

Week One, Monday
Subject: Beliefs

Your Daily Devotional Time

Mark 1:35 (NIV)

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went to a solitary place, where he prayed.

“An essential part of Christian growth is the habit of daily Bible reading, prayer and meditation. There is no substitute” (MasterLife Discipleship training, Vol. 1, 31). It doesn’t matter if you have been a Christian for a few weeks or many years, a personal daily devotional time that leads to an ever-growing love relationship with God is vital. Many Christians go years without experiencing the benefit of a quiet time. A quiet time is a time of prayer and Bible reading in which you encounter God on a personal basis. To help us appreciate such a time with God, let’s consider the above verse.

First, it is natural to want to communicate with someone you love. As a child of God, we should desire quality time with God. Through such a quiet time, one can receive direction in daily decisions and encouragement during times of struggle.

Secondly, notice the time and place Jesus selected for His devotional time. Jesus prayed early in the morning in a place of solitude. It is best to find a time and a place that offers the least amount of distractions: a place and time where you can avoid phone calls, visits, noise and interruptions. Initially, it is not the length of your prayer time but the consistency that is important.

You might like to find a time and a place that you could have a short Bible reading, meditation and then a prayer. Hopefully, using “New Member” devotionals like this one will help you improve your quiet time. Each day’s devotional will only take about 10 minutes.

What is the best time for you to have a devotional time with God? _____

Where is the best place for you to have a devotional time with God? _____

Also, you can use this devotional time to meditate on scripture. You will be encouraged to meditate on the Bible by learning at least one verse a week. Your verse for this week is Psalm 119:11. Find this verse in your Bible and write it below. Think on each word as you write it.

Pray, thanking God for loving you and for desiring to have a close personal relationship with you.

The Bible: The Inspired Word of God

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The above verse describes the word of God. What part of this verse indicates that, though the Bible is very old, its truths can still be applied today?

Write the phrase here: _____

Pray, thanking God for caring about you enough to give you a guidebook to life.

According to this verse, the Bible deals with one's deepest thoughts and attitudes. The Bible, however, will do us little good if we do not let it "work" on our lives. You can let the Bible speak to you by: (1.) hearing it, (2.) examining it, (3.) remembering it, (4.) thinking on it and (5.) analyzing it. We can hear the Bible by attending Bible study groups or listening to the Pastor. Sometimes during the course of the week, you may be reminded of something the pastor or Sunday School teacher said; this is "thinking on" the Bible. We also can read the Bible for ourselves as part of a personal discipline. It is helpful to memorize certain verses that have special meaning to you. Each week we will try to memorize one verse as a part of this study. From time to time, you will want to really study or analyze a Bible lesson. This kind of deep study will assist you in your spiritual growth.

Can you list the five ways to better understand the Bible? Use the acrostic below for help.

H _____
E _____
A _____
R _____
T _____

*Did you write: hear, examine,
analyze, remember, and think?
This is a great way to get God's
Word into your **HEART**.*

Find the scriptures below and match them to the word on the right.

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Psalm 119:11 | Analyze (study) |
| Psalm 1:2-3 | Remember |
| Acts 17:11 | Think (meditate) |

Psalm 119:11 is your verse to memorize this week. Start working on it today!

What We Believe About God

There is only one true God. This God is unchanging and infinite. He is everywhere and cannot be escaped. He is perfect in His holiness and He cares about His creation.

Find the scriptures below and match them to the phrase on the right that describes God.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| ___ Mark 12:29 | A. God is creator |
| ___ Mark 12:30 | B. God is one |
| ___ Psalm 102:27 | C. God is holy |
| ___ Leviticus 19:1-2 | D. God deserves our all |
| ___ Genesis 1:1 | E. God is unchanging |

Mark 12:29 states that God is one. But you may wonder who Jesus and the Holy Spirit are. The “Trinity” is a way to understand what the Bible teaches about God. God is revealed in the Bible as Father, Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit. God is One and has made Himself known as three eternal “persons”. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a unity in a single “person”. Christians believe in one God. Jesus is the Son of God and yet he is God also; this is impossible for us to completely understand or explain. Even though the doctrine of the Trinity is beyond our comprehension, we accept it as God’s way of revealing Himself to us.

God loves us more than we could ever love Him, but He does want us to offer ourselves totally to Him in response to His love.

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.

I John 4: 10

This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

As you pray today, thank God for His love gift of Jesus. Offer your body to God to be used for His good.

Spiritual Gifts, Part 1

Remember to work on your memory verse: Psalm 119:11. Look at the verse in your Bible then write it below.

Every true Christian has spiritual gifts. When you became a Christian, God gave you at least one “spiritual gift.”

Romans 12:3 (KJV)

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt [given] to every man the measure of faith.

1 Corinthians 7:7 (NIV)

...but each man has his own proper gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

“Man” is used to refer to all Christians. Notice in the above verses that God gives the spiritual gift. God decides what gift to bestow on us, and it is given to us to be used to honor God. There is no room for pride or arrogance among Christians over our gifts.

Just what is a spiritual gift? It is the Spirit-given capacity and desire to serve God. Spiritual gifts are not natural abilities like playing the piano or singing. Even non-Christians have natural talents. A spiritual gift is not a place of service, like Sunday School teacher or Deacon. They are not rewards given to outstanding Christians while other Christians go without. Spiritual gifts are not age-group ministries like Youth or Senior Adult work. Spiritual gifts are God’s way of involving all Christians in accomplishing His purpose through the church. Spiritual gifts are a great source of joy in the Christian life and they motivate us to let God work through us to accomplish His purpose. Christians that are not involved in God’s work and using their spiritual gifts are seldom growing or happy.

Read Romans 12:6-8 and make a list of gifts mentioned in these verses.

Did you include prophecy, teaching, serving, encouraging, giving, leading and showing mercy?

Now read Romans 12:9-13 and notice how we are to use our gift(s) with love, devotion to one another, zeal, joy, patience and prayer.

Spend a few minutes thanking God in prayer for your gift, Ask God to start showing you what your gift is and how you can use it in the right way.

Spiritual Gifts, Part 2

Ephesians 4:11-12

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

Our list of spiritual gifts is growing. There is even another list mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 & 28. Below is a short description of some of the gifts used in the church.

Prophecy (Ephesians 4:11) is the God-given capacity and desire to serve God by proclaiming God's truth.

Teaching (Ephesians 4:11) is the God-given capacity and desire to serve God by making clear the truth of the Bible with accuracy and simplicity.

Exhortation (Romans 12:8) is the God-given capacity and desire to serve God by motivating others to action by urging them to pursue a course of conduct that would honor God.

Shepherding/pastoring (Ephesians 4:11) is the God-given capacity and desire to serve God by overseeing, training and caring for the needs of a group of Christians. This is **not** to be confused with the office of Pastor in the church.

Mercy Showing (Romans 12:8) is the God-given capacity and desire to serve God by identifying with and comforting those who are in distress.

Serving (Romans 12:7) is the God-given capacity and desire to serve God by rendering practical help in both physical and spiritual matters. This gift is also called the gift of "helps." New Christians should start out in this area. As they help in a variety of ministries, God will begin to confirm their spiritual gift and how they can use it.

Giving (Romans 12:8) is the God-given capacity and desire to serve God by giving of his/her material resources, far beyond the tithe, to further the work of God.

Leading (Romans 12:8) is the God-given capacity and desire to serve God by organizing, administrating, promoting and leading the various affairs of the church.

It is important that you let God use you in the areas that He has gifted you. But remember, just because you have a gift in an area of service doesn't mean you don't have to prepare and work to be used effectively by God. God always uses a prepared and dedicated person more than a non-prepared person. Pray that you will be a dedicated servant for God.

Can you say from memory Psalm 119:11?