

winter break
devotional



YALE
CHI
ALPHA

Over Winter Break, you have an opportunity to begin or deepen your devotional life. Our desire is that each of you would have a vibrant, personal relationship with God. This plan will guide you through all of Winter Break, culminating in a Chi Alpha-wide fast during the first week of the Spring semester.

Our prayer is that the components of this 4-week plan will help build momentum and establish patterns in your devotional life over Winter Break that you can carry into the Spring semester. This plan was written to run from December 23 through January 19, but can be used on any timeline.

There are four components of this plan:

1

Scripture Reading

God's Word is a living Word that speaks life to us and leads us to Jesus. It really is worth engaging. This plan takes you through some of Paul's shorter epistles in the New Testament: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Remember: the goal is not just to get it done. The goal is to get God's Word inside of you and be changed by it. A tool on how to read and interact Scripture with called PROAPT is included in the pages following the plan.

2

Psalms of Prayer

A wonderful way to engage the Bible is through prayerful reading of Scripture, a mode of reading towards finding language out of which we form a prayer of response. One Psalm is listed each day for you to pray through, making its words your own. As a whole, the psalms comprise the best place in Scripture from which to pray Scripture. The book of Psalms—which means “book of praises” in Hebrew—teaches us how to bring ourselves before God honestly and to pray authentically. Because the psalms range widely in emotional expression—from delight, to distress, to trust, to anger—the psalms give us permission to share our whole being with God. Guidelines on how to pray the psalms are included in the pages following the plan.

3

Spiritual Disciplines

Each week, a different spiritual discipline is highlighted. Spiritual disciplines are practices found in Scripture that promote spiritual growth and formation. Take each week to try a new discipline! Explanations on each spiritual discipline are included in the pages following the plan.

4

The Bible Project's Read Scripture Videos

With each new biblical book, we recommend you watch a short animated video on The Bible Project's Read Scripture website (www.thebibleproject.com) and YouTube page. These videos outline each book's context, structure and purpose in an engaging and accessible way to help you read more clearly.

1

WEEK 1

WATCH GALATIANS & EPHESIANS READ SCRIPTURE VIDEO

- Day 1 Galatians 1 • Psalm 1
- Day 2 Galatians 2 • Psalm 2
- Day 3 Galatians 3 • Psalm 3
- Day 4 Galatians 4 • Psalm 4
- Day 5 Galatians 5 • Psalm 5
- Day 6 Galatians 6 • Psalm 6
- Day 7 Ephesians 1 • Psalm 7

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE:
PRAYING SCRIPTURE



2

WEEK 2

WATCH PHILIPPIANS READ SCRIPTURE VIDEO

- Day 1 Ephesians 2 • Psalm 8
- Day 2 Ephesians 3 • Psalm 9
- Day 3 Ephesians 4 • Psalm 10
- Day 4 Ephesians 5 • Psalm 11
- Day 5 Ephesians 6 • Psalm 12
- Day 6 Philippians 1 • Psalm 13
- Day 7 Philippians 2 • Psalm 14

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE:
SABBATH



3

WEEK 3

WATCH COLOSSIANS READ SCRIPTURE VIDEO

- Day 1 Philippians 3 • Psalm 15
- Day 2 Philippians 4 • Psalm 16
- Day 3 Colossians 1 • Psalm 17
- Day 4 Colossians 2 • Psalm 18
- Day 5 Colossians 3 • Psalm 19
- Day 6 Colossians 4 • Psalm 20
- Day 7 1 Thessalonians 1 • Psalm 21

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE:
SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION



4

WEEK 4

WATCH 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS READ SCRIPTURE VIDEO

- Day 1 1 Thessalonians 2 • Psalm 22
- Day 2 1 Thessalonians 3 • Psalm 23
- Day 3 1 Thessalonians 4 • Psalm 24
- Day 4 1 Thessalonians 5 • Psalm 25
- Day 5 2 Thessalonians 1 • Psalm 26
- Day 6 2 Thessalonians 2 • Psalm 27
- Day 7 2 Thessalonians 3 • Psalm 28

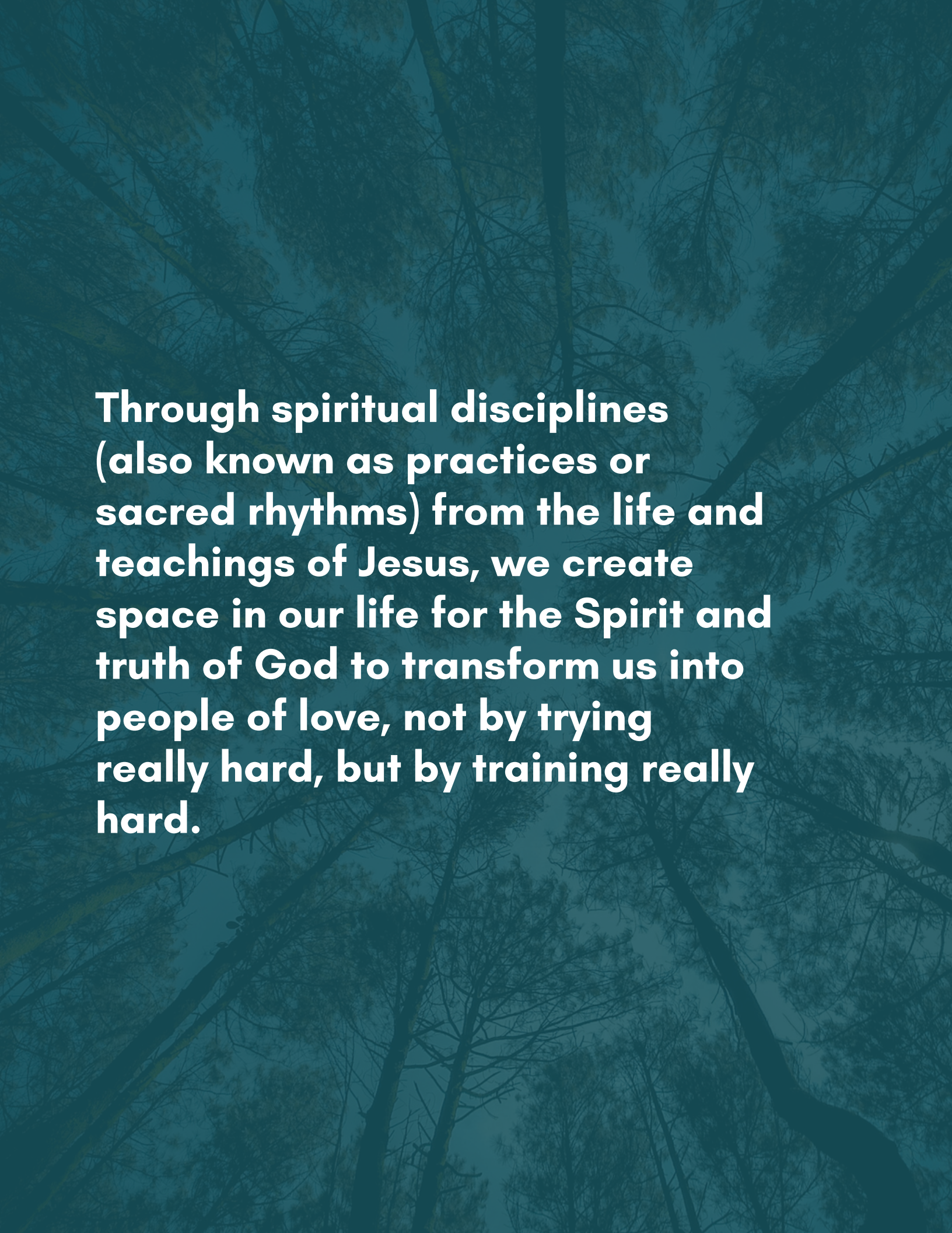
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE:
FASTING





**Pray.
Read.
Observe.
Apply.
Pray.
Tell.**

PROAPT stands for: Pray, Read, Observe, Apply, Pray & Tell. It is a simple way to learn how to read the Bible devotionally & apply what you have read. For the complete resource, visit xayale.com/devotionallife



Through spiritual disciplines (also known as practices or sacred rhythms) from the life and teachings of Jesus, we create space in our life for the Spirit and truth of God to transform us into people of love, not by trying really hard, but by training really hard.

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

A powerful way to engage the Bible is through prayerful reading of Scripture, a mode of reading with an eye towards finding language out of which we form a prayer of response. It is a specific kind of praying that uses words and ideas from the text to shape a natural prayer of response. The Bible contains wonderful prayers by people like Jesus, Paul, Daniel, Mary, Moses and Hannah. Their prayers provide a framework for intercession for peoples and nations. When we are at a loss for words and have no prayers in our heart, the prayers of Scripture guide us to God. They can provide the help and structure that keeps us on the path through a difficult season.

The book of Psalms is a wonderful place to start praying Scripture. God's people have always looked to the Psalms to learn how to pray and to give voice to their prayers. It doesn't clean up the mess of life before prayer. It brings the totality of life to God. We find prayers that voice our needs, fears, confessions, joys, sorrows, anger, loneliness, dryness and joy. The Psalms invite us to be authentic and come to God as we are. When we read the psalms, they show us who we are in light of God. When we pray them, they change us.

Every day, read a psalm slowly, meditating on it and then forming a prayer of response. Use the psalmist's words and make them your own as you respond to what God has revealed to you in the text. It's a simple practice that yields huge benefits in terms of spiritual formation.

The goal is to allow the psalms to help us learn new ways of walking to and about God.

Consider these four questions:

1. What is the psalm about?
2. What is felt?
3. What is requested?
4. What is declared?

Here's an example of what you might pray while reading Psalm 3:

(1-2) Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him.

Lord, there are things in life that confuse me, even anger me, and cause me despair-loss, betrayal, frustrations, disappointments.

(3-4) But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the Lord, and he answers me from his holy mountain.

But You remain in control God. You allow me to live without fear, because You are a shield. You are my only source of hope so I call out to you Lord.



SABBATH

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it...There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest. Hebrews 4:1, 9-11

Dallas Willard states bluntly that you must "*ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.*" Sadly, everything about us and our culture works against this elimination of hurry. Our compulsion to produce and not waste time invades the space God gave for us to rest. Papers need to be written, exams studied for, office hours attended. The calendar and to-do lists never end, we never slow down, and the hurry from one task to another demands our attention. We dress it up by calling it the "hustle" or the "the daily grind," but it comes at the cost of our relationship with God and one another.

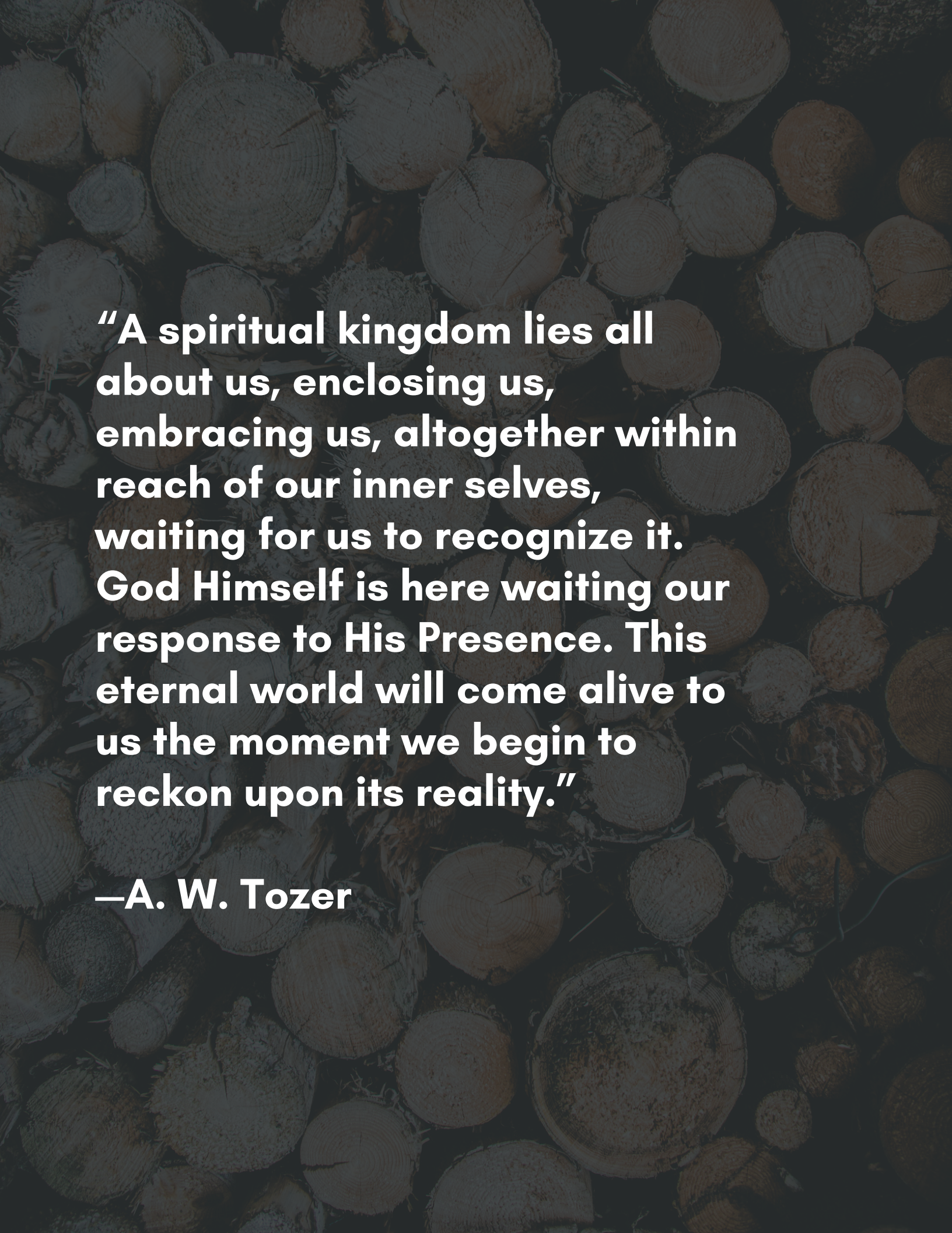
Fortunately, we serve a God who has gifted us with a command to rest and recharge. A God who created us to live free of the tyranny of our smart phones, email, and Google calendars. God has given you enough time to rest and also complete all the things he has for you here at Yale. Can you imagine how different and magnetic your life and your core group could be if you lived this way? If you took a day each week to rest and enjoy the company of people you love. To feel the joys of knowing others and being known.

REFLECTIONS & SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Have you ever taken a sabbath? What fears do you have at the thought of slowing down and resting on a campus where people seem to go 24/7? Bring your calendar to God in prayer and ask Him where you can set aside times for rest. If you're new to this, consider beginning by scheduling in 15 minutes a day and between 12 *consecutive, waking* hours a week for a sabbath.

Plan a twenty-four-hour sabbath you can enter with anticipation. Remember part of this planning will probably include working diligently to finish your work throughout the week. Some wise people have made it simple: *pray and play*. Consider the things that would nourish you and restore your soul: worship, music, a nap, walking, playing a sport, reading, a face-to-face meal with a friend, afternoon tea. Plan them spaciouly into the day. Consider even turning off your phone or putting it on *Do Not Disturb*.

If you are practicing this over the winter break, consider how you might incorporate these practices when you return to Yale. Invite a friend from Chi Alpha to join you and hold each other accountable to taking a sabbath together.



“A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within reach of our inner selves, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here waiting our response to His Presence. This eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to reckon upon its reality.”

—A. W. Tozer

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Memorization is the process of continually remembering the words, truths and images God uses to shape us. Memorization provides us with a store of learning, which can be accessed anywhere and anytime.

David speaks in the Psalms: *“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”* (Psalm 119:11) and Jesus’s own disciples relied on Jesus’s teachings as the foundations of their faith: *“Then they remembered his words.”* (Luke 24:8) Throughout the New Testament, the writers spoke to the importance of remembering the teachings of Jesus and treasuring them in their hearts: *“I think it is right to refresh your memory...and I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.”* (2 Peter 1:13,15)

The practice of scripture memorization allows us to be encouraged by and encourage one another with God’s words wherever we might be in whatever circumstances we might be facing.

PRACTICE INCLUDES

- memorizing Scripture, hymns, poems, quotes, etc.
- rereading portions of Scripture until they are committed to memory
- learning by heart portions of Scripture that encourage you when you are tempted

When we do this, we develop a habit of remembering that anchors our life in biblical truth. If you’re new to this practice, you can begin with memorizing one scripture this week that stands out in your devotional reading. If you’re looking for suggestions, start by memorizing:

- Psalm 23
- Philippians 4:6
- Ephesians 3:16-21

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

When you find yourself captivated by a Scripture, write it on a card that you can tape to a mirror, a window or even the shower wall. Every day read the verse, rehearsing it in your mind and heart. On a daily basis remind yourself of the Scripture until you know it by heart. Only then are you ready to move on to another portion of Scripture.

Call someone from your Core Group this week and work together to memorize a passage of scripture. Considering making this a weekly part of your conversations with one another.



FASTING

We constantly seek to fill our emptiness with food and other comforts. We ignore our soul and our neighbor's need by medicating with food and drink. Regular fasting exposes who we really are, reminds us how broken the world is, and draws our eyes to how Jesus is redeeming all things.

Fasting is an opportunity to lay down an appetite—an appetite for food, for media, for shopping. This act of self-denial may not seem huge—it's just a meal or a trip to the mall—but it brings us face to face with the hunger at the core of our being. Fasting exposes how we try to keep empty hunger at bay and gain a sense of well-being by devouring creature comforts.

Through self-denial we begin to recognize what controls us. Our small denials of the self show us just how little taste we actually have for sacrifice or time with God. This truth is not meant to discourage us. It's simply the first step in realizing that we have to lay down our life in order to find it again in God.

Deny yourself a meal, and when your stomach growls "I'm hungry," take a moment to turn from your emptiness to the nourishment of *"every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). Feed on Jesus, the bread of life. Skip music, social media, or TV for a day and become aware of how fidgety you are when you aren't being amused or diverted. Taste the difference between what truly nourishes the soul—the living bread and the life-giving water—and what is simply junk food.

Fasting reminds us that we care about "soul" things. We care about the church. We care about the world. We care about doing God's will. Thus we willingly set aside a little comfort so we can listen and attend to the voice and nourishment of God alone. For God can give us grace and comfort and nurture we cannot get on our own.

WHAT TO DO IN TIME SET ASIDE FOR FASTING

- Bring your Bible and a glass of water during your fast.
- Relax and breathe deeply. Place yourself in the presence of God.
- Offer yourself and your time to God by repeating Samuel's words "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." Or simply say, "Here I am."
- Spend some time worshiping God for his faithfulness. Thank him for where he has come through for you.
- Psalm 103:1-5 also provides a starting point for praise. Bring your desires to God. Ask him if this desire is in line with his will and his word for you and the church. Be still and listen. Offer your desires and prayers to God.

THE DAILY PRACTICE OF LIVING AS DISCIPLES

We believe it is our daily practices that shape our lives as disciples. We become more and more like Christ not by trying harder or by our attempts to earn our way, but through accepting the free gift of our salvation and ordering our lives in a way to know God more and love others as he first loved us.

As you continue to practice the ways of Jesus this coming semester, here is a starting point to assess where we are at and set goals for where we want to be. Consider filling out this form and discussing it with your Core Group leader, pastor, or a trusted spiritual mentor.

DEVOTION

We practice listening to God speak to us in Scripture and responding personally to him in prayer.

WHAT TIME WILL YOU HAVE YOUR DAILY DEVOTIONS?

_____ AM / PM

WHAT IS YOUR PLAN FOR READING SCRIPTURE THIS SEMESTER?

HOSPITALITY

We practice regularly inviting people, especially those who are different from us, into our lives through the sharing of time, attention, and resources.

HOW DO YOU PRACTICE THIS?

HOW OFTEN?

WHO DO YOU HAVE REGULAR MEALS WITH?

WORSHIP

We practice intentionally placing our affections on God and cultivating a love for him above all else.

BAPTIZED? Y N

SERVING IN A COMMUNITY? HOW?

TITHING? GOAL:

SUPPORTING MISSIONS? GOAL:

SABBATH

By ceasing from work, we are regularly reminded that our identity is not in what we do or achieve, but in what has been done for us in Christ.

DAY? (CIRCLE ONE)

M T W R F S S U

TIME FRAME?

MORNING AFTERNOON EVENING

ACTIVITIES:

ACCOUNTABILITY

We practice building friendships where we are responsible to challenge, support, and pray for one another's spiritual growth.

TWO FRIENDSHIPS OF ACCOUNTABILITY:

HOW OFTEN WILL YOU MEET?

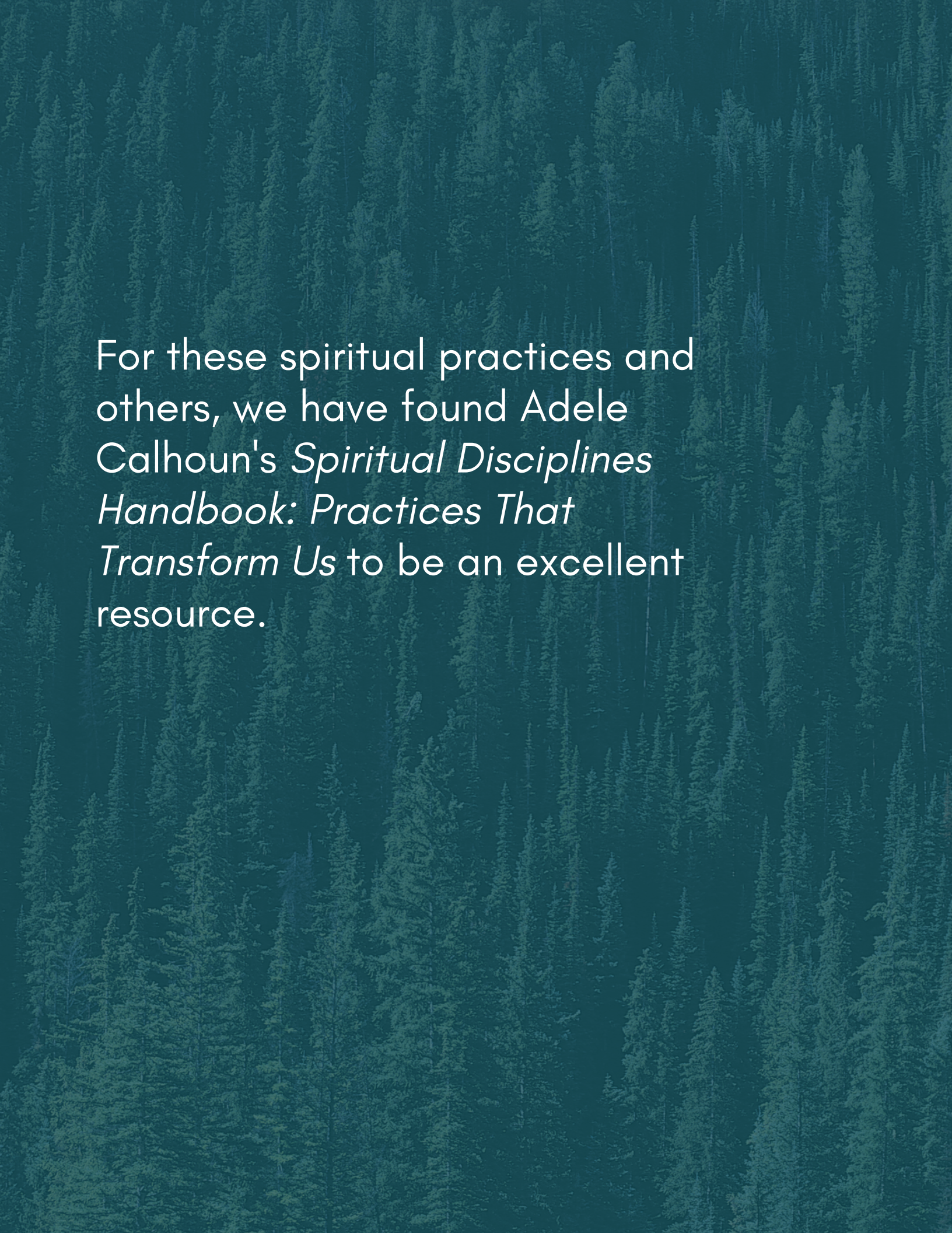
WEEKLY BI-WEEKLY MONTHLY

ARE YOU IN A CORE GROUP? Y N

OTHER PRACTICES

We practice listening to God speak to us in Scripture and responding personally to him in prayer.

LIST PRACTICES YOU CURRENTLY DO & ONES YOU WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN.



For these spiritual practices and others, we have found Adele Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* to be an excellent resource.