

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

LESSON 2: DEVELOPING A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled *Our Relationship with God*. This series of lessons examines the relationship we have with God. It begins by understanding our identity in Christ which is a result of our becoming a child of God. This series of lessons looks at the attributes of God, how we learn about God and know Him better, and how we develop this personal relationship. Understanding ourselves in God's eyes, and having a clearer picture of who God is, will help us live the life that God designed for us.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All other content is © 2019 Trans World Radio Canada, and may be used in any way you like as long as you use it with the purpose of reaching the world for Christ and do not charge for the use of the material. See more license details at www.discipleshipessentials.org/licensing.



OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

LESSON 2: DEVELOPING A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to motivate and equip believers to develop a personal relationship with God through a daily quiet time with Him.

LEADER'S NOTE

This lesson centres on developing our devotional life. Depending on the relationship you have with your participants, it might be helpful for you to share with them what you have been learning in your own daily time with God. Feel free to share with them a particular method you enjoy, or resources that might be helpful to them. If you have not developed a regular time alone with God, please consider what is hindering you. This biblical God-honouring habit will bless you and strengthen you. You may wish to provide materials for your participants, such as a one-year Bible reading plan. There are also resources at the end of the lesson which may be helpful.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Do you have a daily time set aside to pray and read God's Word? When do you make time for this, what do you do during your quiet time?
- ❖ When you read from the Bible, how do you decide what to read? Do you have a plan?
- ❖ If you have not had a regular daily quiet time, would you like to start? What are some of the barriers to developing this habit?
- ❖ If God is everywhere and His Spirit is always with us, why should we set aside special time to focus on Him?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **Our Relationship with God:** A strong relationship with God starts with a deep longing for His presence. People who love to be in one another's presence cannot wait to be reunited after a time of separation. While we are never separated from God in one sense, setting aside time for our relationship with God will strengthen and increase our love for Him.
- ❖ **The Example of David**



- **Read Psalm 68.** Does David make it sound like meeting with God regularly was a chore? This passage sounds like a love song and yet it was written to God – not a person.
 - David spent much time with God and made it a priority in His life. The more He knew of God, the more He wanted to spend time with Him.
 - David knew in his heart that God was his source of satisfaction, his help and strength, and his refuge, even though he was a king.
 - We often don't make it a priority to spend time with God daily. It has been said that it takes 21 days to build a habit. When we repeatedly do something it becomes easier to make it a habit. Spending time with God becomes more rewarding the longer we do it.
- ❖ **Biblical Examples:** Many godly men and women in the Bible rose early in the morning to meet with God. This is not a practice invented by today's Church, rather it has been a habit for people who want to know God more. Look at these verses together about people who rose early to pray, worship or meet with God:
- **Abraham:** Genesis 19:27 What can we learn from this example? Abraham got up early in the morning for a specific purpose. He had a special place to meet with God and he did it daily.
 - **Jesus:** Mark 1:35 Jesus went away from distractions to a quiet place so that He could spend time with God the Father. Certainly if Jesus Himself felt the desire to do this, it would benefit us too!
 - **Here are more Examples**
 - **Moses:** Exodus 24:4; Exodus 34:4
 - **Joshua:** Joshua 6:12
 - **Hannah:** 1 Samuel 1:19
 - **Job:** Job 1:5
 - **Mary Magdalene:** John 20:1
 - **Apostles:** Acts 5:21
 - Other verses that support rising early to spend time with God:
 - Psalm 5:3
 - Psalm 59:16
 - Psalm 63:1
- ❖ **Our Daily Quiet Time:** When we read about godly people in the Bible, we often see them rising early to be with God. Sometimes our regular time with God is referred to as our daily devotions, or daily quiet time, or even our morning watch. Whatever you call it, it is an excellent habit and discipline to develop.



- **What happens during your daily quiet time?** There is no formula you must follow when you spend time with God. You will not always spend time with God in the same way every day. Activities may vary, but the goal is to connect with Him. Remember that relationships take time. You just need to be committed to spending time with God regularly.
- The following are some ideas of what you could do during your quiet time:
 - **Get quiet:** It should be quiet and free of distractions so that you can give God the attention He deserves. Find a place you can be alone, or face a wall to minimize distractions. Take a few moments to still your body and mind.
 - **Read God's Word:** Hear what God wants to tell you from His word. Read thoughtfully and ask yourself questions about the text. What can you learn?
 - **Read wise words:** Sometimes you may wish to read wise words written by other Christians for devotional purposes. These may be books, or written sermons or short thoughts. Remember to spend time in God's Word yourself, and don't rely only on someone else's words.
 - **Praise and prayer.** Before asking God for anything, it's a good practice to thank Him for His many blessings. Be specific about these things which we often take for granted. Praise Him for who He is. Then ask God to reveal Himself to you. Be honest with God and tell Him what you are feeling, what your worries are, what you need help with.
 - **Record your thoughts:** You may wish to use a journal to record what you are praying about, what God is teaching you, answers to prayer, etc. It can be encouraging to look back and read what God has done in your life. This will keep you on track.
- **Benefits to us:** This time with God will help us focus on what is truly important. We must never be too busy to pray! When we commit the plans of the day to the Lord, we receive His help, His peace and assurance of His presence in order to accomplish all that is before us.
- **Be consistent:** It is important to set a regular time each day to pray. It does not have to be accomplished sitting quietly. Some people pray as they go for a walk. You can change the place you pray without changing the purpose.
- **Shake things up:** While forming a habit takes repetition, sometimes a routine can become boring and not beneficial. If you find that as you meet with God you are reading without thinking and saying words without really meaning them, you may want to try a new place, new method or new materials. It is important to keep this time with God alive and meaningful.

Ideas for spending time in God's Word are provided with this lesson — you may wish to make a copy for your students. It may be especially helpful for those who have not started a daily quiet time habit.



DISCUSSION

- ❖ What are the benefits of meeting with God every day?
- ❖ What are some of the things that can hinder us? How can we combat these?
- ❖ How can we prevent our time with God from being the same each day? In what ways can we deepen our relationship and really connect with God instead of just going through the motions?
- ❖ What would you say to someone who suggests that we can have a strong relationship with God without a regular habit of prayer and Bible reading?
- ❖ After this lesson, what will you change about your daily time with God?

PRAYER

Close with a time of prayer. Thank God that He is a personal God who loves spending time with us. Thank Him that He provides us with His Word and listens to our prayers. Pray that the devotional life of the participants would flourish and that they would be convicted to spend more time in the presence of God. Thank God that He is with us always and meets with us when we seek Him.



IDEAS FOR SPENDING TIME IN GOD'S WORD

The following ideas can be used for spending time in God's Word during your daily quiet time. It might be helpful to try a new approach to your time with God in order to see God in a new way. Spend time in God's Word, in stillness and in prayer, and you will be rewarded with a closer relationship with God!

1. ASKING WHAT THE BIBLE IS SAYING TO YOU

The simplest way to meditate on God's Word is to read through the Bible, a passage every day, and ask yourself questions. Write down the answers in your journal. Think quality over quantity. Go slowly through the Bible and think about what it is saying. Some questions you could ask are:

- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- Is there a lesson to learn?
- Is there a new truth to carry with you?

2. FINDING GOD IN THE PSALMS

Each day, pick one psalm to read. After reading the psalm, pick out all the attributes (character traits, descriptive words) of God you can find. They may be right there in the text or implied. Write these traits in your journal. Pray and thank God for who He is. Think about these things. God is much more than we could ever understand in our lifetime. Try and learn to see Him better every day!

3. PUTTING THE BIBLE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

This activity will help you understand Scripture in a more personal way. First, pick a passage to translate. It can be a chapter, a psalm or a few paragraphs. Read over the passage several times, and divide it into smaller pieces. Ignore the numbers in the text and work sentence by sentence. Then write down each sentence in your own words. A single sentence may be translated into three of your own sentences, this is okay! Understand the meaning of the passage, working through a few sentences each day. Reflect on what you have learned and write down what it teaches you about God, about yourself, and about living the life of a Christian. Some passages to start with might include:

Romans 5-6

2 Corinthians 4

Psalms 1

Romans 12

Ephesians 2

Psalms 23

Matthew 5-7

1 John

1 Thessalonians 4-5



4. LOOKING FOR JESUS

Sometimes when we're reading the Bible it is easy to get caught up in one detail or another, or not really pay attention to what we're reading. Here is a way to learn more about Jesus and practise focusing on Him. First, use only the book of Mark. Skim through the book until you find a chapter heading that has the word Jesus in it (that will be most of them!). Read this story, and as you read focus on Jesus. What is He doing? How is He doing it? What kind of person is He? Why is He doing what He is doing or saying what He is saying? How did people react to Him? Write down what this passage taught you about Jesus. Consider what example Jesus is for you, and what Jesus is telling you.

5. GETTING THE WORD INTO YOUR HEART

Have you ever wished you could remember a verse you heard a long time ago? Have you ever been comforted by a verse that just 'popped' into your head? The psalmist said "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11).

Learning how to get God's Word into your heart could be one of the most useful habits you ever develop. God's Word has power to change your life and the lives of others, but first you have to get it inside you! Set a goal for memorizing. You may want to memorize a few verses a week to start. Find a method of memorizing that works for you. You could write it down repeatedly, repeat it out loud to yourself, then just write down the first letter of each word and try to recite the verse using just the letters as your cue. Some people like to put verses to a tune to sing them. Keeping the verse on a small card to carry with you through the day can be helpful too.

Remember to review verses you have memorized, and consider what they mean for your life! Here are a few sets of verses that may be of interest for you to memorize.

Salvation: Romans 5:8; Romans 6:23; Romans 10:9,10; Romans 6:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Isaiah 59:2; Acts 4:12

God's Guidance: Proverbs 3:5,6; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 119:31-33; Isaiah 42:16; Isaiah 30:21; Isaiah 58:11; Psalm 143:10; John 16:13; Romans 8:28

Promises of God: Daniel 9:9; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Jeremiah 29:13; Psalm 37:4; Isaiah 41:10; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 7:7,8; James 1:17

Dealing with Temptation: Matthew 26: 41; 1 Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Hebrews 2:18

The Christian Life: Hebrews 12:2,3; Deut. 31:6; Galatians 5:22-23, Philippians 4:6; Romans 10: 13-15; 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 John 3:23; 2 Timothy 1:7; Titus 2: 11-14; Romans 8:9; Micah 6:8

Longer Passages: Psalm 1; Psalm 23; Psalm 25: 1-15; Psalm 100; 1 Corinthians 13; Romans 12; 1 John