

***BECOMING LIKE***

**JESUS**

*DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH  
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES*

# BECOMING LIKE JESUS

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SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES*

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**DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS:** LOVING GOD

**THEME:**

Most Christians want to become more like Jesus, but we don't know how. We want to experience a deeper relationship with God, but we don't know where to start. Thankfully, for thousands of years, God's people have learned specific ways to go deeper and become more like Christ. These practices are commonly known as Spiritual Disciplines.

**OVERVIEW:**

The late Dallas Willard taught that "grace is not opposed to effort; it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action." Spiritual disciplines are simply about people putting intentional effort and action into growing deeper with Christ. This two-part series invites you to practice 8 different spiritual disciplines. Part I focuses on Inward Disciplines, and Part II explores the Outward Disciplines.

**BIG IDEA:** Biblical Meditation is about filling our minds with Scripture and reflecting on God's Word.

**INTRO:** Our world is filled with noise, busyness, and crowds. We don't notice, because we are used to it. And we don't care, because it masks the boredom, loneliness, and emptiness in our lives. Unfortunately, the superficial aspects of our culture make it difficult to experience deep relationships. We long to know and be known, but we don't know how. Knowing God and knowing His heart, require slowing down and focusing on His Word.

This brings us to the discipline of meditation. Biblical meditation is different from Eastern meditation, which focuses on emptying your mind to gain some form of spiritual clarity or enlightenment. Biblical meditation is a practice that involves slowing down, reading Scripture, and repeating God's Word in our minds so it can slowly fill our hearts.

**KEY VERSES:** Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:1-2, Psalm 143:5, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:1-3

**SHARING LIFE:**

Is it easy or hard for you to slow down? What do you like or dislike about the times when you do slow down? If you had more time, what is one activity you would add to your day or week? What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "meditation"?

**OPENING SCRIPTURE:**

What do the above passages say about meditation?  
What does it look like to meditate on Scripture?  
What sounds exciting and what sounds challenging about this discipline?  
If you've done this before, what advice do you have for the group?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

How can we support you with prayer this week?  
Spend some time praying for one another.

**ACTION STEPS:**

What is one verse or passage that you can meditate on this week?  
Can you commit to spending two minutes each day reflecting and meditating on this passage?

**MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE** (in as little as 2 minutes):

Find a quiet place to be alone.  
Take a deep breath to calm your soul.  
Read a verse or short passage of scripture.  
Re-read the verse or passage.  
Focus on a word or phrase that stands out.  
Re-read the verse or passage.  
Pray about whatever comes to mind.

**BIG IDEA:** Prayer is how we have conversations with God and allow Him to transform us by aligning our heart and our will with God's desires.

**INTRO:** Prayer is one of the basic building blocks of Christianity. We know prayer is good, and we know it's important. But we don't always feel confident about the specifics. How often should I pray? What should I pray about? How long should my prayers last? When should I pray by myself, and when should I pray with a group?

The good news: there is more than one right answer to these questions! When Jesus died and rose again, He gave us an all-access, VIP backstage pass to God. This means we can pray at any time, and our prayers can take a variety of forms. Prayer is deeply personal, and we can express our personal relationship with God in unique ways.

No matter what shape, or form, or style it takes, prayer is about having a conversation with God. Sometimes we do more talking, sometimes we do more listening. But at the end of the day, a prayerful relationship opens us up to be transformed to become more like Jesus. Approaching prayer as a spiritual discipline means we are intentional with our approach and in our willingness to pray in a variety of ways.

**KEY VERSES:** Matthew 6:5-13, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19

**SHARING LIFE:**

- What first comes to mind when you hear the word "prayer"?
- What do you like most about your prayer life?
- What is the hardest part about praying?
- Is there something about your prayer practices that you want to change or explore?

**OPENING SCRIPTURE:**

- Matthew 6:5-8: What does this passage teach us about how we pray?
- Matthew 6:9-13: What stands out to you about this prayer? How does it inform your own prayer life?
- Colossians 4:2: What does it look like to devote yourself to prayer?
- 1 Thessalonians 5: What does it look like to pray without ceasing? Why is this important for our spiritual growth?
- How is praying without ceasing connected to the ideas in the passage?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

- How can we support you with prayer this week?
- Spend some time praying for one another.

**ACTION STEPS:**

- Which passage about prayer will you focus on this week?
- Can you commit to spending two minutes each day praying on this passage?

**BIG IDEA:** Fasting is a time where you abstain from something (usually food) for a period of time in order to focus on seeking the Lord.

**INTRO:** Fasting sounds scary! I mean, why would anyone choose to not eat? And what does that have to do with our relationship with God? Fasting can be so intimidating that we think it's only something for "super Christians" or "really spiritual people." Even if we are interested or ready in trying fasting, we don't always know where to start. Let's break it down a little bit.

When you fast, you are removing something from your daily routine, so that you can focus more intently on God. In Scripture, this always involves fasting from food for a time. However, we don't have to limit fasting to food. We can experience spiritual significance by fasting from things like social media, television, or smart phones.

With fasting, the why is more important than the what. Why should you fast? Fasting should always be about focusing on God. Maybe you want to pray, asking for something specific, maybe you want to hear from God more clearly, or maybe you want to experience a deeper communion with your Heavenly Father. These are just a few good reasons to fast. In the end, the most important part of fasting is to remove something for a period of time to help you spend more intentional time with God.

**KEY VERSES:** Matthew 6:16-18, Luke 2:36-38, Acts 13:1-3, Acts 14:21-25

**SHARING LIFE:**

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "fasting"? Have you ever fasted before? Why? What was your experience like?

**OPENING SCRIPTURE:**

What does Matthew 6 teach us about fasting?  
Read Luke 2:36-38. How do you think fasting, prayer, and worship are connected?  
Read Acts 13:1-3 and Acts 14:21-25. How do you think fasting is connected to ministry?  
What do these passages teach us about fasting?  
When should we fast? How can we fast? What can it look like?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

How can we support you with prayer this week?  
Spend some time praying for one another.

**ACTION STEPS:**

What is something you can fast from during this week? This can be all foods, a specific type of food, social media, etc.  
How long are you going to fast? For one hour each day? For one day? For the weekend? For the whole week?

**BIG IDEA:** Studying scripture is intentionally reading, observing, interpreting, and responding to God's Word.

**INTRO:** Studying scripture doesn't sound very spiritual. It might sound interesting and exciting to some of us. But it can also sound dry, boring, and tedious. Studying sounds like something that should be left for the professors, academics, and pastors (but only the nerdy ones). While some people go into these professions because they enjoy studying the Bible, they shouldn't be the only ones who study.

Studying scripture is different from listening to a sermon or reading devotionally. With studying, we are intentional in slowing down, diving deeper, and focusing on understanding and interpreting Scripture properly. This is an integral part of our faith and experiencing a deep relationship with Jesus. And thankfully, it doesn't have to be intimidating.

Studying Scripture involves the following four steps:

**Repetition:** Studying requires reading a passage more than once. This helps us learn, allows it to sink in, and makes it easier to notice the details and nuances of a passage.

**Concentration:** Studying Scripture is similar to studying in school in that we must focus. Quiet spaces, with dedicated time to focus are essential to learning and transformation.

**Comprehension:** Study should lead to comprehension. We want to know the big picture and the details of a passage. This helps us know God better, and makes it easier for His truths to become part of our daily life.

**Reflection:** Reflection helps us see things from God's perspective. It also helps us ensure that studying leads to more than knowing facts about the Bible. Knowledge should transform our hearts to be more like Christ.

**KEY VERSES:** Ezra 7:8-10, Acts 17:10-12, 2 Timothy 2:15

**SHARING LIFE:**

Did you like studying in school? Why or why not?  
Have you ever studied the Bible? What was your experience like?

**OPENING SCRIPTURE:**

Read Ezra 7:8-10. Why do you think Ezra dedicated himself to studying the Law? How did this impact his relationship with God?

Read Acts 17:10-12. Why did the Berean Jews examine the Scriptures? What happened as a result?

Read 2 Timothy 2:15. What does it mean to correctly handle the Word of Truth? How can you grow in that ability?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

How can we support you with prayer this week?  
Spend some time praying for one another.

**ACTION STEPS:**

What passage of Scripture will you study this week?  
How much time and what days will you commit to studying?

**BIG IDEA:** Simplicity is focusing our lives on God so that we can experience true joy and contentment in all of life's circumstances.

**INTRO:** "The Christian Discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle. Both the inward and the outward aspects of simplicity are essential. We deceive ourselves if we believe we can possess the inward reality without its having a profound effect on how we live. To attempt to arrange an outward life-style of simplicity without the inward reality leads to deadly legalism." Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline, pg. 79-80.

Simplicity starts with seeking first God and His Kingdom. When our lives are grounded in God, we are able to put worldly things in their proper place. God gives us food, clothing, and shelter for our well-being. He blesses us with beauty, such as nature and art, so we can experience the richness of life. And God even invented the concept of fun and leisure so we can experience joy and rest. Simplicity ensures that we enjoy everything God gave us with appropriate moderation. Too much of anything can distract us from God's priorities. But when our focus is on God and His Kingdom, we can experience the depth of the riches of His love and grace in our lives.

**KEY VERSES:** Matthew 6:19-34

**SHARING LIFE:**

What does a "simple life" look like to you? What sounds attractive about that life? What sounds difficult? Would you describe your life as simple? Why or why not? What makes it difficult to live a simple life right now?

**OPENING SCRIPTURE:**

Read Matthew 6:9-24. While this passage is primarily about physical wealth, how does this concept and passage relate to living simply? What does it look like to embrace God's priorities?

Read Matthew 6:25-34. How is worry related to simplicity? Consider both passages together: How does God want you to live your life? What does it look like to trust Him and follow Him in light of simplicity?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

How can we support you with prayer this week? Spend some time praying for one another.

**ACTION STEPS:**

What is one way you will simplify your life each day this week? What is one way you can simplify your life this month?

**BIG IDEA:** Solitude is spending intentional time alone with God.

**INTRO:** Since I am writing this during COVID-19 and sheltering in place, being alone sounds amazing! My wife and I are both working from home, while our three kids are trying to do school online. Our house has never felt smaller, been messier, or sounded louder! While I love the extra time with my family, I have also come to appreciate things like peace and quiet even more.

Solitude is much more than just being by yourself. Like other spiritual disciplines, it is about moving away from distractions so you can spend time with God. The easiest way to experience solitude is to be physically alone, without people, technology, or artificial noise around you. But solitude should also include spending time talking with God, listening to God, and worshipping God. These activities can be done even when we are not physically alone. As we grow in this discipline is it possible to practice inner solitude by remaining at peace and focusing on God even when the world around us is busy, noisy, and chaotic.

**KEY VERSES:** Mark 1:35, Luke 5:15-16, Luke 6:12

**SHARING LIFE:**

Do you like to be alone? Why or why not?

What is the longest period of time you have been alone with nothing to do? What was that experience like?

**OPENING SCRIPTURE:**

Read Mark 1:35 and Luke 6:12. Why does Jesus go off to a solitary place to be alone?

Read Luke 5:15-16. Why do you think Jesus would often withdraw from healing the sick, so He could be alone with God?

What ways can solitude impact your relationship with God?

Does the idea of solitude with God sound exciting or intimidating? Why?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

How can we support you with prayer this week?

Spend some time praying for one another.

**ACTION STEPS:**

What day will you set aside time to be alone with God?

How long will your solitude with God last?



**BIG IDEA:** Submission is about relinquishing all authority to God, and then freely following Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**INTRO:** I have three young kids who are 3, 6, and 8 years old. Each one is unique, however, they all share one specific trait, all three want to be in charge All...THE...TIME! It feels like a constant struggle. I ask them to pick up their toys, but they want to watch TV. I make dinner, but they want to go outside and play. I tell them it's time for bed, and they will bring out every negotiating tactic ever invented to try and stay up for just 5 more minutes! Sometimes it seems like they only listen when I tell them they can do something they are already excited about.

While this is usually a frustrating experience, deep down, I can't blame my kids too much. After all, I like to be in charge too! Everyone enjoys having some freedom and autonomy, and we should make the most of those opportunities. But we live in a world where we have to submit to authorities every day. We have to follow laws; we have to listen to our bosses; it's an integral part of our society.

As Christians, we are also called to submit to God and to the teachings of Jesus. This isn't always easy, because Jesus calls us to live radically different lives from the rest of the world. When rules are hard to follow, they often feel unjust or unfair, but God calls us to submit to Him, because He knows what is truly best for us. As followers of Jesus, we submit first and foremost to God, and we learn how to do this by submitting to His Word. As we submit our lives to God the natural overflow will lead us to submit to our families, to our church, and to our neighbors.

**KEY VERSES:** Luke 9:21-26, Mark 10:42-45, Colossians 3:12-17

**SHARING LIFE:**

What comes to mind when you hear the word "submission"?  
What connotations does submission carry in your culture?

**OPENING SCRIPTURE:**

Read Mark 10:42-45. How does Jesus compare worldly submission to Godly submission? How have you experienced both of these in your life?

Read Luke 9:21-26. What does Jesus require of us if we want to follow him? What are the costs? What are the benefits?

Read Colossians 3:12-17. How do these verses relate to submission? How is God a part of this? How is the church community a part of this?  
What do you think Biblical submission looks like?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

How can we support you with prayer this week?  
Spend some time praying for one another.

**ACTION STEPS:**

How are you going to submit to God this week?  
How are you going to submit to God's Word this week?  
How are you going to submit to another person this week?

**BIG IDEA:** Service to God is a lifelong calling for all Christians, and is done for an audience of one, Jesus.

**KEY VERSES:** John 13:1-17, Galatians 5:13-15, 1 Peter 4:7-10

**SHARING LIFE:**

What comes to mind when you hear the word servant and the word serving?  
Do different things come to mind? Why or why not?

**OPENING SCRIPTURE:**

In John 13:1-17, why does Jesus wash the disciple's feet? What does it look like for us to "wash one another's feet?"

Read Galatians 5:13-15. How is the Spirit involved with serving? How is humility connecting to serving?  
What does 1 Peter 4:7-10 teach us about serving?  
Who are called to serve? Who are we called to serve? How are we called to serve?

**PRAYING TOGETHER:**

How can we support you with prayer this week?  
Spend some time praying for one another.

**ACTION STEPS:**

How will you serve God this week?  
How will you serve a family member this week?  
How will you serve a neighbor or co-worker this week?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **INTRODUCTORY AND ACCESSIBLE:**

The Life You've Always Wanted, by John Ortberg

So You Want to Be Like Christ? Eight Essentials to Get You There, by Charles Swindoll

### **INTERMEDIATE AND INSPIRING:**

Celebration of Discipline, by Richard Foster

### **ADVANCED AND DETAILED:**

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, by Donald Whitney