



## *Practices for Becoming Mature Disciples* SIGN #7 - YOU LIVE OUT SCRIPTURE

### **Introducing** *The Nine Signs of Spiritual Maturity*

We have identified nine characteristics that define a transformed and mature follower of Christ. We hope to use these characteristics, or signs, as mile markers to help us pay attention to the path we're on. It is important to note that these are all broad simplifications. They're not meant to be a pass/fail test, but a gauge we check regularly and to know when and where to adjust as we go. Each week we will explore one of these nine signs in depth using a variety of exercises and spiritual disciplines designed to help you evaluate where you're at and how you can continue growing towards maturity in Christ.

### **This Week's Focus:** A Mature Disciple Lives Out Scripture

This week's sign has three equally important components. Explicitly, the statement declares that a mature disciple is someone who lives out the scripture they read. But in order to live out what we read, we must believe it. And in order to believe what we read, we need to know what it says (or in other words: actually read it.)

We believe a mature follower of Christ recognizes the Bible as God-breathed and infallible. Which makes scripture the final authority for their faith and life. For us, this looks like reading, studying, and meditating on scriptures regularly. It also means our life is consistently being shaped by those scriptures.

### **Quick Tip:** Switch Up Your Scripture Reading Strategy

Sometimes it can be hard to connect to the Bible when you're reading on your own, but this doesn't mean you don't value scripture. Think about all the times you have been moved by scripture-filled worship songs, or inspired by passages taught in sermons, or encouraged through verses quoted by others. It's not always about the words themselves, but the way they are presented to you.

If you're having trouble relating to or understanding scripture, try reading the same passage in a few translations. Sometimes we get a better picture when we read it a few different ways. And if that doesn't seem to work, try listening to the passage read aloud or even watching The Bible Project's video on that chapter.

[BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com) is a great place to look at different translations side-by-side, and the [YouVersion](https://www.youversion.com) bible app is a great place to listen to scripture read aloud.

# TIME ALONE

## PRAY: Praying Scripture

One of the ways we can elevate scripture in our lives is to pray scripture. Prayer is woven through the fabric of scripture. You can use scripture in a number of ways during your time of prayer:

1. Pray the scripture to God. The Psalms are a great place to do this.
2. Use the scripture to guide your time of prayer. Using a verse to shape your prayer.
3. Pick a scripture and declare it as truth as a reminder or declaration over a person or place.

In your alone time with God try each of these this week.

Below are some examples to get you started, but as you spend time in the word use these means of prayer for scripture that God highlights to you.

- Praying Psalm 84 as your own would mean reading the sentence “*my* heart and *my* flesh cry out for the living God” as if they were your own words, not as words from an author from another time.
- A prayer shaped by Romans 8:28 would sound like “God help open my eyes to the ways in which you are working where I feel like you are absent. Show me where you are in my struggles.”
- A declaration could sound like “God, Acts 2:21 says that everyone who calls on your name will be saved. I pray that the people of Vancouver will call on your name, after experiencing your grace.”

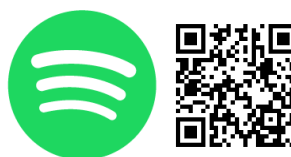
## READ: Matthew 3:16-17, 4:1-4

Read through this passage each day. It can be helpful to read in different translations, such as NIV, ESV, or The Message.

## WORSHIP: This Week's New Songs

We now have a playlist made up of worship songs that are meaningful to our community; including our Sunday setlists and even a few originals! Each week, we'll add new songs. Find the playlist using the links below. Here's what we added this week:

- King of Kings by Hillsong Worship



# TIME ALONE

## REFLECTION: How Do You Regularly Encounter the Scriptures?

### Hebrews 4:12

*For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Did you know, the Bible is the most popular book in the world? It's the most successful literary creation of all time. Every year over 100 million Bibles are sold or given away. So it's the bestseller this year. It was the bestseller last year. It's the bestseller every year. In fact, practically every week the Bible is the bestseller. If it was put into a bestseller list, every week it would win. That's why they don't put it in – it would be so boring. 'What's the bestseller this week?' 'The Bible. The Bible. The Bible.' It's the most popular book in the world. It's the most powerful book in the world. As we follow the Way of Jesus the scriptures are essential. We have to develop a relationship with it, not just reading it as a text book, but giving space for God to speak, form, challenge us everyday in our lives.

Most of us engage the scriptures through reading and studying different passages, but in order for us to form a true relationship with our Bibles we have to develop habits that create different experiences and lenses for us to see and experience the scriptures through.

- **Praying Scripture**
  - Select a passage that is meaningful to you and that you feel speaks truth into your life. A psalm is a great place to start this practice (e.g., if you want to pray a prayer of praise to God, try Psalm 100).
  - Start reading through your passage slowly, meditating on each word and verse.
  - As you finish a sentence or a verse, stop and turn your thoughts into a prayer. Bring the ideas or truths of the passage into a conversation with God.
  - Use the words of the Bible to guide prayers of worship, confession, thanksgiving, and petition for yourself and others.
  
- **Picture and Contemplate It**
  - Pick a Gospel passage where Jesus is interacting with someone.
  - Focus your heart and mind. God is present and your desire is to encounter God through your reading.
  - Read the passage twice, becoming familiar with the story and its details.
  - Sit quietly and close your eyes. Picture the scene. Where is it taking place? Who is there? What is Jesus doing? What are the sights, sounds, smells? Are you observing the scene as an outsider, are you one of the characters, or are you Jesus? How do you feel? What do you think?
  - The scene may come to life for you in vivid detail. Or you may enter into it through verbally describing what you see, contemplating people's words or actions. Creativity and imagination can be helpful, but are not necessary for this exercise. The aim is to engage with the scene and gain a more personal knowledge of Jesus.
  - As you conclude, take time to talk directly to Jesus. Speak whatever comes to your heart.

# TIME ALONE

- **Journaling Scripture**

- Write verses that stood out to you
- Jot questions about the passage
- Write a truth from the passage
- Write action steps for yourself based on your reading
- Write a praise to God for a promise that was meaningful to you
- Write prayers for yourself or others that were prompted by the passage
- Write a confession if you've fallen short of an action in the passage
- Ask God for help in living out the passage

- **Memorizing Scripture**

- Memorizing Scripture is one of the most effective means of Scripture engagement. Because Scripture engagement is about reflecting on the Bible and mulling a passage over in our minds, having a passage memorized makes the process of reflection available to us at all times. Memorized Scripture allows us to dwell continuously on a passage throughout the day.
- Grab a notecard and write down a verse and carry it with you throughout your day.
- Turn a passage into a song to help you memorize it easier.

- **Singing Scripture**

- One of the most powerful aspects of singing is that it connects with both your thoughts and emotions. Your relationship with God is about having the correct beliefs and thoughts about him and also about having a strong emotional connection with him, leading you to a life of obedient love. In other words, you use your head (thinking), your heart (emotions), and your hands (actions) in your relationship with God. Leaving out any one of these three aspects can lead to a shallow, unsatisfying, and potentially weak relationship with God. Singing the truths in the Bible can enhance your experience with God through his Word both emotionally and cognitively.
- Singing Scriptures can deepen your thinking about God by helping you meditate on God's truth. As you sing a passage of Scripture, you're praying the passage. The more often you sing/pray a passage, the more you'll understand the passage and will be changed by that understanding of God's Word. Singing can help you in your thinking about God's Word as well as enhance your dwelling on God's truth.
- But music doesn't just change your thinking. Excellent music will stir your heart, enhancing the feelings that are associated with the message of the lyrics. The lyrics of songs are poetry. Because of its extensive imagery, poetry also can help you feel the truth of a message in a powerful way. Your feelings will help your motivation to act on biblical truths you are learning.

# TIME TOGETHER

## Welcome:

- Icebreaker: What music genre, band, or song brings back nostalgic memories?
- Who is the first bible passage (or bible story) you remember reading or hearing? Do you remember a point when the bible started to feel more significant and meaningful to you?

## Scripture: Matthew 3:16-17, 4:1-4

Have someone read the passage out loud in any translation. Others can take notes below.

*16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

*4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*

## Discussion: *The Bible*

- Share any words, phrases, or pictures that stood out to you while reading.
- What does the statement mean "Man shall not live by bread alone..."?
- How does this apply to "living out scripture"?
- How has the bible been useful in your life recently?

# TIME TOGETHER

## **Discussion:** *The Practices*

- Discuss your experience of taking time alone with God  
How hard/easy was it to find time? How did you feel before you started versus after? Do you have a go-to place or spot in the house? What adjustments can you make to help you make time?
- Share insights, questions, and challenges from the “Time Alone” Practices  
What has been encouraging to you this week? What questions do you have from your Time Alone? Where do you see God challenging you? What are 2-3 steps that you can take now to grow in loving your church?

## **Share from your assessment of Encountering Scripture**

- Which strategy for engaging scripture did you try this week and how did it go?
- Did it affect your understanding or experience of scripture?
- Which strategies come most naturally to you?
- Which strategies are more challenging for you?

## **Discussion:** *The Journey*

Growing in your relationship with Jesus is a life-long journey. Each of us has highs and lows along the way, and each of us is still growing.

- How have you been encouraged in your relationship with Jesus lately? (the “Wins”)
- What challenges have you experienced that seem to pull you away from trusting God (distractions, defeats, doubts)
- During the next season of focusing on our relationship with Jesus, in what ways are you especially hoping to grow?
- How can the group encourage you and pray for you as we each walk together?

## **Prayer:**

In addition to prayer requests and anything else the group wants to pray about, ask God to deepen your group’s desire for His Word. If there is someone in your group who is particularly passionate about scripture and has made it an essential discipline in their life, have them pray over the group as an impartation; asking God to move in the group as He has in their life.

# FAMILY TIME

Teaching our kids to love God's word can be fun! There are so many amazing children's bibles and if you don't yet have one, we would be happy to give one to you!

A few ways to teach your kids to build the habit of reading God's word include:

1. Pick a time where you read together, this could be in the morning, before bed or even over a meal.
2. Listen to the audio Bible, I use YouVersion on my iPhone. You can listen to God's word during a regular time like bedtime or driving in the car.
3. Podcast: Kids Corner Bible Stories are a favorite in our home
4. Memorize Scripture together
  - a. Pick a verse of the week and memorize it as a family
  - b. There is a great music playlist called "verses" that is purely scripture

Below are some Bibles for kids that we like!

[\*\*The Beginner's Bible: Timeless Children's Stories\*\*](#)

**By The Beginner's Bible**

[\*\*The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name\*\*](#)

**Written by Sally Lloyd-Jones and Illustrated by Jago**

[\*\*Bedtime Bible Stories\*\*](#)

**Written by Daniel Partner and Illustrated by Kathy Arbuckle**

[\*\*The Action Bible: God's Redemptive Story \(Action Bible Series\)\*\*](#)

**By Sergio Cariello**

[\*\*The Story for Kids: Discover the Bible from Beginning to End\*\*](#)

**By Zondervan**