

**Immersed in God’s Word,**

**following Jesus – together**

*His disciples came to him, and Jesus began to teach them.*

 *~ Jesus, Matthew 5:2*

As we carry out this plan to immerse in God’s Word regularly, we do so expecting to meet God through the experience. A person may read the bible with different intentions, among them:

* Educational (to learn about God and His ways)
* Emotional (for strength, comfort, support)
* Guidance-driven (seeking direction, advice)
* Experiential (to encounter God through His Word)

**So what is our primary purpose in for immersing in God’s Word?**

 Our chief goal with God’s Word is to bring about an

 encounter with the Living God, known as the Father

 of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Father of our Lord

 Jesus Christ – our Father in Heaven – Abba. We know

 God uses such encounters to create, sustain, or grow

 faith in His people and complete work He aims it to do

 in and through us.

As you engage God’s Word, remember that it is *“****living and active****, sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”.* (Hebrews 4:12).

AND… please know that there will be times when God challenges you through His Word. Gladly embrace this truth, keeping in mind this other verse from Hebrews: *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*” (Hebrews 12:11)

Immersing, Yielding, and Relating with Others



In seeking to grow as disciples of Jesus, this time in God’s

Word includes three components we consider necessary

for spiritual growth: HIs Word, His Spirit, & His people.

**IMMERSING IN GOD’S WORD** This plan puts you in God’s Word daily, encouraging you not only to read the Word, but meditate on it, responding in your spirit, thoughts, and emotions. Highlight words and phrases that catch your attention and ask God about them, knowing that he desires to shape and mold you as His disciple. Consider journaling, even if only a line or two. Feel free read the bible’s context to scripture passages (before and after).

**YIELDING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT** Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would remind his disciples of what he taught; That Spirit helps us too. The opening and closing prayers here remind you to yield to the Spirit in both these devotions and in life itself.

**OPENING PRAYER:** Spirit of God, You are my primary teacher of God’s Word; I yield my heart and mind, my soul and spirit, my will and imagination to You as I immerse myself in the Word during these dedicated moments. Teach me in Jesus’ name, Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** Spirit of God, I pray that you use this time of devotion today to shape and influence my thoughts and emotions, actions and attitudes throughout the day. May all who encounter me also encounter You in me. Again, I yield my heart and mind, my soul and spirit, my will and imagination to You as I immerse myself in the rest of my day to God’s Glory; in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**RELATING WITH OTHERS** At least once a week, connect with a small group of people (2-12) also walking with the Lord. You can even talk through this material, sharing what you are learning or wrestling with while in God’s Word (9:30am at Hope is an option). Encourage, admonish, strengthen, and love each other in these get-togethers. This is the third way God matures people. So whenever you can make it happen, do so; don’t ignore it.

**Information about IMMERSION’s Weekly Layout**

The first part of IMMERSION in God’s Word flows from Monday to Sunday, culminating with the weekend worship experience. The material used throughout the week is built into the worship service, from the scripture readings to prayers and even the discipleship point used each Friday. Here is a basic description:

* *Monday: Overall discipleship theme for the week (\*with prayer)* Each week has a different discipleship emphasis being flushed out in both devotions and the worship/preaching experience.
* *Tuesday: God’s Mission in relation to the week’s theme\**

The disciple’s call always begins in receiving God’s grace through Jesus before joining Jesus on His mission to others.

* *Wednesday: One’s identity in Christ based on the theme\**

The world constantly pushes identity issues on us. To combat this reality, we remind ourselves who we are in Christ.

* *Thursday: Reviewing, Repenting, and Returning to God.*

Near mid-week, this day calls for re-centering our lives on God

* *Friday: Thematic Discipleship Point\** This content is drawn from IMMERSION materials, Luther’s Catechism, other resources.
* *Saturday: Thematic Scriptural Story for the week\**

Each week we will invite God’s Spirit to teach us through the power of story. The more stories from God’s Word that you can learn, the more scriptural analogies and parallels that He has as His disposal to bring life to you and others.

* *Sunday: After the season of Advent, there are quotes regarding worship from Scripture and disciples of the past or present\**

Sunday is a constant reminder to devote time to God, to dedicate time to be with Him and his people. Let’s not give up meeting together: In micro-groups, in small groups, or in large groups. Let your lifestyle reflect your Christian values as you carve out and protect time to worship God and deepen your walk and understanding with God and your fellow disciples. Be intentional until you can be habitual.

**Micro-Meditation: Psalm of the Week**

In addition to the daily IMMERSION with a discipleship focus, there is opportunity to be in a selected Psalm each week. You are encouraged to do it at a separate time of day. The psalm may have a general connection to the discipleship theme for the week, but it has a purpose all its own in the devotional life: Getting one to meditate of the “Prayer Book” of the Old Testament. The intent is training you to meditate on His Word and praying it back to Him. Part two provides a simple routine Monday to Friday, with each section of verses handled throughout the week as follows:

* Monday: Read the assigned set of verses twice (inset box), highlighting whatever words or phrases catch your attention. Note any reactions of thought, emotion, body, or spirit. Through a time of meditation, ask God to impress things upon you. He will use his Word to speak to you. If inclined, use a journal or a loose-leaf paper to jot notes. It will be helpful for later review personally or with others.
* Tuesday-Friday: There will be a focus on one-two verses from the assigned Psalm as well as a parallel teaching or command and scriptural promise.

*The Scale* icon designates a teaching or command of God being shared; the scale symbolizes the importance of regarding the Lord’s Word as weightier that of the world. It’s a good time to ask: Am I following God’s

Word or a worldly view on a subject, issue, or matter?

This iconindicates a promise of God being brought to your attention. Knowing God’s

promises lends power and direction to one’s prayer & faith life.

During this time of meditating with God on His Word, pay attention

to thoughts, emotions, attitudes, etc. Consider journaling through

your experience – even the “silly” things that seem to arise. If the

Lord puts something on your heart to do – a spiritual ‘nudge’ make

sure you write that down and follow up as compelled.

Many of the Bible verses cited are on the material provided. Nonetheless, you are encouraged to use your own bible. Along with that, have a pen or pencil, highlighters (or crayons as some prefer) and paper to write on. Some people have purchased a binder to keep all their devotional notes together. Read the Text Box below:

**Examples of Praying the Psalms**

*Using Psalm 23:*

Lord Jesus, You are my shepherd;

 Remind me that I lack nothing with You taking care of me.

You give me “green pastures” to both eat and lie down in,

 like I find in my home;

You lead me to water,

 taking care of my thirst physically and spiritually.

You restore and take care of my soul:

Continue to lead me in your paths, even if it means

 walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

Because You promise to be with me, I will fear no evil:

 Comfort me with this truth;

Even with whatever enemies I have,

 You take care of me – letting my cup run over.

Surely Your goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life:

Thank You My Good Shepherd. Amen.

 **Or**

Jesus, I rejoice that You are my shepherd and that I lack nothing.

I thank You for a place to lie down at night,

and for the proverbial green pastures of food

that You daily provide for me in so many ways.

Thank You for providing for my need of water,

both physically and spiritually.

Thank You for restoring my soul.

Help me to appreciate Your goodness and mercy

and stay within it all the days of my life.

Thanks again –

 Your sometimes-straying-but-so-appreciative sheep. Amen.

**Helps for your Personal Discipleship Time**

One of our goals with discipleship is that each person defines her/himself as a disciple of Jesus, believing that the mandate of discipleship is coming directly from Jesus Himself. That means you are responding to His call on your life, following Him, letting Him change you, and working with Him in His mission to help make disciples of other people along the way.

God is always trying to speak to us, using moments in our lives to get our attention. Two basic questions we want to get familiar with asking daily relate to the learning circle:

 ***1 What is God saying to me?***

 ***2 What am I going to do about it?***

 *Mike Breen, Lifeshapes, 3DM Ministries*

We don’t expect everyone to be a mature disciple immediately, but we do expect everyone to be on the path to maturity. We are going to be learning how to listen for, hear, and respond to Jesus’ voice. Don’t skimp on the meditation time; learning to listen to God comes with practice. Jesus said that his sheep follow him because they know his voice (John 10:5,27). He also told his disciples that the Spirit would remind them of what he taught them (John 14:26).

As one grows in this process, it is natural to have questions arise – write them down. Later that day or week, ask a group leader or someone else discipling you; do not simply make up an answer.

In addition to the two questions above, you may find others helpful as well throughout the week: What did you learn? Is this new or a reminder of past learning? What did you wrestle with this week because of God’s Word? Is this new or has it persisted for awhile? Did God convict or comfort you in some way? How? What emotions are you feeling? What questions do you have about the readings?

Finally, consider turning the psalm into a personal prayer before you conclude your devotional time (see the Psalm 23 examples).

 ***Coming to learn from Jesus*** (Matthew 5:1-2) is the theme for our upcoming year in the church. Plan to come to Jesus regularly.





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**Evaluation Mission**

Any insights you share are helpful as we carry out our goal of building discipleship resources that God can use to strengthen us as we connect with one another in the contagious joy of following Jesus, the mission adopted for our church.

Please take note of any mistakes like word omissions, typos, incorrect bible references, or incomplete sentences. We want those addressed. Please identify the date concerning error.

MORE SO, let us know if the material is helping you connect with God, inspiring an insight, or prompting you to deeper thoughts.

Lastly, if something comes across as too complicated or confusing; You’re welcome to offer suggestions to enhance or simplify the devotion. Anonymity is welcome, but leaving your name is fine too. Thanks!