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a resource in:

**Sunday School**

## Spiritual Discipline Lessons High School



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# Spiritual Disciplines

## Lesson 1: Reading God's Word

**Recommended Age/Class:** High School (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)

### Objectives:

- The student will understand that spiritual disciplines are practices that help us become more Christ-like and enable us to serve God better.
- The student will understand the Bible has a larger storyline of God pursuing a close relationship with the people he created, beginning in Genesis and leading to Jesus.
- The student will understand the purpose of reading the Bible is for us to know God better and become more like Him.
- The student will understand that to read the Bible one needs to become an active reader and needs the Holy Spirit to understand its meaning.

### Scripture:

*Themes of the Bible:*

- Genesis 1:26-27, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."
- Genesis 3:6, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."
- Romans 5:14 & 17, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come... For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

*Psalms 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."*

*2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."*

*Psalms 19:7-10, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."*

*Hebrews 4:12, "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

*1 Corinthians 2:11-12, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."*

### Lesson Content:

- Every endeavor has skills that require practice (e.g., tying rope climbing knots in rock climbing). These skills are often called disciplines.
- Being a Christian includes disciplines that help us become more like Christ and enable us to serve God better.
- Pursuing spiritual disciplines is not an easy task, but dedication in pursuing them will lead to spiritual fruit.
- The Bible is more than a collection of individual stories, but rather a larger connected story that shows God's desire to have a relationship with the people he created, their rebellion against following God's instructions, and the fulfilled promise of life and redemption through Jesus.

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- When reading the Bible, first seek to understand the passage and how it fits into the larger story of the Bible. Seeking to understand the passage first allows one to consider how to live out its teachings.
- Remembering our purpose for reading the Bible will keep us motivated to do it. This purpose is to know God better and become more like Him.
- Through reading God's Word, we can see both the righteous judgement for sin and the compassion God shows with providing salvation through His son. Knowing God better encourages us to want to live our lives for Him.
- In reading the Bible, one needs to humbly rely on the Holy Spirit to interpret what it means and see how we can continually grow in applying God's teachings to our lives.
- To actively read the Bible means to meditate and think about what it means.
- Strategies for actively reading the Bible include paying attention to the literary style of the passage (poetry, narrative, law, prophecy, and epistles) and how this impacts how we read it, stopping and looking up words we don't understand, looking up connected passages, listening to and seeking to pursue answers to the questions that arise as we read, and slowing down to ponder what we are reading.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What skills or disciplines do you work on for a hobby or sport? How do spiritual disciplines compare to these earthly skills or disciplines?
2. What are major themes or ideas that are present throughout the Bible?
3. How would thinking of the Bible as one connected story affect the way you would approach reading it?
4. What parts of the Bible are more difficult for you to understand or unfamiliar to you? What could you do to understand them better?
5. Why do you read the Bible?
6. How might your view of God, Man, Satan, and what it means to be a follower of Jesus change as you read the Bible?
7. What are the differences between seeing the Bible as a book about God and getting to know God versus a book of "how-to"?
8. What will knowing God more intimately lead to for an individual? And you personally?
9. What does being dependent on the Holy Spirit's leading mean to you? How might we stifle the Holy Spirit's instruction when we read the Bible?
10. How could you distinguish between being led by the Spirit vs. being led by your own pre-conceived ideas as you read the Bible?
11. What are helpful methods for keeping your mind actively engaged while you read the Bible?
12. How might the literary style affect how you read and think about different parts of the Bible? For example, how would you read poetry differently than narrative or epistles?
13. What do you think is a healthy balance between reading and thinking as you spend time in the Bible? (e.g., 90% reading & 10% thinking, 50% reading and thinking, 25% reading & thinking)

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## Activities:

1. **Activity 1:** Drawing Together the Old and New Testament
  - a. Read parallel passages from the Old and New Testament to make connections. Suggested passages:
    - i. *Genesis 3:6* and *Romans 5:14-21*
    - ii. *Isaiah 61:1-3* and *Luke 4:16-21*
    - iii. *Genesis 3:14-15* and *1 Corinthians 15:1-19*
  - b. For each passage discuss the connection of Old and New to the overall larger story in the Bible of God pursuing a rebellious people to offer redemption and a relationship with Him.
  
2. **Activity 2:** Parable of the Sower
  - a. Read together *Mark 4:1-20*.
  - b. Discuss the different responses to applying God's Word in one's life
    - i. Missing the point of the message (verse 15).
    - ii. Believing in good times, falling away in hard times (verses 16-17).
    - iii. Pursuing worldly riches and pleasures (verses 18-19).
    - iv. Receiving the message and producing fruit (verse 20).
  - c. Connect each of the responses with the current life stage of the students:
    - i. Missing the point of the message – Not understanding what the Word says and failing to seek clarification.
    - ii. Believing in good times, falling away in hard times – When difficult times come (hard test, peer friendship issues, etc.) thinking that God doesn't care and His Word does not apply.
    - iii. Pursuing worldly riches and pleasures – Seeking peer acceptance through brand name clothes, activities, engaging in risky behavior, etc.
    - iv. Receiving the message and producing fruit – Taking time to read God's Word individually, attending Sunday School, or Bible study groups; sharing God's Word with others.
  - d. Consider the three less positive responses and what can be done to overcome them:
    - i. Missing the point of the message – Praying to God, comparing connecting passages, asking someone else to help clarify.
    - ii. Believing in good times, falling away in hard times – Asking God for His power and grace to make us strong, memorizing Bible verses to refer to during times of temptation or difficulty.
    - iii. Pursuing worldly riches and pleasures – Prioritizing what is most important, spending time with friends that encourage you to godliness.
  
3. **Object Lesson 1:** The Whole Picture (materials needed: 1000 piece puzzle)
  - a. Before the lesson, remove a piece of the puzzle for each student. Place the puzzle box out of sight of the students.
  - b. Tell students you have a 1000 piece puzzle that you are interested in putting together and need their help.
  - c. Give a puzzle piece to each student and ask them to tell you what overall picture is on the puzzle (scene, art style, objects, people, etc.)
  - d. As students give different responses or are unable to predict the picture of the puzzle, compare this to looking at one part of the Bible and trying to understand God's Word by only that one verse, chapter, or book. The picture you get of the overall theme of the Bible or God's message to us will be different if you look at individual pieces instead of putting it all together into one large story.

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4. **Object Lesson 2:** God's Word Impacts our Life (materials needed: hot water, 2 Cups (clear if possible), tea bag)
  - a. Pour water into two cups. Put the tea bag in one cup. Talk about how the tea bag changed the water.
  - b. Compare the two different cups to how one can be impacted by God's Word. If we read it, meditate on it, and let it dwell in us, it will change our life like the tea bag diffuses into the water. People will know we are different because we will look different, talk different, and act different than those who are not Christians. However, if we do not read and study God's Word, we will be no different than others around us (like the water that did not have tea).

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## Lesson 2: Prayer

Recommended Age/Class: **High School (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)**

### Objectives:

- The student will understand prayer is our means of communication with an almighty God who cares for us.
- The student will understand that prayer is an intentional expression directed to God that is affected by our spiritual condition.
- The student will understand the purpose of prayer is to reorient our hearts toward God, build connection with God, and to change life circumstances.
- The student will understand the Lord's Prayer provides a model for our prayers.
- The student will understand how to apply practical strategies to develop a more effective prayer life.

### Scripture:

*Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

*Romans 8:26, "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."*

*1 John 3:22, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."*

*Psalms 145:18, "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth."*

*James 5:16, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*

*Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

### Lesson Content:

- Sin has separated us from direct communication with God as occurred in the Garden of Eden. Prayer is our avenue of communication and connection to God.
- Prayer is an intentional expression that can come in audible words, internal thoughts, or groanings that arise from deep emotion.
- Prayer can be in different forms such as questions, statements, personal requests, or praise.
- Prayer can be focused on personal desires or frustrations, as well as focused solely on God.
- The God who is the Creator of the universe and holds all power cares for us and wants to listen to our prayers.
- Our relationship with God will impact how we approach God in prayer and how He hears our prayers.
- Direct disobedience of God's Word will hinder our prayers, but God wants us to cry out in repentance.
- Those who are redeemed can come boldly before the throne of grace because of what Christ has done for us, but should still be humble and thankful.
- Prayer reorients our hearts to the wonder, mercy, and awesomeness of our God.
- Prayer reorients our hearts to God's character rather than our circumstances.
- Taking time to pray builds our connection to God as we openly express our needs, hopes, questions, and joys while also finding hope and comfort in Him.
- Prayer changes circumstances, but not always in the way we want or in visible ways.

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- God invites us to pray so we can take part in His work both in our lives and in the lives of others.
- The Lord's Prayer provides a model of how we should pray including honoring God; seeking for God's kingdom to be fulfilled; petitioning for food, forgiveness, and protection; and acknowledging God for who He is.
- A vibrant prayer life involves actively engaging our hearts and minds when praying through strategies such as the following:
  - Pray scripture.
  - Pray for a different group of people each day of the week. (e.g., Monday: family, Tuesday: friends, Wednesday: church leadership, Thursday: missionaries, Friday: teachers).
  - Share specific prayer requests weekly with someone.
  - Write out your prayer.
  - Pray out loud.
  - Find a good time of the day to pray (e.g., Set aside a specific 15 minutes in your daily schedule to pray).

## Discussion Questions:

1. How would you describe prayer?
2. How is prayer different from thinking?
3. How is prayer similar or different from communicating with your friends?
4. How is prayer the same and different since the death and resurrection of Jesus?
5. What can hinder prayer?
6. What does it mean to come both boldly and humbly before God in prayer?
7. Why does God want us to pray?
8. Why did Jesus pray when He was the Son of God (*Mark 1:35*)?
9. What beliefs or questions can hinder us from praying? (e.g., God already knows everything before I pray., God is going to do what He wants to do no matter if I pray or not.)
10. How can prayer help us move beyond focusing only on our circumstances?
11. Are you able to be open with God in your prayers? Why or why not?
12. How should prayer be both open with God and yield to His will?
13. What are ways you can use the Lord's Prayer as a model as you pray?
14. Why might reciting the Lord's Prayer not be a sufficient for a rich, close prayer life with God?
15. What are some topics/groups of people you would like to include in your prayers? (e.g., political leaders, friends, teachers, honoring God)
16. Which of the practical ideas for prayer have you tried and how did it help you?
17. Which of the practical ideas for active prayer would you like to try this week?

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## Activities:

1. **Activity 1:** A Prayer Model (materials needed: copy for each student of *Matthew 6:5-13* double spaced with room for annotating such as that provided below)
  - a. Read together *Matthew 6:5-13* and ask students to write a list of things they learned about prayer from this selection.
  - b. Have students share what they learned about prayer with a partner and then with the entire class.
  - c. Discuss with students the following points and have them annotate their passage with notes such as those below:
    - i. Attitude in prayer – communicating with God, private conversation rather than a public display of piety
    - ii. Genuine communication – avoid repeating the same phrases
    - iii. What to include in our prayers – praise and honor for God, praying for His will to be done on earth and in heaven, requests for daily provisions and grace to live a holy life
    - iv. Breakdown of each phrase of the Lord’s prayer
      1. Our Father which art in Heaven – who we are speaking to as we pray, God wants us to address Him as our father when we pray.
      2. *Hallowed be thy name* – God is holy and He wants us to respect and honor Him.
      3. *Thy kingdom come* – Praying for the fulfillment of God’s kingdom in the hearts of men on earth.
      4. *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven* – praying for following God’s will in our lives each day, for peace and unity of people here on earth like it is in heaven.
      5. *Give us this day our daily bread* – asking God to provide for our daily needs.
      6. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors* – asking God to forgive us of our wrongs and for help forgiving others who have hurt us, recognizing that forgiveness from God also means we must forgive others.
      7. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* – asking for God’s guidance for knowing the right thing to do and for His protection to keep us away from evil.
      8. *For thine is the kingdom* – Recognizing God has all authority over man and that His kingdom will be fulfilled on earth.
      9. *And the power* – All power comes from God.
      10. *And the glory* – All glory goes to God for the good works that are done.
      11. *Forever* – God is, was, and always will be; His kingdom, power and glory will last forever.
      12. *Amen* – “so be it,” acknowledging acceptance of what was prayed.
2. **Activity 2:** P.R.A.Y.
  - a. Discuss the types of prayers or purposes we may include in prayers with the following acronym:
    - i. P=Praise
    - ii. R=Repent
    - iii. A=Ask
    - iv. Y=Yield (wait and listen to God)
  - b. Categorize the following prayers in the Bible by the four categories above. Some prayers may be categorized into more than one purpose:
    - i. *Exodus 15:1-18* (justice or righteousness)
    - ii. *2 Samuel 7:18-29* (strength)
    - iii. *1 Kings 3:5-15* (wisdom)
    - iv. *Isaiah 37:14-20* (sovereign)
    - v. *Psalms 28* (strength)
    - vi. *Psalms 51* (restorer, cleanse)
    - vii. *Psalms 62:1* (salvation)

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- viii. *Psalm 119:78* (mediate on precepts)
- ix. *Psalm 119:164* (judgements)
- x. *Luke 15:21* (forgiving, worthy)
- xi. *Luke 18:1-8* (avenge)
- xii. *Luke 18:13* (mercy)
- xiii. *John 17* (eternal)

3. **Activity 3:** Prayer Journal (materials needed: small notebooks or paper; pens, markers, or pencils)
  - a. Give each child a small notebook or paper. Talk about how journaling about our prayers helps us to remember what to pray for and see how God answers our prayers.
  - b. Have students write down several prayer requests. They could also draw visual designs around different categories of prayers (e.g., praises, requests, worries and fears, thanks, etc.).
  - c. Have the students use the prayer journal entry this next week to pray and record how God is answering their prayers.
  - d. Have students bring their prayer journals to next week's lesson and share how God is answering their prayers and how the prayer journal helped them to be more consistent in prayer.
4. **Activity 4:** Pray Scripture (materials needed: set for each student of small cards with Bible verses that can be used for prayer such as those provided below)
  - a. Talk about how sometimes it might be hard to think of what we should pray, but we can pray words that God has given us in the Bible. Praying the scriptures helps us know we are praying for God's will and helps us to live what God lays out in His Word.
  - b. To pray scripture, we need to first seek to understand the verse and its context. For example, *Philippians 4:6-7* was written by Paul when he was in jail and he was teaching the Philippians that our circumstances in life do not need to dictate our outlook or the joy we have.
  - c. Secondly, to pray scripture we need to reflect on the verse in our own life and what it could mean for us if we applied it more fully. Personalize the verse to match our needs. For example, have students personalize *Philippians 4:6-7* by writing in as a prayer something like the following: *Lord, I am thankful that I do not need to worry about anything but I can bring all my problems to you. Thank you for the peace you give me even when things don't seem to be going right. Lord, help me to bring my worries to you when I want to try to fix my problems on my own. Help me to trust you to work in my life in your time and way. In Jesus's name I pray, Amen.*
  - d. Encourage students to use the additional scripture cards in their prayer time at home to pray for themselves and for others in their lives.
5. **Object Lesson 1:** Calling God (materials needed: cell phone)
  - a. Hold up a cell phone and ask students to think about how a cell phone is an example or comparison of prayer.
  - b. Discuss the following connections:
    - i. We can use a cell phone anywhere, just like we can pray anywhere.
    - ii. We use a cell phone to talk to others, just like we talk to God.
    - iii. We use a cell phone to get directions or information, just like we can ask God for guidance and to show us His will for our lives.
    - iv. We call a specific number to talk to someone specific, just like we need to pray in Christ's name to reach God. (*John 14:13*)
    - v. We call people to ask for specific requests, just like we should pray specifically to get an answer.

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6. **Object Lesson 2:** Turning to the Right Source for Help (materials needed: ½ sheets of 8.5x11 paper, scissors)
  - a. Before the lesson watch [this video](#) for an example of how to do this lesson.
  - b. Prepare the example paper with the cutting and folding as demonstrated in the video.
  - c. Show students the example paper and give them each a paper and scissors to make it look like the example. Give the students time to try and mimic how it looks, but do not tell them how to do it or give them hints.
  - d. Next tell students they can ask anyone in the class for help. Give students another minute or two to work on figuring it out.
  - e. Remind students they could have asked anyone in the class for help and ask who they should have asked (you who knows how to do it). Ask students to set their attempts aside while you show them how to do it. If there is enough time, give students a new half sheet of paper to make one.
  - f. Compare this experience to prayer and turning to the right source for help – praying to our heavenly Father to find the answers we need. We can find lots of answers from our peers and the internet, but God is the one who is the true source of wisdom and revelation.

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## Lesson 3: Fasting

Recommended Age/Class: **High School (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)**

### Objectives:

- The student will understand fasting is denying our bodies of physical nourishment as a response to life situations that troubles us.
- The student will understand reasons to fast include grief, personal brokenness, oppression, and indecision.
- The student will understand the goal of fasting is to “afflict our souls.”
- The student will understand fasting often occurs alongside of prayer for God to mend the troubling situations in life.
- The student will understand fasting is not primarily done to achieve an effect, but to put ourselves at God’s mercy.

### Scripture:

*Ezra 8:21, “Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us.”*

*Matthew 6:16-18, “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”*

*Mark 9:29, “And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”*

### Lesson Content:

- Numerous examples are present throughout the Bible of people who fasted including Moses, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, and Jesus.
- Fasting is denying our bodies of physical nourishment as a reaction to life circumstances that trouble us.
- We may fast because we are overcome with grief and our body aches along with our hearts.
- Some people fast as a lifestyle choice in their devotion to God.
- Fasting may come from a response to fight against evil and sin present in the world.
- Fasting may also be used to more fully seek God’s direction.
- Fasting may include depriving oneself of all food, part of one’s diet, or other things besides food for various lengths of time (e.g., day, several days, week/s).
- The goal of fasting is to afflict our souls as we put ourselves at God’s mercy.
- Fasting is often done alongside of prayer to God for mercy, forgiveness, or direction.
- Fasting as a response is more focused on the cause, rather than an expectation of a result.
- We fast to put ourselves at God’s mercy, rather than expect Him to be at our mercy to fulfill a desire or petition.
- During fasting, we want to focus beyond ourselves to also notice the needs of others.

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## Discussion Questions:

1. What are things that grieve you?
2. What are broken things in this world that grieve God?
3. How can fasting help us align our hearts to God's?
4. What is the difference between fasting as a response to brokenness versus as a manipulative tool to gain an effect?
5. How can fasting "afflict our souls?"
6. What might be things besides food that you could give up as a fast?
7. Why would fasting without expecting a result free us to fast?
8. Would you feel comfortable enough to ask someone to fast with you? If not, what might help you to be able to do that?
9. Even though fasting is not done to achieve an effect, why might an effect result from fasting?

## Activities:

1. **Activity 1:** Fasting Examples in the Bible
  - a. Read the following passages and discuss the purposes of fasting in each verse:
    - i. *Mark 9:28-29* – to cast out evil or defeat the devil.
    - ii. *Luke 2:37* – to serve God with devotion.
    - iii. *Isaiah 58:6-7* – to help the poor.
    - iv. *Joel 2:12* – to draw closer to God.
    - v. *Matthew 4:1-11* – to prepare for serving God.
    - vi. *Jonah 3:3-10* – to repent for sin and seek God's forgiveness.
    - vii. *Esther 4* – for deliverance from evil.
2. **Activity 2:** Give Up, Fill Up (materials needed: two envelopes for each student, small slips of paper, markers or pens)
  - a. Give each student 2 envelopes and several small slips of paper.
  - b. Discuss things we might "give up" to fast (e.g., food, drink, digital time, sweets, etc). Have students choose several things to give up that would be a sacrifice for them personally. Write a different item on each slip of paper. Put these slips of paper in an envelope and mark it as "give up."
  - c. Discuss things we might "fill up" with to replace what we give up to draw us closer to God during fasting (e.g., reading the Bible, listening to hymns or Christian music, praying, memorizing scripture, etc.). Give students more slips of paper if needed. Have students write each item on a separate piece of paper. Put them in the second envelop and mark it with "fill up."
  - d. Have students take the envelopes home and encourage them when they fast to take one item out of the "give up" envelope and one item out of the "fill up" envelope. Talk about how if we take something out of our life, we need to put in something that will help us draw closer to God.

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3. **Object Lesson:** The Empty Cup (materials needed: an empty cup, bowl, sand, pitcher of water)
  - a. Tell students the cup represents us. Start saying things we can fill our lives with as you put sand into the cup (e.g., sports, hobbies, friends, digital time, music). Have students also share things they might fill their lives with that make them busy. Keep adding sand until it is almost full and talk about how this represents our lives being full of things that consume us.
  - b. Tell them the water represents God. Place the cup with sand over or inside the bowl and start to pour water in the cup. As the water pours out of the cup into the bowl, talk about how this is what happens when we fill our lives with things that may even seem good but leave us no room for God.
  - c. Empty the cup of sand and compare this to fasting in which we remove distractions we have of our time with God and focus on spending time with Him. Pour water into the cup and talk about how the cup is now full of God, just like we can be if we choose to remove distractions and fill our lives with what God wants during fasting. In doing so, God will fill us with His love, wisdom, and strength.

# Spiritual Disciplines

## Lesson 4: Meditation

Recommended Age/Class: **High School (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)**

### Objectives:

- The student will understand meditation means to ponder or carefully think.
- The student will understand biblical meditation means to focus on filling the mind with truth found in the scriptures.
- The student will understand meditation on the scripture can lead to conviction, direction, transformation, and magnifying God's greatness.
- The student will understand that meditation requires slowing down to ponder what we are reading and exploring questions that engage our minds in better understanding the scriptures.

### Scripture:

*Psalm 1:1-2, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."*

*Psalm 104:33-34, "I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD."*

*Psalm 143:5, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands."*

*Proverbs 3:1-4, "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man."*

*Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."*

### Lesson Content:

- Meditation means to ponder or carefully think, which are not skills valued in our efficient and task-focused culture.
- Meditation involves slowing down while we read the scriptures so it can impact our heart, mind, and life.
- Instead of emptying the mind like in Eastern meditation, biblical meditation means to fill one's mind with truth that is found outside of us in the scriptures.
- We are encouraged to meditate on the scriptures and what they say about God, who He is, His characteristics, and what He has done.
- Meditating on the scriptures leads to conviction of what is right and wrong, direction for how to live our lives, transformation of our heart and mind, and a desire to magnify God's greatness.
- Meditating on the scriptures allows us to store truth in our hearts and minds for that allows us to resist temptations both in difficult and prosperous times.
- What we choose to meditation on will affect how we view and engage in everything in life, including decisions we make and how we relate to others.
- Meditation involves slowing down to ponder what the scriptures are saying so we can ask ourselves questions that engage our minds in the text.
- Meditation can be accomplished through four steps:
  1. Notice: slow down to notice things you may not have thought of before.
  2. Have curiosity: Explore what you are reading by asking yourself questions.
  3. Be repetitive: Reread often.
  4. Seek understanding: explore questions to achieve a greater understanding and appreciation for the Lord.

# Spiritual Disciplines

## Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define biblical meditation?
2. How is emptying your mind different from filling your mind with truth from outside of you?
3. What are good things for us to meditate on?
4. What are reasons for meditating on the scriptures and on who God is?
5. What are areas of your thoughts, emotions, or actions that need transforming to better align with the scriptures?
6. What would help motivate you to spend more time in meditation?
7. What are some ways you can work on focusing and slowing down while you are reading the Bible?
8. How will you practice or improve in the skills of meditation (slowing down, having curiosity, and seeking understanding)?
9. Are there additional skills or strategies you have used or seen others use to meditate on the scriptures?
10. What truths or biblical passages would you like to spend more time meditating on?

## Activities:

1. **Activity 1: Meditating Brainstorming**
  - a. With students create a brainstorming list or web. Title the list or web as Meditating on God. Include columns on the list or circle spokes on the web for God's law, God's attributes, and God's work.
  - b. Give students 1-2 minutes for one category to write down as many things for that category as they can think of that would be good to meditate on.
  - c. Have students share the ideas aloud and compile into the class list or web.
  - d. Repeat steps b and c with the other categories on the list or web.
  - e. Encourage students to write down a few items they want to meditate on this next week and have them make a list of these items on a small card to carry with them in their car, bookbag, purse, etc.
  - f. Talk about how meditating on these items means to frequently think about them throughout the day and evening.
2. **Activity 2: Ponder and Paraphrase**
  - a. Select ahead of time a Bible passage to have students use for a practice meditation exercise. Prepare copies of the passage on paper for students to write on. Possible passages include *Proverbs 1*; *Proverbs 3:1-13*; *Matthew 5, 6 or 7*; *Ephesians 4:1-16*.
  - b. During the lesson talk about how to paraphrase – rewriting a verse in your own words. Have students read over the selected passage and choose two-three verses to paraphrase in their own words.
  - c. Have them share how they paraphrased it with the class and talk about what was learned by slowing down to ponder what the passage meant.

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3. **Object Lesson 1:** Chew on the Word (materials needed: bubble gum)
  - a. Show students the gum and ask them how they would eat/use it.
  - b. Discuss that in chewing gum, you don't just swallow a piece, but you chew it many times to enjoy its texture and taste.
  - c. Compare chewing gum to meditating on the scriptures. We don't just read it over quickly, but rather we spend time slowing down to think on it and read it over many times to understand it better.
  
4. **Object Lesson 2:** Focusing to See (materials needed: optical illusion pictures [such as these](#))
  - a. Show the students one or two pictures and ask them to tell what they see. Talk about the different ways in which they may view the picture/s.
  - b. Compare viewing these pictures to meditating on the scriptures, in which one needs to look closely at the pictures to see what it could be, just as we must ponder on the Bible when we read it to get its true meaning.

# Spiritual Disciplines

## Lesson 5: Worship

Recommended Age/Class: **High School (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade)**

### Objectives:

- The student will understand worship means to put someone or something first in our lives as our ultimate desire.
- The student will understand that what we choose to focus our time and resources on will become what we worship.
- The student will understand we are to consciously put God first and yield ourselves to His authority and power.
- The student will understand that worshipping God transforms us to be more like Him.
- The student will understand that we worship God in spirit and in truth as we honor God and respond to His wonder.
- The student will understand we must purposefully set aside times to worship God individually and with others in a group.

### Scripture:

*Exodus 20:2-6, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."*

*Revelation 4:11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."*

*Deuteronomy 6:4-5, "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."*

*Matthew 6:20-21, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

### Lesson Content:

- When we worship someone or something we put it first in our lives and it becomes our ultimate desire.
- The first commandment (*Exodus 20:3*) teaches us to put God first and acknowledges our tendency to elevate other things over God.
- What we choose to focus our time and resources on will become what we worship as become more emotionally attached to it.
- The only thing we should worship is God by putting ourselves under His power and authority.
- We must consciously choose to worship God or something or someone else will become what or who we worship.
- Only God is worthy of our worship because of who He is. Worshipping anyone else besides God will leave us feeling empty and unfulfilled.
- Worshipping God transforms us to be more like Him as we begin to see the world as He does, care about the things He cares about, and seek to interact with others as He would.
- True worship involves worshipping God in truth by knowing and elevating God in our lives.
- True worship also involves worshipping God in spirit through an inner attitude of submitting to Him.
- We need to purposefully set aside times to worship God internally in our heart and externally in our schedule.
- We should worship God both individually by ourselves and with others.

# Spiritual Disciplines

- We can worship God personally by studying the Bible, praising Him during prayer, meditating on who He is, and through singing, listening, or playing music.
- We can worship God in a group with others through activities such as church services, singing in a group, group Bible study, praying with others, spiritual conversations, and service projects.
- At different times in our lives, worship may be an act of will and at other times be a natural response to experiencing the wonder of God.

## Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define worship?
2. How does worship affect our hearts, minds, and body?
3. What is the difference between enjoying something and worshipping something?
4. What are some people, things, or desires that can become idols in your life?
5. How can we know when we are worshipping something other than God?
6. What makes God worthy of our worship?
7. Why is it wrong to worship anything or anyone other than God?
8. Why would it be important to worship God because of who He is rather than what He gives?
9. How does worshipping God lead to transforming us to be more like Him?
10. What are barriers for you to engage in worship and have an internal attitude of worship?
11. How does worshipping individually and also in a group impact each other?
12. What do you enjoy and what is difficult for you in personal worship?
13. What do you enjoy and what is difficult for you when worshipping in a group?
14. What is one way you can purposefully worship God this week?

## Activities:

1. **Activity 1:** Who is God?
  - a. Have students brainstorm characteristics of God. Record ideas on a board or piece of paper.
  - b. Together read some, or all, of these passages:
    - i. *1 Chronicles 16:23-31*
    - ii. *Mark 4:36-41*
    - iii. *Psalms 95*
    - iv. *Psalms 100*
  - c. From the passages, have students identify more characteristics of God and add to their brainstormed list.
  - d. Discuss how all the characteristics can only be attributed to God and not to anyone else, making God the only one who is worthy of our worship.

# Spiritual Disciplines

2. **Activity 2:** Planning to Worship (materials needed: pencils or pens, weekly planner chart like that provided below)
  - a. Discuss the ways in which we can worship God individually and with a group from the lesson above.
  - b. Talk about which ways are easiest and which are more difficult.
  - c. Give students a chart with the days of the week and ask them to pencil in times and methods they will set aside for worshipping God this week.
  - d. Below the chart, also have students write ways in which they can worship God throughout their day (e.g., listening to hymns or spiritual songs in the car or during exercise, doing one's job with integrity to show submission to God).
  - e. Have students return the following week to share how they were able to increase the time of purposeful worship in their week and how it affected their actions and inner attitudes.
  
3. **Object Lesson 1:** Worship God for Who He Is, Not What He Gives (materials needed: dog treats)
  - a. Show students the dog treats. Ask them who would want to eat them and how they are used as a reward for dogs.
  - b. Compare this to how God wants us to worship and praise Him in times where we may not feel rewarded by our worship. Discuss how we worship God for who He is, not for what He does or gives us.
  
4. **Object Lesson 2:** When to Worship (materials needed: large glass jar which is gallon size or bigger, smaller jar of sugar, enough golf balls to fill up the large jar)
  - a. Show students the materials and talk about how we can choose to worship God on Sundays only. Pour all the sugar into the bottom of the jar. Compare the sugar to worship time to go along with *Psalm 34:8*, "O taste and see that the Lord is good."
  - b. Next talk about things you might do throughout the week for the various golf balls (e.g., school, soccer practice, practice piano/other instrument, grocery shopping, birthday party, etc.). As you put the golf balls in talk about how you have run out of room to put in all the golf balls and the worship time is only at the bottom of the jar.
  - c. Remove the golf balls and put the sugar back into the smaller jar.
  - d. This time talk about how we can worship God throughout the week, as we do our other tasks. Put a little sugar in the bottom of the jar for Sunday. Start putting in the golf balls again adding a little sugar as you go along. Finish pouring any remaining sugar on top.
  - e. Ask students to notice where the sugar is positioned this time. Discuss how this represents when we should worship God – all the time throughout our week, rather than only on Sunday. Worshipping God all the time allows us to keep the right perspective and attitude as we do the other things in our life.

## The Lord's Prayer

<sup>5</sup> *And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

<sup>6</sup> *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

<sup>7</sup> *But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.*

<sup>8</sup> *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

<sup>9</sup> *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

<sup>10</sup> *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

<sup>11</sup> *Give us this day our daily bread.*

<sup>12</sup> *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

<sup>13</sup> *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

# Spiritual Disciplines

## Praying the Scripture Cards

<p><i>Philippians 4:6-7, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."</i></p>	<p><i>Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."</i></p>	<p><i>Psalms 119:18, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."</i></p>
<p><i>Psalms 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."</i></p>	<p><i>2 Thessalonians 3:3, "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil."</i></p>	<p><i>Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."</i></p>
<p><i>Psalms 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."</i></p>	<p><i>Luke 6:27-28, "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you."</i></p>

## Planning to Worship

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY