



# WATCH, REST, REPEAT



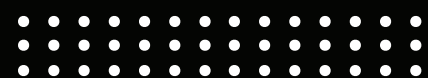
READING PLAN





WEEK 1

# **Mental Health and The Church**



# MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH



## Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

### DAY 1:

You sprain your ankle, and your other leg takes on added weight to allow you to walk until you heal.

You get something in your eye, and instinctively your hands rise to cover and protect your eyes from further injury.

Your brain temperature starts to rise, so the signal goes out for a big yawn to not only stretch your jaw and increase your blood flow but also trigger a sharp inhale to cool the blood headed for your brain.

Taking on added weight or burden, protecting the injured part to allow healing, and intervening to prevent damage are all essential ways your physical body functions as a whole and not just a disconnected series of parts.

As today's verses remind us, a body of believers functions in much the same way.

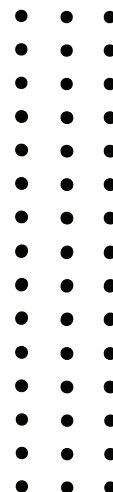
You get devastating news, and friends offer to stay with you until the shock wears off. They hold you up as you recover.

A classmate hurls an insult at you, and your parent's words of wisdom provide you perspective and distance from the pain and hurt.

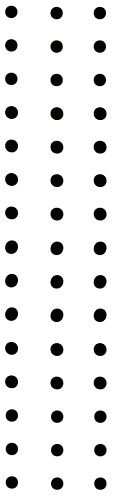
Your anxiety is escalating, and your pastor or trusted counselor steps in to address the issue and offer you relief.

With your physical body, the various parts are so intertwined that one member's pain is immediately felt by all. In a healthy community, members are also sensitive to one another's joys and sorrows, but that closeness is built on each member's decision to be authentic and even vulnerable.

We chuckle at the thought of our eye trying to declare independence



# MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH



## Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

### DAY 1: (CONTINUED)

or even hide an injury from our hand but still fall victim to the temptation to isolate ourselves when things go wrong.

Imagine the chaos if each part of your body tried to hide its pain or deny its reliance on the rest of the body.

Your body is at its strongest, most efficient, and most healthy status when each part celebrates its unique features and function even as it recognizes its value as part of the whole.

Is it any wonder that you are at your healthiest when you intentionally choose to rely on those around you to support, protect, and defend you even as you attempt to do the same for them?

You were wired for relationship, and it is within the interdependence of community that you are perfectly positioned to be the most creative, extraordinary, contributing you possible.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Have there been times when you assigned relative value to those around you or even yourself based on personality, background or even experiences? Has what you've read changed your opinion? If so, how?
- In what ways do you think being honest about your struggles or fears creates or even strengthens community?
- Today, who can you turn to for support? To whom can you offer support?

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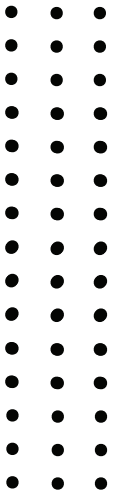
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# MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH



## Read Psalm 42

### DAY 2:

Everywhere we look is a reminder that God has woven cycles throughout his creation, including into our own lives.

It's so evident in nature, as spring gives way to summer then fall and to winter and back to spring. The waves of the ocean push upward on to the beach only to recede into the distance.

Today's passage gives us a snapshot of someone experiencing the trough between two waves, not only in his physical circumstances but also in his perception of his relationship to God.

In the heartbreak of feeling distant from God, he turns to God and cries out his longing for God's presence.

Even as he pours out his feelings of discouragement and sadness, rejection, and grief, he deliberately reminds himself not only of the joys

and celebrations of the past but also of God's unfailing love.

In the midst of his pain from the accusations of his enemies, he proclaims his trust in God's love.

Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that there is a season for everything, and there is a time for every activity under heaven.

A time to plant and a time to harvest.

A time to cry and a time to laugh.

A time to grieve and a time to dance.

These times are not assigned to different people.

God has not designated one group to exclusively plant, cry, and grieve any more than he has chosen others to only harvest, laugh, and dance.

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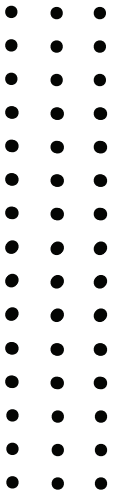
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# MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH



## Read Psalm 42

### DAY 2: (CONTINUED)

Each of these times or seasons are a part of every person's life.

And when your time is one of grief, rejection, sorrow, or pain, you can benefit from the lessons of the Psalmist.

Cry out your longing for God.

Lament the depth of your pain or grief.

Recount to yourself memories of times of joy and celebration.

Encourage yourself with words and songs of praise and worship to God.

Speak to yourself words of hope for the future and trust in the God who is with you yesterday, today, and tomorrow no matter what season you are in.

The undeniable constant in life's continuous cycles of change is God's presence and his overwhelming love for you.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Do times of pain usually drive you towards or away from God? Has what you read changed or modified how you will respond in the future? Why or why not?
- What value, if any, have you seen in the times you have grieved or suffered?
- How have those times influenced your relationships with friends, family, and God?

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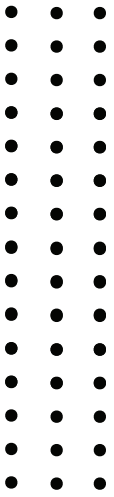
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# MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH



## Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Hebrews 10:23-25

### DAY 3:

Loneliness can be your reality whether you are in the middle of the most massive crowd or have hidden away from everyone.

Feelings of isolation can make you feel out of sync and rejected by everyone, even when it's not true.

They wouldn't understand.

I'm the only one who has ever felt/experienced this.

If I'm honest about what I'm thinking or feeling, they will ultimately reject me.

The challenge is that when we most need the wisdom and unconditional love of a friend, we are often vulnerable to the lies that increase our isolation and convince us to deliberately push people away.

We erect barriers to keep people out when our pain is too great.

But woven throughout our physical and spiritual DNA is the need for relationship.

Today's verses remind us of the power that comes from having even one other person when the storms come and the winds blow and the unyielding strength that comes when God is your third cord.

Whether the person is filled with words of wisdom or just sits with you and listens, receiving sympathy can shift your perspective and lighten your burden.

A friend can remind you of the truth, encourage you to hold on, and stand with you while you grow stronger.

There will probably come a time when they will need you to hold them up and remind them of the truth.

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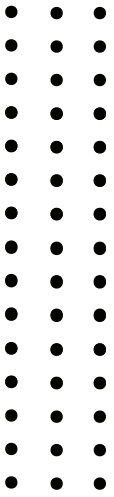
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# MENTAL HEALTH AND THE CHURCH



## Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Hebrews 10:23-25

### DAY 3: (CONTINUED)

In 2 Corinthians 1:4, we are encouraged to “comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” The imagery is of walking alongside others as God has walked alongside us.

There is such an authenticity when someone has walked the same road that you are on and can offer time-tested words of comfort and courage. The details may not be the same, but the strength of presence is priceless.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How can recognizing that sorrow and pain are part of everyone’s life encourage you to take the risk to be authentic with someone about what you are thinking, experiencing, or facing?
- Take a moment to pray and ask God to reveal whom you need to connect with to provide or gain strength. Name someone you can reach out to for comfort (to have them walk alongside you) and someone else you can comfort (walk alongside them).

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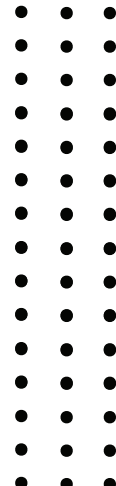


WEEK 2

# **The Bible and Suffering**



# THE BIBLE AND SUFFERING



## Read Genesis 3 Hebrews 2:14-15

### DAY 1:

It can feel like we're losing the battle.

You watch as someone you love struggles to keep their head above water as waves of shame, anxiety, depression, and even self-harm threaten to overwhelm them.

Maybe for you, the struggle rages within your own mind, and you begin to doubt that you will make it through.

Just as a funhouse mirror or Insta filter can so distort your features that you struggle to recognize yourself or your best friend, the effects of sin can warp your thoughts and emotions until a sound mind seems impossible.

Trace back every evidence of brokenness, every thought or action that reeks of death, and you'll arrive at the same spot.

Evil, suffering, and death were unleashed when Satan convinced Adam and Eve to turn away from God, to choose the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil instead of the Tree of Life. The results of this choice are all around us: in the brokenness of our relationships, bodies, minds, societies, politics. Sin has infected everything.

But because of Jesus, because of God's unrelenting plan to redeem and restore us both now and for eternity, there is a reason to hope.

Not hope in the sense that we use it to signify a wish like I hope it rains or I hope I win, but the heart-bursting expectation that God's promises are true, and his Kingdom has and will come.

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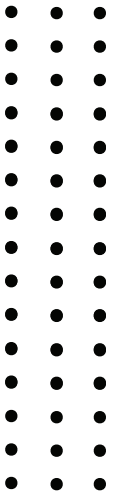
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# THE BIBLE AND SUFFERING



## Read Genesis 3 Hebrews 2:14-15

DAY 1:  
(CONTINUED)

There will be a day when all is turned right side up.

There will be a day when the shackles of suffering and shame are broken once and for all.

There will be a day when you are no longer marred by the effects of sin—yours or anyone else’s.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Can you recognize any of the effects of sin in your own life?
- What is one thing that you pray that God will make right? What role do you think you have in his plan to redeem and restore?

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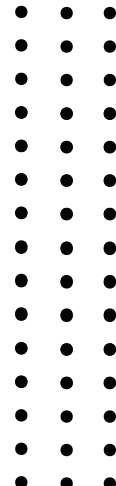
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# THE BIBLE AND SUFFERING



## **Read Romans 8:18-25**

### DAY 2:

If you've ever watched a woman labor in childbirth, you might wonder why anyone ever has more than one child.

But ask a woman to describe her experience, and she will probably say that the tidal wave of love and protectiveness she felt as soon as that baby was laid on her chest completely swept away all her memories of the pain she endured.

It's an analogy that the Bible applies to our current condition corporately and individually. The Bible speaks of creation groaning in labor, and the implication is that when the awaited glory comes, it will eclipse all our sorrow and suffering.

Don't misunderstand.

This is not an attempt to negate the reality of the pain you suffer. The answer is not to pretend that life isn't hard and you don't actually struggle.

Instead, it is a recognition that there will be an end to sorrow and suffering.

It is the encouragement that what you long for, what your heart aches for, what your spirit hungers for with an intensity beyond words, that glory is so magnificent that it will eclipse what you are enduring now.

And until that day, God has sent the Holy Spirit as a deposit of his promise of eternity. It is no coincidence that the Holy Spirit is also called the Comforter.

His presence in your life inspires and strengthens you to hold fast to the hope of God.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

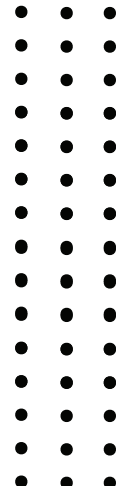
- How has what you've read revealed God's truth about your suffering or sorrow?
- Knowing God's promises about eternity, how does that affect your perspective on your life's positive and negative circumstances?

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# THE BIBLE AND SUFFERING



## Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-18

## Revelation 21:3-4

### DAY 3:

This week we've focused on shifting our perspective by considering our momentary sorrows in comparison with the eternal, ultimate joy of God's presence.

Although the glory that God promises you is almost beyond description, you probably experience this kind of shift in perspective every day.

As a student, you choose to study rather than binge-watch your favorite shows.

As an athlete, you choose to endure the pain of training and not give in to empty calories and late-night parties.

As a friend, you have hard conversations when you see your friend's choices are dangerous.

Why would you deny yourself or deliberately choose something painful today other than because you're expecting something better in the future?

When we're going through hard times, there are a million ways we can distract ourselves. We numb ourselves with social media, alcohol, work, unhealthy relationships, television. But the thing is, those paths don't lead to freedom and accomplishment. They just make the problem worse.

In today's passage, we are reminded that on one side of the scale are our troubles that will end, and on the other side is a glory that "vastly outweighs" them and will last forever.

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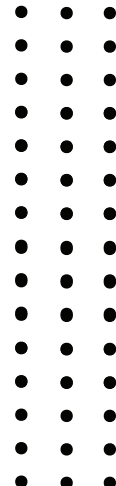
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# THE BIBLE AND SUFFERING



## Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-18

## Revelation 21:3-4

DAY 3:

(CONTINUED)

So the challenge for us today and every day is which side of the scale will we focus on? When we focus on an image inches away, it fills our vision so we can't see anything else. But when we intentionally focus on an image in the distance, suddenly it grows sharp, and the closer image grows blurry.

Will you allow today's pain to overwhelm you, or will you choose to trust that the power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you? Will you be overwhelmed by the partial truth of today's pain, or will you allow yourself to remember the bigger picture, which includes how God is working in you and in the world?

Even if we choose poorly and give in to the temptation to indulge our desires or artificially numb the pain, God's promise of mercy and forgiveness are clear.

As you read the passage from Revelation, pause long enough to consider precisely what it would mean to you to experience eternity without death, sorrow, grief, and pain. Let the sheer richness of this promise invade your spirit and strengthen your hope.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What is an example of this shift in perspective that you have experienced in your own life? What made your ultimate goal worthy of the "price" you paid?
- What helps you to focus on God's ultimate glory rather than your circumstances? Praying, talking to friends, journaling, worship, or something else?

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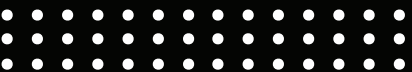
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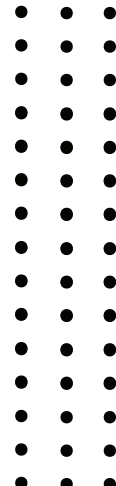


WEEK 3

# Seeking Self-Awareness



# SEEKING SELF-AWARENESS



## Read 2 Peter 1:3-11

## Matthew 11:28-30

### DAY 1:

Over the past couple of weeks, we've explored some misconceptions about mental illness, seen that sin is the root of all suffering, and glimpsed the incredible glory that God promises is in store for us as believers.

But what about today?

Is there anything you can do to navigate the impact of your daily circumstances and to navigate through the daily challenges?

The answer is a resounding yes!

In the first of today's passages, we are reminded that God has given us everything necessary for spiritual health. Step by step, aspect by aspect, in response to God's promises, we are to add qualities like self-control, endurance, godliness, and love to our faith.

But is this something we do for God? The second passage quickly dispels that misconception.

Spiritual maturity and health come from life with God. If we try to do this on our own, we are quickly broken by the strain. It is from our closeness to Christ and reliance on his Spirit that we fulfill all the potential he has woven within us.

So what's the next step?

It is revealed in the first quality mentioned—knowledge. Do you know your areas of strength? What are your potential areas of weakness?

Knowing yourself or being self-aware can equip you to handle each day with strength and a healthy perspective.

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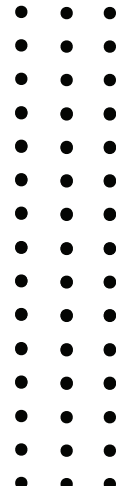
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# SEEKING SELF-AWARENESS



## Read 2 Peter 1:3-11 Matthew 11:28-30

### DAY 1: (CONTINUED)

Sometimes, it is mature to recognize you need to step back and examine what you are experiencing.

Are you prone to feelings of isolation? How have you combatted loneliness in the past?

How do the seasons affect you? Do you notice yourself giving in to melancholy when you haven't seen the sun or are under a great deal of academic pressure?

Recognizing the root of your feelings and knowing what has lifted your spirits in the past will help you decide to engage in physical activity, seek a change of surroundings, or a friend's company.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How well do you know yourself? Can you easily identify the circumstances that bring you down and the ones that lift you up?
- What is one thing you can "add" today that will change your attitude and/or experience?

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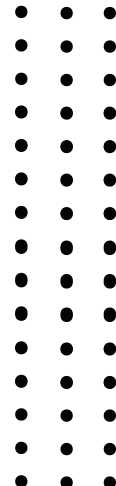
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# SEEKING SELF-AWARENESS



## Read **Philippians 2:3-5**

## **Psalm 19:7-14**

### DAY 2:

We've all known people who make everything about them.

They view every bump in the road as targeting them and any shift in attention away from them as a reason for concern.

That's not the kind of self-awareness we're talking about today.

A healthy, mature, and biblical view of self is based on an identity founded on Christ.

When you know how God views you, you value the input of those you trust and admire, but you are not desperately seeking their approval.

When you understand God's mercy and forgiveness, your tendency towards shame and self-recrimination fades because you trust God sees you as clean and righteous.

When you fully trust that God is for you, you have the confidence to extend yourself to others rather than continually assessing every situation, asking, "What is in this for me?"

Think of how Jesus reacted to his closest friends, his enemies, and even those who wanted to push him into the mold of who they thought the Messiah should be.

In every interaction, you glimpse such confidence in who he is and who he knows the Father to be.

The tools Jesus used to maintain his connection with God are the same tools you can use today—prayer and the truth of God's Word. Christ was comforted and strengthened through the time he spent with God.

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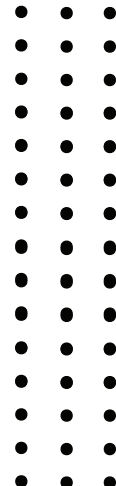
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# SEEKING SELF-AWARENESS



## Read **Philippians 2:3-5**

## **Psalm 19:7-14**

DAY 2:

(CONTINUED)

When there are so many inner and outer forces pulling at your image, actions, and even your physical reactions, choosing to reflect Jesus' attitude can place your identity squarely in the hands of God rather than in the hands of those around you or your circumstances.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What is one attribute of having the mind and attitude of Jesus that you need to apply today? What verses can equip you to reflect Jesus' character in this situation or relationship?
- How will being confident of God's love allow you to critically examine and acknowledge the areas where you need to grow?

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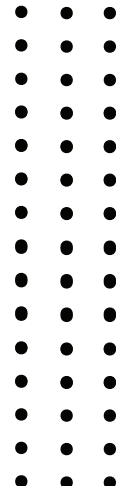
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# SEEKING SELF-AWARENESS



## Read Psalm 139:23-24

## Luke 18:9-14

### DAY 3:

Think about a time when you have welcomed a critique of your actions.

Was it a coach who pointed out your stance or body position that was off?

Was it a friend who revealed that you tend to emphasize the negative rather than the positive?

Was it a teacher who redirected your argument in a paper?

What made the difference between your feeling judged and even hopeless to change and the sense of excitement to change something for a better outcome?

There are usually some elements that are essential for genuine and healthy self-examination.

The first is trust in the motivation of the person giving you the feedback. When you know their desire is for you to grow and strengthen, you don't view their assessment as a reason to be deflated or defeated.

The second is confidence that you are capable of making the change. Having a coach expect you to run a five-minute mile can be crushing, but one who is confident you can improve upon your personal best can provide you with tools you need to fulfill their expectation.

The third is an attitude of humility. When you recognize that there are areas in your life in need of adjustment, your spirit, heart, and ears are open for change.

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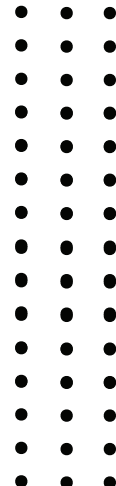
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# SEEKING SELF-AWARENESS



## Read Psalm 139:23-24

## Luke 18:9-14

DAY 3:

(CONTINUED)

So what inspires you to invite God to search you and point out those areas that are not in line with his purpose for you?

Probably these same factors.

Can you approach God in humility, recognizing that you are lost without his touch?

Can you trust God's motivation in what he reveals to you as areas that need change?

Does he consistently provide you with an accurate reflection of who he knows you are as his beloved child?

Is the Bible filled with his promise to transform and renew your mind, motivations, and actions?

As you ask God to examine your heart today, you can dare to be completely honest as you trust that he will not only reveal your inner thoughts and areas of growth but also give you the power to be transformed.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Has there been an opportunity where you have grown and changed because you were willing to ask for feedback?
- Which one of God's promises reminds you of his love for you and his desire to see you set free? How does that inspire you to allow God to reveal what areas you need to change?

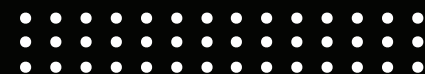
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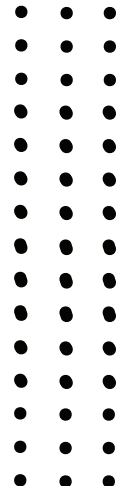


WEEK 4

# **Discipleship and Our Whole Self**



# DISCIPLESHIP AND OUR WHOLE SELF



## Read Mark 12:28-31 Romans 12:1-2

### DAY 1:

Inward and outward.

Specific and holistic.

Looking at Jesus' identity, emotions, interactions, and even his physical needs, we can see the value of balance.

Throughout this four-part reading plan, we have torn down some of the misconceptions about mental health that are common among believers.

We've explored the value of honest and authentic relationships, a willingness to self-examine and to invite God to reveal growth areas.

As we look at today's first passage, it's interesting how Jesus responded to the question about the most important commandment.

The emphasis is on your relationship with God and the challenge to love him with all you are.

Nothing held back.

Nothing left covered.

God invites you today and every day to love him with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength even as he recognizes our tendency to pull things back.

Today, as you read these verses, make an honest assessment of the degree to which you can say that you love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Do you find yourself conforming to the world, or are you daily being transformed by allowing God to change the way you think, act, and respond to your circumstances?

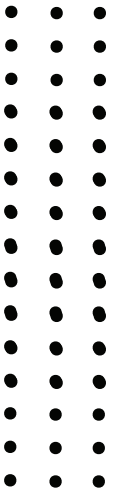
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# DISCIPLESHIP AND OUR WHOLE SELF



## Read Mark 12:28-31 Romans 12:1-2

### DAY 1: (CONTINUED)

Maybe this is the first time you have read these passages, or perhaps they are familiar to you. Regardless of where you start, Jesus' words are an excellent way to assess how you are maturing as a believer. Are you pursuing him or your own ways to feel safe, loved, and worthwhile?

But Jesus didn't stop there. The mark of a mature believer is not just his/her relationship with God but also how that tangibly impacts their relationship with those around them.

Much has been taught about the meaning of "love your neighbor as yourself," but even a first reading prompts us to measure the strength of our love of God by examining how we treat our neighbor.

The Bible is clear—we will be known as Jesus' disciples by the way we love others. We will live out his good, pleasing and perfect will when we choose to reflect him and

not the world's norms.

Radical, selfless, all-encompassing love for God and for others is the hallmark of everyone who claims God's name.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- As you look at the list—heart, soul, mind, strength- what is an area you have the chance to strengthen today? What is your first step?
- Love of God and love for our neighbors are intricately connected. How can your love for God express itself to your neighbor today? How can an act of love towards your neighbor deepen your love for God or your ability to love him wholeheartedly?
- Are there areas where you have aligned your thoughts with the world rather than God? What have been the results?

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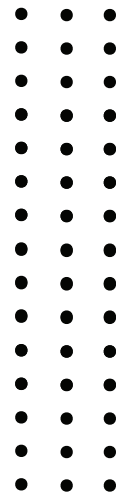
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# DISCIPLESHIP AND OUR WHOLE SELF



## Read Galatians 5:16-26

### DAY 2:

When you feed a child healthy foods, he or she will grow bigger and stronger. It just makes sense.

Today we will consider what parts your actions, emotions, physical practices, and spiritual disciplines are feeding and, in turn, strengthening.

Today's passage reminds us that there is a direct correlation between our choices and the outcomes.

Your relationships, physical abilities, emotional balance, mental health, and spiritual maturity will start to suffer if neglected.

When you prioritize regular physical activity, you strengthen your heart and muscles, optimize your oxygen uptake, and flood your body with "feel good" hormones. Do it with a team or partner, and you strengthen your social ties at the same time.

When you set aside time for reflection, prayer, and to go through a daily Bible study like this, you realign your heart, spirit, and mind with God. Just a few minutes a day can radically transform and enrich the rest of your daily relationships and activities.

When you gather with other believers to worship and study, you strengthen your network of support and realize that you are not alone.

On the other side, when you live by your impulsive desires or choose your natural ways, anger, envy, and strife are certain to rise up in your life no matter how hard you try to mask them.

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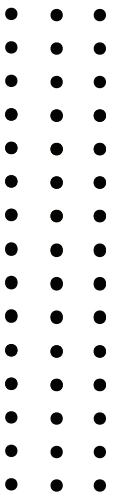
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# DISCIPLESHIP AND OUR WHOLE SELF



## Read Galatians 5:16-26

### DAY 2: (CONTINUED)

When you choose the Spirit's way and say no to your impulsive need to seek instant gratification, the outcomes are sure and noticeable. Love, joy, faithfulness, and self-control mark your actions and attitudes.

What if you are not sure you want to—or even can—choose the way of the Spirit? Your honesty is the perfect place to start.

Ask God to reveal to you not only the overwhelming, transformational impact of choosing to live by the laws of his Kingdom but also to give you the strength to choose him in every small and large decision.

Your spiritual journey with God is just that—a journey, not a destination. Each day will bring you the challenge and opportunity to deliberately silence your own desires and choose God's way.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What decision did you make today that indicated a desire to follow the Spirit? One that catered to your own desires? What, if any, outcome did you see as a result of your decision?
- What area do you need God's power to overcome? What verses have you read recently that remind you of his mercy and forgiveness when you fall? What is one tangible way you can focus on God's promises and not your weaknesses?

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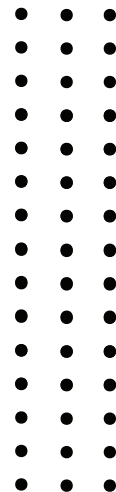
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# DISCIPLESHIP AND OUR WHOLE SELF



## Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 Jude 25-26

### DAY 3:

Rules without relationship lead to rebellion.

You've probably encountered someone who just demanded a behavior without offering you the support or even feedback to achieve it.

From Genesis to Revelation, God's story is one of relationship and then, after the fall, the redemption and restoration necessary to make relationships possible.

Stop for a minute and ask yourself honestly, "Is there an obstacle in my relationship with God?" and then a second question, "Is this a true obstacle, or is it based on a misunderstanding of who God is or who he considers me to be?"

The Bible is clear.

The truth will indeed set you free.

Today, is there anything that keeps you from experiencing the totality of God's love for you? Feelings of shame, unworthiness, and guilt from the past start to fade in light of the truth of God's Word.

What if the truth was that God was too busy loving you to be disappointed in you? What if he longs for you to be honest with him about your genuine thoughts and feelings rather than a carefully curated image you present to everyone else?

The truth is that you are already fully known, totally accepted, and completely loved by God.

Right now.

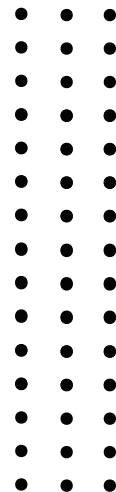
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# DISCIPLESHIP AND OUR WHOLE SELF



## Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 Jude 25-26

DAY 3:  
(CONTINUED)

Not when you “get better.”

Not when your circumstances change.

Not when you live up to someone’s definition of what a Christian should be.

Right now.

Yes, he is changing you. He is transforming you. He is growing you up in Jesus. But none of your maturing makes him love you one bit more. You are already totally lovable in his eyes.

Let that sink in and then let it change your life.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What is one thing that will shift in your life as you choose to live as one loved by God? What will drop away? What will be added?
- What can you do right now to reflect that you know God’s promises are true about his love for you and his power to mature you? What is your response to God?

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# WATCH, REST, REPEAT



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