read" is aimed at religious leaders (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42). Only Matthew has "to you." Exodus 3:6 has no verb in Hebrew, so the argument rests on covenant (Exod. 3:15-16; Luke 20:38).
- On theopneustos (θεόπνευστος, 2 Tim. 3:16): from theos plus breath or spirit, used only here in the New Testament. Cf. Psalm 33:6; 2 Peter 1:20-21 (pheromenoi, "carried along," as a ship by wind, Acts 27:15). The Greek has no verb in the first clause: "all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable" or "every God-breathed Scripture is also profitable."
- On the four uses (vv.16-17): didaskalia (teaching), elegmos (reproof), epanorthosis (setting upright again), paideia (child-training, Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:5-11). Elegmos, epanorthosis, and artios ("complete") appear only here in the New Testament.

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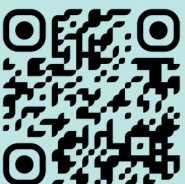
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