

# devotional

A 6-WEEK STUDY THROUGH THE  
GOSPEL OF MATTHEW



**YALE  
CHI  
ALPHA**

01



**HEAD**

Read Matthew 1.  
Practice *Lectio Divina*.  
See next page for more details!



**HEART**

Go on YouTube and watch *The Bible Project's* video on the Gospel of Matthew for context.



**HAND**

Text someone to let them know you are thinking of them.

02



**HEAD**

Read Matthew 2.  
Practice *Lectio Divina*.



**HEART**

Listen to the passage of the day be read aloud by someone else.



**HAND**

Call on the phone or use voice message and pray for 1-2 people today.

03



**HEAD**

Read Matthew 3.  
Practice *Lectio Divina*.



**HEART**

Memorize the scripture that caught your attention today.



**HAND**

Google hangout with some friends and share a meal together.

04



**HEAD**

Read Matthew 4:1-11.  
Practice *Lectio Divina*.



**HEART**

Take the verse(s) that caught your attention today and write them at the top of a piece of paper. Take time to reflect in words or pictures about the verse(s). What do you feel? What questions do you have?



**HAND**

Text someone a funny memory you have with them to brighten their day "remember when..."

05



**HEAD**

Read Matthew 4:12-25.  
Practice *Lectio Divina*.



**HEART**

Text 5 people to let them know you are thinking of them



**HAND**

Find a bible verse and send it to 1-2 people today.

06



**HEAD**

Read Matthew 5:1-12.  
Practice *Lectio Divina*.



**HEART**

Share the scripture that caught your attention today with a friend and tell them why it stuck out to you.



**HAND**

Text someone something that you admire about them or a strength that they have.

07



**HEAD**

Read Matthew 5:13-48.  
Practice *Lectio Divina*.



**HEART**

Read two different versions of the passage for today. Take note of anything that catches your attention, helps you understand the passage better, or see it in a new way.



**HAND**

Write a letter to someone today encouraging them and telling them how grateful you are for them.



# Scripture

To prayerfully encounter and surrender to the living God through attending to Scripture. It requires an open, reflective, listening posture alert to the voice of God. This is aimed more at growing a relationship with God than gathering information about God.

**Devotional Reading (*Lectio Divina*) was traditionally made up of five different movements:**

- **Silencio** – quiet preparation of the heart. Slow down, relax, and release chaos and noise in your mind to Him.
- **Lectio** – read the word. Read the passage slowly and out loud. When a word or phrase catches your attention, don't keep reading. Stop and listen to what God is saying to you. Listen and wait.
- **Meditatio** – meditate. Read the scripture a second time out loud. Reflect on the importance of the words that light up to you. Explore the ramifications of God's invitation.
- **Oratio** – respond, pray. Read the scripture a third time. Now enter into a personal dialogue with God. Respond truthfully and authentically. What do you feel about the text? Where do you want to push back? Talk with God about these feelings.
- **Contemplation** – contemplate, rest, and wait in the presence of God. Allow some time for the word to sink in. Surrender yourself to God. Consider making a reminder that can help you dwell on this word throughout the day before you leave.

In short, think of it as walking through the process of: **Prepare. Read. Reflect. Respond. Rest.**

## TIPS FOR DAILY PRACTICE

Scripture provides one of the basic building blocks for how we know and understand God. To grow as disciples, we must know God, and to know God, we must spend time in his word.

**If you're new to this discipline, here are some practical tips for building the habit of reading scripture and abiding with Jesus:**

- Pick a time to have your devotionals each day (we recommend mornings!) Creating a predictable rhythm will help you be consistent.
- Pick a Bible reading plan (convenient for you, we'll be going through Matthew together!) This will help give structure to your time and a guide on what to read each day.
- Context matters: take some time to learn the context of the passage of scripture you're reading. If you're unsure, consult other resources like *The Bible Project*.
- Take notes: jot down any thoughts or questions and discuss them with your mentor or someone from your Core Group.

Remember, the end goal of all the spiritual disciplines is that they would shape us to be people who know God, love God, and reflect his love to the world.

**Additional Resources:**

01

**HEAD**

Matthew 6:1-18.

**HEART**

Ask the Lord to show you where there is sin in your life. Write those things down as an act of confession.

**HAND**

Ask someone to tell you their story.

02

**HEAD**

Matthew 6:19-34.

**HEART**

Use Psalm 51 as a way of bringing your own sins before God.

**HAND**

Spend some time in prayer with a friend today.

03

**HEAD**

Matthew 7:1-20.

**HEART**

Identify a trusted spiritual friend or mentor whom you can confess to & contact them.

**HAND**

Check on the elderly people living around you and see if they need anything.

04

**HEAD**

Matthew 7:21-29.

**HEART**

Ask the Holy Spirit: "When did I fail to love God or love someone else this week?" Confess them to God and thank Him for His forgiveness and love. If appropriate, ask that person for forgiveness.

**HAND**

Thank two people for their impact on your life.

05

**HEAD**

Matthew 8:1-17.

**HEART**

Memorize 1 John 1:9.

**HAND**

If you order takeout, leave a generous tip.

06

**HEAD**

Matthew 8:18-34.

**HEART**

Ask a family member or close friend to help you see your blind spots. Ask questions like: *What do I do that hurts you? How could I better love you? What is it like to be with me?*

**HAND**

Ask someone to be your accountability partner until the end of the semester and check in with them weekly.

07

**HEAD**

Matthew 9.

**HEART**

Revisit one of the previous days' practices that you would like to give more time to.

**HAND**

Go on a prayer walk around your neighborhood.

# Confession and Self-Examination

**Confession** may be good for the soul, but it can be very hard to do when we put a great deal of energy into maintaining the image that we are good moral people. When we can't see our sin, we have nothing to confess. Yet the truth is that we all sin—through our actions, hearts, and beliefs—and true repentance and forgiveness require us to confess our sin in order to grasp the freedom that Jesus gives.

**Self-examination** is a process whereby the Holy Spirit opens our hearts to what is true about us. This is not the same thing as a shame-inducing inventory. Instead, it is a way of opening ourselves to God within the safety of divine love so we can authentically seek transformation. There is nothing that we confess that God doesn't already know! Confession is both private and corporate.

When we confess privately to God, we come before God and own up to what's inside us and accept the forgiveness we have in Christ. When we confess to another Christ-follower, that person is there in the flesh to respond to us in Christ's name and acts as a channel of God's forgiving grace. Confession before God and others embraces Christ's gift of forgiveness and restoration while setting us on the path to renewal and change.

When we do this, we have God's assurance that He has forgiven us. His word says in Psalm 103:12: "*As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*" We need to believe in this promise, knowing that our sins have been paid for by Christ. Our reaction, then, should be to live each day in the joy of Christ's forgiveness.

## TIPS FOR DAILY PRACTICE

**What does confession look like?** Here are a few pointers:

- *Confession is specific.* Speaking in specifics is superior to speaking in generalities.
- *Confess the consequences.* True confession involves looking not just at the sin we commit but also at how this sin has affected us. It is more than an admission of guilt, but is a process of searching to see where sin has taken root in our lives.
- *Confession leads us to ask for forgiveness.* A confession is not, in itself, enough. We need to ask God for His forgiveness, not just confess our sins to Him.
- *Confess before someone we have harmed.* There may be times where our sin requires us to confess and ask forgiveness from someone our sin has affected. One must be careful with this, especially if revealing it to others would only hurt them and damage relationships.
- *Confession before other believers.* It may be wise to confess our sins before a friend or other trusted individual. This person can then pray with us, pray for us, and help us believe in God's assurance of forgiveness.

01

**HEAD**

Matthew 10:1-25.

**HEART**

Pray through the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), line by line.

**HAND**

Spend some time in prayer with a friend today.

02

**HEAD**

Matthew 10:26-42.

**HEART**

Pray for supernatural healing for the sick and suffering.

**HAND**

Ask a friend today how you can be praying for them.

03

**HEAD**

Matthew 11.

**HEART**

Pray for medical workers and other essential service workers.

**HAND**

Check on the single moms or moms with young children and see if they need anything.

04

**HEAD**

Matthew 12.

**HEART**

Pray for the lost and those who do not know Jesus as Savior; pray that the Kingdom would grow in the lives of many.

**HAND**

Reach out to your pastor and see if there is anyone in your church who needs help or encouragement.

05

**HEAD**

Matthew 13:1-23.

**HEART**

Pray for missionaries all around the world.

**HAND**

Reach out and talk to someone who you maybe don't talk to a lot on a regular basis.

06

**HEAD**

Matthew 13:24-52.

**HEART**

Pray for wisdom and humility for decision-makers at all levels, locally, nationally, and globally.

**HAND**

Reach out to someone you think may need it a little extra today. Try to notice someone who seems down or anxious.

07

**HEAD**

Matthew 13:53-58.

**HEART**

Pray for protection and strength for the immunocompromised.

**HAND**

Go on a prayer walk around your neighborhood.

# Prayer

We are currently, in many ways, forced to withdraw from everyday life, comforts, and activities. This Lenten season, we find ourselves fasting from many things that normally are meaningful and important to us. This week, we will intentionally lean into this moment in time and seek God through prayer.

Prayer is not just one more thing in an inventory of elements that make up following Jesus—it is at the heart of living in the Kingdom of God. It is an encounter in which we humbly communicate and worship the Lord, confess our sins, and ask him to fulfill both our needs and the desires of our heart. For Jesus, prayer wasn't a drag or a duty. He seemed to genuinely enjoy his Father's company—no wonder the disciples asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray." Jesus' answer, known as "the Lord's prayer," offers us a template to follow when we pray:

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matthew 6:9-13, ESV)*

Jesus teaches us that prayer is both relational and consequential—and that our prayers do not need to be full of many words. Prayer isn't about complex words that impress God or others, but is a quiet, simple and private time of meeting with a Father who loves us perfectly. This week, we hope to train ourselves to get into the rhythm of daily prayer.

## TIPS FOR DAILY PRACTICE

**Posture is an important part of prayer.** Though the posture of sitting for prayer is not necessarily rooted in biblical examples, it is the posture most of us in Western culture assume in order to concentrate on something or someone.

**Consider exploring some of these biblical postures for prayer:**

- *Stand:* Standing is a way of honoring the presence of another and giving him or her your full attention. Stand before the majesty of God. (2 Chronicles 6:12-13)
- *Outstretched arms:* Lifting up our arms or hands pulls our awareness toward heaven. It is a posture that opens the core of our body toward God. (1 Timothy 2:8)
- *Uplifted eyes:* Looking up to heaven with open eyes draws our attention above earthly realities to eternal verities. We are not alone. God is watching us. (John 11:41)
- *Kneeling:* Kneeling is a way we express humility and reverence. (Psalm 95:6)
- *Prostrate:* Lying face down or bowing low to the earth reminds us that we were created from dust and to dust we will return. It is a posture of submission and obedient worship. (Genesis 17:3, Matthew 26:38-39)

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come, your  
will be done, on earth as it  
is in heaven. Give us this  
day our daily bread, and  
forgive us our debts, as we  
also have forgiven our  
debtors. And lead us not  
into temptation, but  
deliver us from evil.**

**Matthew 6:9-13, ESV**



01

**HEAD**

Matthew 14:1-21

**HEART**

Spend some time journaling, specifically listing things for which you are grateful.

**HAND**

Schedule a 1:1 this week with someone from your Core Group.

02

**HEAD**

Matthew 14:22-36

**HEART**

End each day by saying thank you to God for at least one thing.

**HAND**

Spend some time in prayer with a friend today.

03

**HEAD**

Matthew 15

**HEART**

Write a letter of thanks to someone who has touched your life.

**HAND**

Text a friend you are grateful for and tell them how you feel.

04

**HEAD**

Matthew 16

**HEART**

Think about a current hardship. Where is there evidence of God's presence in this hardship? Is there anything you can be thankful for?

**HAND**

Note the birthdays of the people in your Core Group. Think of how you can celebrate them.

05

**HEAD**

Matthew 17

**HEART**

Before each meal today, take time to think about the things you can be grateful for in your day so far.

**HAND**

Text a pastor or a mentor a word of encouragement.

06

**HEAD**

Matthew 18:1-20

**HEART**

If you live with family or friends, vocalize gratitude around the dinner table, listing the things, people, and moments in recent memory that you recognize as gifts from God.

**HAND**

Find a bible verse and send it to 2 people today.

07

**HEAD**

Matthew 18:21-35

**HEART**

Make a plan for cultivating gratitude in the weeks to come.

**HAND**

Go on a prayer walk around your neighborhood.

# Gratitude

Gratitude is unnatural. As a society, our hearts are naturally bent towards greed, entitlement, and discontent. It's often the desire for the things we don't have or have yet to achieve that drives us and guides our decision making. It's the Sisyphean quest that can rob us of true rest, contentment, and ultimately joy.

Now, more than in most seasons, we're confronted with a list of things we do not have: easy access to friends and family, freedom of movement, the comforts of college. What a lot of us do have, however, is time and space to rest and reflect.

In the Old Testament, the people of God were forbidden from buying and selling on the sabbath. Once a week, the markets closed, the busyness ceased, and the focused shifted from things they desired to a person worthy of all desire.

In our spiritual practice this week, we want to deliberately reorient our hearts away from greed and discontentment and towards gratitude. Though it's often antithetical to our modern society, it's through the practice of gratitude, thanksgiving, and contentment that we can become the type people that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 6:10: *"sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything."*

## TIPS FOR DAILY PRACTICE

### **Gratitude is a deliberate act of mindful contentment.**

Despite whatever circumstances we might find ourselves in, we can all choose to be grateful.

As we cultivate this practice, it can be helpful to ground ourselves in familiar prayers. Take some time to pick a psalm, common prayer, or a passage of scripture to repeat throughout the week to remind you to be grateful.

### **A great place to start is Lamentations 3:21-24:**

*Yet hope returns when  
I remember  
this one thing:  
The Lord's unfailing  
love and mercy  
still continue,  
fresh as the morning,  
as sure as the sunrise.  
The Lord is all I have,  
and so in him  
I put my hope.*

For many, it's helpful to jot down 1-2 things each day that you are thankful for and offer those to God as a prayer of thanksgiving.

**Yet hope returns when  
I remember  
this one thing:  
The Lord's unfailing  
love and mercy  
still continue,  
fresh as the morning,  
as sure as the sunrise.  
The Lord is all I have,  
and so in him  
I put my hope.**

**Lamentations 3:21-24**

01

**HEAD**

Matthew 19

**HEART**

Practice a couple minutes of breathing prayer. Feel freedom to spend the entire week on this.

**HAND**

Schedule a 1:1 this week with someone from your Core Group.

02

**HEAD**

Matthew 20:1-17

**HEART**

Turn your phone off, go to a place you cannot be interrupted, and place yourself in the presence of God.

**HAND**

Use voice message and pray for 1-2 people today.

03

**HEAD**

Matthew 20:17-34

**HEART**

Turn your phone and laptop off for 1 hour today.

**HAND**

Text a friend you are grateful for and tell them how you feel.

04

**HEAD**

Matthew 21:1-22

**HEART**

Sit in silence with God and reflect on your feelings of discomfort with this process. What do you feel? Why do you feel that way? Lay these things before God.

**HAND**

See if there is a task or errand you can run for someone to allow them time for rest.

05

**HEAD**

Matthew 21:23-46

**HEART**

You may find yourself trapped in unintentional solitude. Call a friend or mentor and process those feelings.

**HAND**

Think of a practical need someone has today and meet it.

06

**HEAD**

Matthew 22

**HEART**

Take time alone with God and journal in silence your reflections of this past week on the spiritual discipline of solitude.

**HAND**

Write a letter to someone today encouraging them and telling them how grateful you are for them or consider mailing them a care package.

07

**HEAD**

Matthew 23

**HEART**

Make a plan for cultivating solitude in the weeks to come.

**HAND**

Go on a prayer walk around your neighborhood.

# Solitude

Last week in our devotional plan, we read a well-known and captivating passage: Peter sees Jesus in the distance on the dark waters, and—in a moment of great faith—jumps out of the boat and walks on the water, only to find himself moments later sinking and quickly panicking. So many questions arise. *Is this a story of faith? Of doubt? A question often unasked: why wasn't Jesus already in the boat with them?* The answer is in verse 23: *alone in the night, he went to the mountainside by himself to pray.*

This passage illustrates the great dichotomy of our lives as disciples: we grow and mature in the presence of others and we grow and mature in presence of One. Solitude and community are the gateway disciplines to all other spiritual disciplines. This week we will focus on the former.

In our hyper-distracted, over-achieving digital lives, the primary challenge we will face this week is our inability to quiet our minds and focus. The goal of this week is to begin the long and slow process of quieting ourselves before God. This discipline can be challenging for a lot of us because it's less something we do and more something we allow God to do in our souls. It's less about control and will-power, and more about surrender. You can't "succeed" or "fail" at this practice. All you can do is show up. Without solitude, we continue to be enamored by the illusions of our false selves. Simply put, it's the place where we learn to die to ourselves.

Some of you may feel like solitude is forced upon you in this season. You feel the loneliness of an isolated life. The good news is that because of what Jesus has done for us, solitude becomes the place we learn that we are never truly alone when we are alone.

## TIPS FOR DAILY PRACTICE

Sometimes the first step to cultivating the discipline of solitude is to learn how to sit in silence. Learn what ancients called "breathing prayer" can be a helpful place to begin.

- Close your eyes. Take long, deep, slow breaths, focusing on inhaling and exhaling.
- Start to pay attention to your breathing.
- Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as quickly as it comes, and just focus on your breathing.
- Your mind will run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to do's, and distractions. That's okay. Acknowledge the distraction, and release. Don't be discouraged.
- Sometimes it's helpful to pick a short truth from scripture to repeat and focus on as you learn to quiet your mind. For me, Colossians 1:27 is one I return to often. Inhale: *Christ in me*. Exhale: *the hope of glory*.
- In the beginning, just 1-2 minutes of this is a huge win, and as you get better, extend that time!

Solitude is an excellent way to begin your devotional time with God. It also can unearth thoughts and sins you may have avoided or drowned out with noise. It's helpful as you begin to cultivate this discipline to process your experiences with a trusted mentor or friend.

01

**HEAD**

Matthew 24

**HEART**

Go to a quiet space. Posture yourself in worship (hands lifted, arms open, on your knees, or bowing down) and praise God in song or prayer.

**HAND**

Schedule a 1:1 this week with someone from your Core Group.

02

**HEAD**

Matthew 25

**HEART**

Come to God with an open and listening ear. Write at the top of a paper "What do I value most?" Answer the question. How might what you worship need to change?

**HAND**

As/if you watch the news today, pray for the situations that you see.

03

**HEAD**

Matthew 26:1-35

**HEART**

Read Psalm 145 out loud. Write your own psalm of praise to God.

**HAND**

Find some time this week to call a friend and pray with them.

04

**HEAD**

Matthew 26:36-75

**HEART**

Consider the many names God uses to reveal Himself to us. Which of these names identifies where God is in your life now? Talk to God about what this revelation means to you.

**HAND**

Ask someone to tell you their story.

05

**HEAD**

Matthew 27:1-31

**HEART**

Think of or write down all the ways God has been faithful in your life so far. Pray and thank Him for all He has done.

**HAND**

Think of a practical need someone has today and meet it.

06

**HEAD**

Matthew 27:32-66

**HEART**

Think of the times you have been deeply moved in worship. What was happening in your life at that time? Put yourself where you most easily connect with God in worship and worship Him.

**HAND**

Google hangout with some friends and share a meal together.

07

**HEAD**

Matthew 28

**HEART**

Make a plan for cultivating rhythms of worship in the weeks to come.

**HAND**

Reach out to a friend in Chi Alpha who you may not know well and chat.

# Worship

*"To love you as I should, I must worship God as Creator."*

-C.S. Lewis

Worship is a word typically associated with religion, but in reality, we all worship something. True worship is rightly ordering our desires and giving praise and adoration to God so through his power we can know his love and incarnate that love to the world.

Worship happens whenever we intentionally cherish God and value him above all else in life. Everyone looks to something to give their lives meaning. Worship reveals what is important to us. True worship does not equal going to church on Sunday. True worship of God happens when we put God first in our lives. When what God says matters more than what others say, and when loving God matters more than being loved. Transformation comes through valuing God above all else. Worship can touch our deepest feelings, but that is not the litmus test for worship. Feelings can come and go, but the joyous Trinity remains forever worthy. In light of this, everything else on the horizon of our attention takes its proper secondary place.

To worship God is to make him lord of our heart. We build our life on Him and nothing else which challenges our devotion every day. Our inhale and exhale rests on His every word and command. This in turn determines how we react to hardship, suffering and uncertainty. We can worship one who is steadfast and unchanging. Anything else will crumble under the weight of our worship.

## TIPS FOR DAILY PRACTICE

Worship can be a tricky discipline for some. Cultivating an attitude of worship requires much more than participating in a worship song.

This week, think through some of these questions to help develop this spiritual discipline in your life.

- How did a particular style of worship—charismatic, traditional, contemporary, liturgical—shape you and your image of God?
- How does a particular form or style of worship shape you now?
- Who is God to you?
- What name for God—Shepherd, Lord, Father, Day Spring, Bread of Life—best describes your relationship with him right now? What does this name mean to you?
- How does worshipping alone and worshipping with others affect you?
- What about God moves you to worship?