HABITS OF GRACE
During times of isolation and unsettledness our hearts turn toward the Lord and we become acutely aware of just how busy we are and how little time we actually dedicate to our spiritual life. As an answer to that, we would like to invite you or your small group to engage in this study, Habits of Grace. The book, of the same title, written by David Mathis is the foundation of our strategy to strengthen our spiritual disciplines like Bible reading, prayer, meditation, etc. It is accompanied by a study guide which has been prepared especially for our church to lead you or your small group through a process of discussion, reflection and spiritual growth.

Ideally, you will get the most out of this study if you read the chapters and answer the questions prior to each small group meeting. But the study is written so that you can participate in the group discussion whether you have finished reading the chapters or not. If you are not currently in a small group but would like to be part of a group discussion, contact Tammy Gill to find a small group that works for you.

Finally, this study will intersect with our sermon series through January and February that will be focused on the seven values of our church as seen in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

The Bible tells us to become holy as we are cleansed through the washing with water through the word (Eph. 5:26). This happens as we dedicate ourselves to filling our mind and heart with God’s Word and developing habits of prayer and reflection. Join us for this journey into God’s limitless Grace.
Read the Introduction (p. 22-33) to prepare for this discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION

Whether you play an instrument, participate in a sport or are a gourmet cook, you probably weren’t very good at it when you first started! Share a story about some skill that you have become really good at. What steps did it take to get better at it? How did you feel when you reached the pinnacle of your skill? What does it take to maintain this success?

LET’S TALK...

David Mathis writes on page 22: “The grace of God is gloriously beyond our skill and technique. The means of grace are not about earning God’s favor, twisting his arm, or controlling his blessings, but readying ourselves for consistent saturation in the roll of his tides.”

1. Read the following Scripture passages and circle the word grace every time it appears in the passage.

   a. John 1: 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
b. Romans 11: 5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. 6 And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

c. 2 Timothy 1: 9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

- What does the Bible tell us about grace?
- Who is it that extends God’s grace to us?
- What do we need to do to receive God’s grace?

2. Read the following Scripture passages and circle the word grace. Underline the words justify, redemption and righteousness as they appear in the passages.

a. Romans 3: 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

b. Titus 3: 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

c. Romans 5:17: 7 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

d. Galatians 2: 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”
GRACE JUSTIFIES.

- Who initiates our justification?
- How long does justification take?
- What is the relationship between justification and righteousness or redemption?
- How does justification change us?

3. Read the following Scripture passages and circle the word grace. In the margin, write the words that describe the process of sanctification.

a. 2 Peter 3: 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.
b. Romans 6: 14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

c. 2 Corinthians 12: 9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

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GRACE SANCTIFIES.

• What is sanctification?

• How does sanctification differ from justification?

• What is our role in sanctification?

• What is the guiding purpose in sanctification?
4. Read the following Scripture passages and circle the word grace. Underline the words or phrases that describe what will precipitate our glorification.

   a. 2 Thessalonians 1:12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

   b. 1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

   c. Ephesians 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

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GRACE GLORIFIES.

- What is glorification?
- When does glorification begin?
- What difference does knowing that you will be glorified at the end of your life here on earth make in how you face trials and tribulations on a day-to-day basis?

5. David Mathis writes on page 25: “We cannot earn God’s grace or make it flow apart from his free gift. But we can position ourselves to go on getting as he keeps on giving. We can ‘fight to walk in the paths where he has promised his blessings’. We can ready ourselves to remain receivers along his regular routes, sometimes called ‘the spiritual disciplines,’ or event better, ‘the means of grace’.”

Read Luke 18:35-43:

A Blind Beggar Receives His Sight

35 As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36 When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. 37 They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

38 He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

39 Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

40 Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 41 “What do you want me to do for you?”
“Lord, I want to see,” he replied.

42 Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.”43 Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

• What was the result of the blind man placing himself in Jesus’ path?

• How can we place ourselves in the path of God’s grace and seek Him?

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Grace Gone Wild
HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO MY LIFE TODAY?
Take a few minutes to review the major points of the introduction:

- It is important that we continue to grow in our relationship with Jesus throughout our entire life so that we can receive his grace, enjoy him, and love him more and more.

- The three stages of our spiritual formation are justification, sanctification and glorification.

- We can encounter the means of grace by placing ourselves in the paths where Jesus is at work.

- The ultimate goal of receiving and putting these means of grace into practice is to continue to grow in our knowledge of and love for Jesus.

Discuss how we can keep our focus on grace while practicing these habits so that we continue to make it about what Jesus does for us, not what we do for Jesus or how well we practice the habits.

PRAYER...
David Mathis closes this Introduction on page 33 with the following prayer

“My prayer is that this approach will help to make sense of the means of grace, and your own habits that develop around them, not just accessible and realistic, but truly God’s means of your knowing and enjoying Jesus.”
Grace Gone Wild

• Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.

• Ask God to help you place yourself in the path of His grace and to receive and put into practice these means of grace.

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Read Chapters 1, 2 and 3 (p. 37-60) to prepare for this discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION

In these days of “instant gratification”, the art of reading a good book has become obsolete to some people. They would rather wait for the movie to come out, but the movie is usually a poor substitute for the original book! There is something about the written word that allows us to “see” inside a character’s thoughts and motivations. Are you a “read a good book” person or a “wait for the movie to come out” type of person? If you are a “read a good book” person, what do you enjoy most about reading the written word? If you are a “wait for the movie to come out”, do you ever wonder if you might be missing something that the screenwriters chose not to include in the movie?

LET’S TALK...

In Chapter 1, Shape Your Life with the Words of Life, Mathis writes on page 37; “And it is God’s grace that enables us to make choices and expend effort to seek more of God
1 Cor. 15:10 “It is a gift that we would have the desire for and take action to avail ourselves of the means of God’s grace – his voice (the word), his ear (prayer), and his people (fellowship) - with the most basic principle of grace being the immersing of our lives in his word.”

Last week we talked about the need to practice the means of grace throughout our lifetime as a way of maturing in our knowledge and love of Jesus. Sanctification is God’s work in and through us; but we have the opportunity to place ourselves in the habits of grace where he is already at work. God has chosen to reveal himself and his plan for his people by speaking to us through the Bible, his written word.

1. Chapter 1, Shape Your Life with the Words of Life

Read the following Scripture passages and write in the margin what role Jesus fulfills in speaking to us on the Father’s behalf:

a. Hebrews 1: 1In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

b. John 1: 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JESUS IS THE WORD INCARNATE (P. 38-39)

• How did God speak to our ancestors?
• How does God speak to us today?
• What does it mean to say “Jesus is the Word Incarnate?”
Read the following Scripture passages. Circle any words that describe how we are to share the gospel message with the world.

a. Colossians 3: 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

b. Ephesians 1: 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

c. Acts 20: 32 “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

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JESUS IS THE WORD EVANGELICAL (P. 39)

- What does it mean to say “Jesus is the Word Evangelical?”
- What assurance do we receive when we dwell in God’s Word?
- What are we to do with the gospel message we receive from God’s Word?

JESUS IS THE WORD PERVASIVE (P. 40-41)

On page 40, Mathis writes, “The fundamental means of God’s ongoing grace, through his Spirit, in the life of the Christian and the life of the church is God’s self-expression in his Word, in the gospel, perfectly kept for us and on display in all its textures, riches, and hues in the external written word of the Scriptures.”

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2. Chapter 2, Read for Breadth, Study for Depth

In this chapter, Mathis provides some tips on effective ways to read the Bible but he stresses that the best way to read the Bible is, “Read it for yourself.” You can read through the entire Bible in a year or read a specific book of the Bible from beginning to end to see the “big picture” (breadth) or you can meditate on a specific passage for a few days and let it fill your mind and heart with God’s word (depth). Both perspectives are valid and important as you delve into reading the Bible for yourself!

- What is the most important thing you can do to grow in your Biblical understanding?
- Which parts of the Bible do you think are the most important? Why?

Read the following Scripture passages and circle the words that describe the Holy Spirit.

a. 1 Thessalonians 1: 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

b. 1 Corinthians 12: 12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

- What (who) is the “X Factor” that helps us to comprehend what we read in our Bible?
- What is the role of the Holy Spirit when we receive the gospel message?
3. Chapter 3, Warm Yourself at the Fire of Meditation

Donald S. Whitney defines meditation as “deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application and prayer.”

Read the following Scripture passages. Circle the words that give you an inkling of what it means to meditate on God’s word. Underline the blessings that come from meditations.

a. Joshua 1: 8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.
b. Psalm 1:1
Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

• Why is meditation such an important part of reading your Bible?

• Why does Mathis write, “Meditation is the link between Bible intake and prayer”...and “Meditation bridges the gap between hearing from God and speaking to him”?

• What does meditation look like in your life?

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO MY LIFE TODAY...

Take a few minutes to review the major points of this lesson:

• Jesus is the Word Incarnate, Evangelical and Pervasive. Reading the Bible on a regular basis helps us to grow in our understanding of who Jesus is and how we are to share the gospel message with others.

• Reading the Bible for yourself important because it is how God has chosen to reveal himself to us.

• The role of the Holy Spirit when we read our Bible is to help us understand and infuse God’s word into our hearts and minds.

What changes do you need to make in your life to overcome the barriers that are keeping you from reading your Bible and meditating on God’s word on a daily basis?
Habits of Grace

PRAYER...

• Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.

• Thank God for revealing himself to you through his written word, his Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Pray that he will give you the desire to not only read but meditate on his word every day.

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Read Chapters 4, 5 and 6 (p. 61-89) to prepare for this discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION
If you remember your high school science class, one of the lessons learned was that when you mix certain chemicals, something changes. For example when you mix one oxygen molecule with two hydrogen molecules, the molecules are transformed into water. When you mix flour with water and bake it, it becomes biscuits. Share a time when you experienced a change in your life that transformed you in some way. What were the elements that came together to bring about this change?

LET’S TALK...
Last week we talked about Jesus as the Word...Incarnate, Evangelical and Pervasive. We learned that the best way to read the Bible is to, “Read it for yourself.” When we read the Bible, the “X-Factor”, the Holy Spirit, helps us to comprehend what we read and internalize it. Finally we discussed the importance of meditating on God’s Word which invites us to not only read the Word, but to live it out as it infuses our daily lives.
1. Chapter 4, Bring the Bible Home to Your Heart

Picking up where we left off, Mathis begins Chapter 4 by asking a key question (p. 61), “What effect should regular Bible intake have in our hearts and lives – and how does it happen?”

Read the following Scripture passages and circle the effect that regular intake of God's word has on our hearts and lives.

a. James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

b. Romans 15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

THE BIBLE IS FOR US

• What is God’s purpose in revealing himself to us in written word?

• Why is simply reading the Bible without meditating (internalizing it) not enough in our journey to Christian maturity?

• What are a few of the benefits, or rewards, of daily Bible reading and meditation?

Read the following Scripture passages. Circle words that reveal how we can seek spiritual transformation through our Bible reading and meditation.

a. 2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
b. Joshua 1:8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Mathis writes on page 65: “When Bible reading first aims at astonishment (meditation and worship), it works first on our hearts and changes our person, which then prepares us for application. And application of God’s words to our lives prepares us for God’s blessing of our souls.”

• What effect should regular Bible intake have in our hearts and lives?
• How does this transformation happen?

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2. Chapter 5, Memorize the Mind of God

For many people, the idea of memorizing Scripture leaves a bad taste in their mouth. It reminds them of memorizing the alphabet and spelling words when they were a child, yet no matter how difficult it might have been back then, we use those skills every day without even realizing it. Davis says this in a different way on page 68, “When we learn the Scriptures by heart, we’re not just memorizing ancient, endurably relevant texts, but we’re listening to and learning the voice of our Creator and Redeemer himself. When we memorize lines from the Bible, we are shaping our minds in the moment to mimic the structure and mind-set of the mind of God.”

We have already discussed the importance of meditation but Mathis writes on page 70 that, “meditation in tandem with Scripture memory has tremendous bearing on how we go about the arduous process of memorizing.”

TWO GREAT EFFECTS

Mathis points out two great effects of memorizing the mind of God according to Scripture (p. 71).

Read the following Scripture passages. Write in the margin words or phrases that indicate the mindset of Christ.

a. Philippians 2:5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

b. Philippians 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.

c. 1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

• What does it mean to have “the same mindset as Christ?”

• What are the two “effects” of having the mind of Christ?

• Why are unity and humility so important for us to learn as followers of Christ?

If you would like to learn more about how to start Bible memorization, check out Ten Gospel Verses to Keep Warm (p. 75-77) and Twelve Gospel Passages to Soak In (p.81).
3. Chapter 6, Resolve to Be a Lifelong Learner

Job 32:8-9

8 But it is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding.
9 It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right.

Mathis writes on page 85, “The center of lifelong learning for the lifelong Christian is this: knowing and enjoying God himself in Christ through the gospel word and the written word of Scriptures – in hearing and reading and study and meditation and memorization of the Bible.”
FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING
1. Vary Your Sources and Season (p. 86-87)
2. Create Space and Redeem Spare Time (p. 87)
3. Mind Your Mindless Moments (p. 87-88)
4. Adapt to New Media (p. 88)
5. Embrace the Identity of Learner (9. 88-89)

- Do you identify yourself as a learner? Why or why not?
- Which of these principles do you struggle with the most? What would you need to do to adopt this principle more fully?

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO MY LIFE TODAY...
Take a few minutes to review the major points of this lesson:

- Regular Bible intake should lead to spiritual transformation in our hearts and lives. We should know and enjoy God himself in Christ through the gospel word and the written word of Scriptures, in hearing and reading and study and meditation and memorization of the Bible.

- Two great effects that happen when we memorize the mind of God (Scripture) are unity and humility.

Are you experiencing all of the blessings that come with being a lifelong learner or are you “stuck” where you are? If you identify yourself as a lifelong learner, good for you! If you are “stuck”, what next step could you take to begin growing again in your knowledge of and joy in Jesus?
Habits of Grace

PRAYER...

• Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.

• Choose a passage of Scripture from this lesson and use it to close your prayer time today.

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HABITS OF GRACE

Week 4, Part 2 - Have His Ear
Shape Your Mind with Thoughts of Life

Habits of Grace by David Mathis
Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines

Read Chapters 7, 8 and 9 (p. 93-116) to prepare for this discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION
One of the best things in life is to be able to share time with the people we love. Often it’s the quiet times when we simply sit together and talk that are the most special. We cherish those moments and we build intimate relationships with one another. We celebrate with each other when times are good and we mourn with each other when the struggles come. Why do you think spending time with those you love on a regular basis is so important? How do you think God feels about spending time with you?

LET’S TALK...
Last week we discussed the effect that regular Bible intake has on our hearts and lives as we read the Bible for both breadth and depth. Scripture memorization is one way to study God’s word in depth and allows us to come ever closer to memorizing the mind of God. Being a disciple of Jesus
means being a lifelong learner. Like in any other area of life, what you put into it is what you get out of it. So make the greatest investment of this life and receive the greatest dividend when you have the assurance that you will spend eternity in the presence of God!

1. Chapter 7, Enjoying the Gift of Having God’s Ear

We now transition from Hearing God’s Voice (Word) to Having God’s Ear (Prayer). On page 94, Mathis begins this transition with these words; “And wonders of wonders, not only does he express himself and bid us hear his voice, but he wants to hear ours. The speaking God not only has spoken, but he also listens – he stops, he stoops, he wants to hear from you. He stands ready to hear your voice. Christian, you have the ear of God. We call it prayer.

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

On page 95, Mathis shares this quote from John Piper:

“It is not wrong to want God’s gifts and ask for them. Most prayers in the Bible are for the gifts of God. But ultimately every gift should be desired because it shows us and brings us more of him… When this world totally fails, the ground for joy remains. God. Therefore, surely every prayer for life and health and home and family and job and ministry in this world is secondary. And the great purpose of prayer is to ask that – in and through all of his gifts – God would be our joy.”

Mathis goes on to say, “The great purpose of prayer is to come humbly, expectantly, and – because of Jesus – boldly into the conscious presence of God, to relate to him, talk with him, and ultimately enjoy him as our great Treasure.”
• What is the ultimate purpose of prayer? Write down your answer somewhere on this page.
• Why should we desire the gifts of God?
• What emotion should we experience as we relate to him?

PRAYER’S PRACTICES IN PERSPECTIVE

On page 96 Mathis writes, “…but the principle of continually relating to him, privately and with others. He is holy, and so we worship (adoration). He is merciful, and so we repent (confession), he is gracious and so we express appreciation (thanksgiving), He is loving and caring, and so we petition him for ourselves, our family, our friends, and our world (supplication).”

Read the following Scripture passages and circle the words that describe the ways we are called to pray.

a. Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

b. Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

c. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 pray continually,

d. Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.

• What type of relationship does God desire to have with you based on the words you circled in these passages?
• Which element of prayer (adoration, confession, thanksgiving or supplication) are you most comfortable with?
• Which element of prayer (adoration, confession, thanksgiving or supplication) do you struggle with most?

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2. Chapter 8, Pray in Secret

Matthew 6: 5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

• How does Jesus say the hypocrites pray? What is their ultimate purpose in praying this way?

• How does Jesus say we, as his followers, should pray?
Mathis quotes Tim Keller’s comments on Matthew 6:5-6 (p. 100):

“The infallible test of spiritual integrity, Jesus says, is your private prayer life. Many people will pray when they are required by cultural or social expectations, or perhaps by the anxiety caused by troublesome circumstances. Those with a genuinely lived relationship with God as Father, however, will inwardly want to pray and therefore will pray even though nothing on the outside is pressing them to do so. They pursue it even during times of spiritual dryness, when there is no social or experiential payoff.”

• What does Keller mean when he notes, prayer is essential for a “genuinely lived relationship with God as Father.”

• What is at the center of desiring to pray with spiritual integrity?

FIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR SECRET PRAYER

On pages 103-105, Mathis gives us 5 suggestions for enriching private prayer:

1. Create Your Closet
2. Begin with Bible
3. Adore, Confess, Thank, Ask
4. Divulge Your Desires – and Develop Them
5. Keep It Fresh

• Take a few moments to think about how many of these 5 suggestions (habits) you have developed. What is one suggestion that you will incorporate into your private prayer life as a result of this chapter?
3. Chapter 9, Pray with Constancy and Company

On page 108, Mathis writes, “The highpoint of all-pervasive prayer, outside the closet door, is praying together with other Christians… We pray personally, in secret and on the move, and we pray corporately, resisting the privatizing of our prayers, not just by asking others to pray for us but specifically having others pray with us.”

Read the following Scripture passages and write down the relationship between corporate prayer and God’s response.

a. Acts 4: 31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.
b. Acts 12: 5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

c. Acts 13: 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

• What do these passages tell us about what happens when we pray with one another?

• Are you comfortable praying with others? If not, what do you think is holding you back?

Mathis gives us Nine Profits of Praying with Company (p 112-116):

1. For Added Power
2. For Multiplied Joy
3. For Greater Glory To God
4. For Fruitful Ministry and Mission
5. For Unity Among Believers
6. For Answers We Otherwise Wouldn’t Get
7. To Learn and Grow In Our Prayers
8. To Know Each Other
9. To Know Jesus More
• Which of these nine profits would mean the most to you today and why?

• How do these “profits” encourage you to be more open to praying with others?

**HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO MY LIFE TODAY...**

Take a few minutes to review the major points of this lesson:

• The great purpose of prayer is “getting God”. He often works through his gifts as we make requests but his gifts to us are not the purpose of our prayers.

• As Christians, we do not pray for man’s praise or recognition. We pray privately, in secret, because God, who hears our prayers, desires a relationship with us.

• It is also important to pray with others. God works mightily through the prayers of his people when they gather together to seek him through corporate prayer.

Are you ready to look at your own prayer life and see how God might be asking you to respond to his desire to know you intimately through prayer? Take some time this week to pray in a new way. It may feel awkward at first but God doesn’t care how well we pray...He cares that we pray to him with honesty and sincerity.

**PRAYER...**

• Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.

• Ask each person in your small group to pray a one sentence prayer out loud. They can pray for a request that was expressed or pray a Scripture from today’s lesson.
Have His Ear

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ICE BREAKER QUESTION
There are many areas of life where we have to develop specific habits if we want to be successful and continue to grow in our effectiveness. If you are a parent, you need to develop a schedule for feeding, changing diapers and naptime. If you are an employee, you need to be consistent in accomplishing your responsibilities and often need to do research to stay up to date on the latest technologies or processes. And if you are a student, you have to set aside time to study and complete your homework assignments. What area of your life are you currently striving to develop specific habits and/or to grow in your abilities? Why is it important to continually learn and implement new skills or abilities?

LET’S TALK...
Prayer is our opportunity to speak to God in an intimate exchange. The ultimate purpose of prayer as John Piper shared is; “to come humbly, expectantly, and - because of Jesus – boldly into the conscious presence of God, to
relate to him, talk with him, and ultimately enjoy him as our great Treasure.” We offer prayers of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. We are called to pray privately, “in the closet”, because God desires a relationship with us, and corporately because God works mightily through the prayers of his people.

1. Chapter 10, Sharpen Your Affections with Fasting

Fasting is one of God’s means of grace that has been adversely affected by culture, so it is important that we understand God’s intentions as revealed through Scripture. On page 118 Mathis defines fasting as, “an exceptional measure, designed to channel and express our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world…But normal Christian fasting means privately and occasionally choosing to go without food (though not water) for some special period of time (whether a day or three or seven) in view of some specific spiritual purpose.

Mathis quotes Donald S. Whitney (p. 118-119) in listing what fasting’s spiritual purposes include:

- Strengthening prayer
- Seeking God’s guidance
- Expressing grief
- Seeking deliverance or protection
- Expressing repentance and turning to God
- Humbling oneself before God
- Expressing concern for the work of God
- Ministering to the needs of others
• Overcoming temptation and dedicating yourself to God
• Expressing love and worship to God

Mathis recommends that we focus on the final purpose, Expressing love and worship to God, since it encompasses all the others and gets at the essence of what makes fasting such a mighty means of grace.

JESUS ASSUMES WE’LL FAST
Read the following Scripture passages and circle the words that Jesus uses to tell us how to practice fasting.

a. Matthew 6: 16 “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

b. Matthew 9: 14 Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?” 15 Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

• What has your understanding of fasting been in the past?
• Have you ever experienced spiritual fasting? If so, would you be willing to briefly share your experience with your small group?
Mathis writes on page 121, “What makes fasting such a gift is its ability with the help of the Holy Spirit, to focus our feelings and their expression toward God in prayer.”

HOW TO START FASTING
On page 123, Mathis gives us helpful tips on how to start fasting:

1. Start Small (i.e. one meal a week for several weeks)
2. Plan What You’ll Do Instead of Eating (i.e. prayer and meditation on God’s word)
3. Consider How It Will Affect Others
4. Try Different Kinds of Fasting
5. Fast From Something Other Than Food
6. Don’t Think of White Elephants (turn your attention to Jesus or some great cause of his in the world)

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Chapter 11, Journal as a Pathway to Joy

On page 128, Mathis writes, “The goal (of journaling) is the glory of Christ, not your own, in your ongoing progress in his likeness, for the expanding and enriching of your joy.” He goes on to say, “Journaling has the appeal of mingling the motions of our lives with the mind of God. Permeated with prayer and saturated with God’s word, it can be a powerful way of hearing God’s voice in Scriptures and making known to him our requests.”

Journaling can help us to “capture the past” and to “build a better future,” but most importantly, it can “enrich the present”. On pages 130-132, Mathis lists 3 ways we can use journaling to “enrich the present”.

1. Examine

a. Romans 12: 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

b. 2 Corinthians 13: 5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

- Why is self-examination important as we journal?
- When we practice fasting, who gets the glory?

2. Meditate (look back to Chapter 3 beginning on page 55)

- How does journaling assist us in meditating on God’s word?
3. Disentangle, Draw Out, and Dream

- What is the benefit of writing out our confusion, reflection and dreams in our journal?
- How does journaling add to our understanding of and intimacy with God?

**FIVE WAYS TO FLOURISH IN JOURNALING (P. 132-135)**

1. Keep It Simple
2. Don’t Catch Up
3. Take God Serious
4. Bring The Gospel
5. Stay With It

- Have you ever practiced the spiritual discipline of journaling? Briefly share your experience with your small group.
- What is the next step you might need to take to add regular journaling to your daily time with God?

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3. Chapter 12, Take a Break from the Chaos

In this whirlwind we call life, it is easy to get caught up in the chaos of this world. But Jesus shows us by example that we all need the occasional silence and solitude that gives us some much needed respite.

Read the following Scripture passages. What did Jesus do when he went to a solitary place? Circle your answer in both passages.

a. Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

b. Matthew 14:23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone,

- If Jesus needed to escape from the crowds and pray, what does that mean we need to do in times of chaos?

- Are you comfortable being alone with God or do you find it challenging to carve out that time for him?

As with most things, excess is one of the dangers of silence and solitude. Mathis writes (p. 139), “Silence and solitude are kinds of fasting, respites from normalcy not meant to take over life.” He does recommend that we take “small, daily retreats” (quiet times), to engage with God by hearing his voice through his word and responding to him in prayer.”
Take a few minutes to review the major points of this lesson:

• Fasting is an exceptional measure, designed to channel and express our desire for God and our holy discontent in a fallen world...But normal Christian fasting means privately and occasionally choosing to go without food (though not water) for some special period of time (whether a day or three or seven) in view of some specific spiritual purpose. And Jesus expects that his disciples will fast.

• The goal (of journaling) is the glory of Christ, not your own, in your ongoing progress in his likeness, for the expanding and enriching of your joy.” He goes on to say, “Journaling has the appeal of mingling the motions of our lives with the mind of God. Permeated with prayer and saturated with God’s word, it can be a powerful way of hearing God’s voice in Scriptures and making known to him our requests.”

• Silence and solitude give us the space and time to engage with God by hearing his voice through his word and responding to him in prayer.

The spiritual practices in these chapters all help us to grow closer to knowing God and finding our joy in him. Which one of these habits, fasting, journaling or silence and solitude, would you commit to trying over the next 2 weeks? Be intentional and God will reward you for your desire to bring him glory.
PRAYER...

- Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.

- Ask each group member what spiritual habit they are feeling led to practice over the next 2 weeks. Pray for one another that the Holy Spirit will organize their time and give them the desire to seek God’s grace through these habits.

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Read Chapters 13, 14 & 15 (p. 145-171) to prepare for this discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION
Who doesn’t love a good party? We prepare (or purchase!) food for the pot luck dinner. We dress up and take extra care with our appearance. And we look forward to spending time with people we enjoy. But for some people parties can be stressful and cause anxiety. Are you someone who loves a good party with lots of fun and laughter? Or are you someone who avoids these parties with their surface relationships and false cheerfulness? Briefly share your best or worst party experience with your group!

LET’S TALK...
Last week we looked at some of the practices associated with the principle, Having God’s Ear; fasting, journaling, and silence & solitude. Today, we transition into the third principle; Belong to His Body (Fellowship).
1. Chapter 13, Learn to Fly in the Fellowship

Mathis begins his discussion on fellowship (p, 145) by writing, “It is an electric reality in the New Testament, an indispensable ingredient in the Christian faith, and one of God’s chief means of grace in our lives. The ‘koinonia’ – Greek for commonality, partnership, fellowship – that the first Christians shared... was in their common Christ, and their common life-or-death mission together in his summons to take the faith worldwide in the face of impending persecution.

• What is your definition of fellowship?

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOSPEL

Read the following Scripture passages. In the margin next to each Scripture, write down who we are to be in fellowship with as followers of Christ.

a. Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

b. 1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

c. 2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

• Scripture tells us that we are to be in fellowship with one another, God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Which of these relationships do you find the easiest to engage in? Which one do you struggle with the most?
Read John 13:35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

- How do we share the gospel with people who are not followers of Christ without using words?

- Are there times when “loving one another” is difficult? Share an example of a time when you found it hard to love someone. What made it so difficult?

Mathis shares that there are two “twin texts” in the Bible that remind us, “True fellowship is not only labors to win the lost but serves to keep fellow saints saved.” While you read these twin Scriptures, circle the action words that Jesus uses to show us the behaviors we should practice towards one another.

a. Hebrews 10: 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

b. Hebrews 3: 12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

- What is the charge that Jesus gives to the early Christians as they join in fellowship with one another?

- Why does Jesus say it is important that we care for and support one another?
**LESSONS IN GOOD LISTENING**

Read the following Scripture passage. Underline the words that describe the behaviors James says we should exhibit toward one another.

James 1:19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

- Why is it important that we listen, speak slowly and not become angry?
- Do you consider yourself to be a good listener?

Mathis lists 6 lessons in good listening (p. 151-154) that come from Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Life Together and Janet Dunn’s Discipleship Journal:

1. Good Listening Requires Patience
2. Good Listening is an Act of Love
3. Good Listening Asks Perceptive Questions
4. Good Listening is Ministry
5. Good Listening Prepares Us to Speak Well
6. Good Listening Reflects Our Relationship with God

- Have you ever seriously contemplated what it means to really listen to someone else?
- Which of these 6 lessons do you feel you need to begin practicing the most?
2. Chapter 14, Kindle the Fire in Corporate Worship

On pages 159-163, Mathis writes, Corporate worship is the single most important means of grace and our greatest weapon in the fight for joy, because like no other means, corporate worship combines all three principles of God’s ongoing grace: his word, prayer, and fellowship…Corporate worship is a means of grace not when we’re caught up with what we’re doing, but when we experience the secret of worship – the joy of self-forgetfulness – as we become preoccupied together with Jesus and his manifold perfections”.

FIVE BENEFITS OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

1. Awakening
2. Assurance
3. Advance
4. Accepting Another’s Leading
5. Accentuated Joy
• When you enter corporate worship, what is your main motivation?

• Which of these benefits have you experienced in corporate worship? Share your experience with the group.

Mathis closes this chapter by writing (p. 163), “The secret of joy in corporate worship is not only self-forgetfulness – or to put it positively, preoccupation with Jesus and his glory – but also the happy awareness that we are not alone in having our souls satisfied in him.”

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3. Chapter 15, Listen for Grace in the Pulpit

On page 165, Mathis writes, “While corporate worship as a whole may be the single most important means of God’s grace...hearing the fresh preaching of the gospel from the Scripture is the climactic grace of the gathering...The weekly priority of preaching in worship points to the importance of our not just interacting with God as friends and sharing at his Table as family, but also submitting to his word in the message of his herald, the preacher.

Mathis continues on page 168, “But preaching is not just about Jesus; it is his way of being personally present with his church...In faithful Christian preaching, we not only hear about Jesus, but we meet him.”

Read the following Scripture passages and circle the words that relate to the reason for listening to faithful, Christian preaching.

a. Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

b. John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

- What is the main reason we need to find a faithful Christian preacher when we attend corporate worship?
- In your own words, what does it look like to “know Christ”?

Take a few minutes to review the major points of this lesson:

- Fellowship is an indispensable ingredient of the Christian faith. We share a commonality because of our faith in Jesus that unites us as we serve and care for one another according to God’s plan.
Habits of Grace

- Corporate worship fulfills two purposes; it labors to win the lost and serves to keep fellow saints saved.
- Listening well is an important aspect of fellowship that requires patience but is vital for developing good relationships.
- Corporate worship reminds us that we are not alone in having our souls satisfied in him.
- Corporate worship incorporates all three principles; Hearing His Voice, Having His Ear, and Belonging to His Body.
- The ultimate goal of all preaching is to help us “know Christ”.

PRAYER...
- Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.
- Use the words of Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,... as part of your prayer today.

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ICE BREAKER QUESTION
In most households, there is one parent that the kids tend to come to when they know they have done something wrong, typically mom. And then there is the often heard, “please don’t tell dad!” We all have a tendency to not want to hear about our shortcomings (sin), especially from someone that we respect and want to think we are perfect! Who was the person in your household growing up that you didn’t want to know when you messed up? What did you think would happen when he/she found out?

LET’S TALK...
Our last lesson began our discussion on fellowship and the importance of Belonging to His Body. One type of fellowship is corporate worship and it fulfills two purposes; it labors to win the lost and serves to keep fellow saints saved. Corporate worship incorporates all 3 of the principles, Hearing His Voice, Having His Ear, and Belonging to His Body. Listening well is important not only in our relationships with others but in our relationship with God, the Father, Jesus, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The ultimate goal of all preaching in corporate worship is to help us “know Christ.”
1. Chapter 16, Wash in the Waters Again

Mathis opens this chapter with this; “Visible words.” “That was the term for baptism and The Lord’s Supper in the days following the Reformation. In compliment to the spoken words of gospel preaching, these twin rhythms of the gathered church are dramatizations of the grace of God...They are not just signs, but ‘seals’. They confirm to us not just that God has done something salvific for mankind in general, but that his saving grace has come to me in particular.”

THE SACRAMENTS AS MEANS OF GRACE

Read the following Scripture passages about The Lord’s Supper. Describe in the margin what the sacrament of The Lord’s Supper represents and what our manner in receiving the cup and the bread should be.

a. 1 Corinthians 10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

b. 1 Corinthians 11:27 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

• What does the cup represent?
• What does the bread represent?
• In what manner are we to prepare to eat the bread and drink the cup?
• What happens to those who do not eat the bread or drink the cup in the right manner?

Mathis writes on page 174, “The two ordinances (Baptism and The Lord’s Supper) are means of God’s grace: Christ instituted channels of God’s power, delivered by God’s Spirit, dependent on Christian faith in the participants, given for the corporate context of the gathered church.”

**GRACE IN THE WATER**

On page 175, Mathis writes; “Baptism marks new-covenant initiation. It is to be applied just once, to a believer deemed by a local congregation to have a credible profession of faith, as entrance into the full fellowship of the visible church…Baptism is not only obedience to Christ’s command, and a living testimony of the candidate’s faith in Jesus to all witnesses, but it also serves as a means of joy to the one being baptized.

Romans 6:4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

• How many times should we be baptized?
• What does baptism represent?
• What is the promise we receive through baptism?

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2. Chapter 17, Grow in Grace at the Table

Mathis stresses the gravity of The Lord’s Supper (p.180) as follows: “Great things are at stake when the church gathers at the Table of her Lord. Blessings and judgment are in the balance. As with preaching, and other means of grace, there is no neutrality.”

2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?

- How does God view us?
- What is the outcome for those who believe and are faithful?
- What is the outcome for those who ignore or reject the Lord?

THE PAST: REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

In Luke 22:19, Jesus instructed his disciples, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Mathis writes on page 180 – 181, “The Lord’s Supper is no less than a memorial meal that draws us back into the cutting of the covenant at Calvary in Christ’s self-giving sacrifice for us.

- How does The Lord’s Supper remind us of the past?

THE PRESENT: PROCLAIMING HIS DEATH

1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

- Why is it important the we continue to proclaim the Lord’s death in the present?
THE FUTURE: AWAITING THE FEAST

John 6:53 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

• When we eat the bread and drink of the cup, what is Jesus’ promise to us about the future?
• When we partake of The Lord’s Supper, what is the relationship between Jesus and us?

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Chapter 18, Embrace the Blessing of Rebuke

Mathis begins Chapter 18 with these words, “One of the most loving things we can do for each other in the church is tell each other when we are wrong…It (rebuke) is a great act of love…intended to stop us from continuing on a destructive path.”

Read the following Scripture passage and circle the word rebuke each time it appears.

2 Timothy 3:13 while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

- What is the benefit of knowing the Holy Scriptures from an early age?
- How are we to rebuke (correct & encourage)?

Mathis writes on page 185, “There are at least two participants in a rebuke that serves our souls as a means of God’s grace. One is the giver; the other receives.”
WATERSHED OF WISDOM

Mathis goes on to write, “Reproof is a fork in the road for a sinful soul. Will we cringe at correction like a curse, or embrace rebuke as a blessing?”

Read the following Scripture passages all found in Proverbs. Circle the words that describe what happens to whoever ignores, hates or disregards correction (rebuke). Underline the words that describe what happens to whoever heeds or loves discipline (rebuke).

a. Proverbs 10:17 Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life,
   but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.
b. Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
   but whoever hates correction is stupid.
c. Proverbs 15:10 Stern discipline awaits anyone who leaves the path;
   the one who hates correction will die.
d. Proverbs 13:18 Whoever disregards discipline comes to poverty and shame,
   but whoever heeds correction is honored.
e. Proverbs 1:23 Repent at my rebuke!
   Then I will pour out my thoughts to you,
   I will make known to you my teachings.
f. Proverbs 25:12 Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold
   is the rebuke of a wise judge to a listening ear.

• After reading these passages, what happens to those who do not accept rebuke?

• What happens to those who accept and learn when faced with rebuke from a brother?
Because of our humanity, it is often difficult to receive rebuke from others but God reminds us that when a rebuke is offered in a loving manner, we need to embrace it as if it was God speaking to us through our brother’s voice. We need to understand that God’s reproof most often comes to us from a brother or sister.

Proverbs 19:20 Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.

- Do you view reproof as a pathway to more of God’s grace or as a reprimand?
- Do you listen to advice and accept discipline well or is this an area of your life that God may be leading you to change your behavior in response to rebuke?

On page 188, Mathis summarizes for us, “The love of Christ for us is our key to unlock the power of rebuke. With him in view, the one ‘who loved me and gave himself for me’, no longer must reproof be an assault on our very foundations and deep sense of worth, but it becomes a fresh opportunity for growth and greater joy.

The following are seven steps for the “giver” toward correction (p. 189-194) that are truly Christian:

1. Check Your Own Heart First
2. Seek to Sympathize
3. Pray for Restoration
4. Be Quick
5. Be Kind
6. Be Clear and Specific
7. Follow Up
James 5:19 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

- When you are called to “bring that person back”, what does James say you need to remember?
- How does this Biblical perspective of rebuke inspire you to change your behavior when you are the receiver? What about when you are the giver?

Take a few minutes to review the major points of this lesson:

- Baptism and The Lord’s Supper are two sacraments that Jesus commanded his disciples to partake in. They remind us of the past, proclaim him in the present, and give us hope for the future.
- Rebuke is God’s way of offering us correction, often from our brother or sister in Christ in a kind and loving way.
- When we embrace rebuke, God blesses us. When we ignore or reject rebuke, we are cursed.

We are all called at one time or another to be either the “giver” or the “receiver” of rebuke. What has this lesson taught you about the charge of giving rebuke to a brother or sister and accepting rebuke when you have done something wrong?
PRAYER...

• Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.

• Thank God for giving us the sacraments of Baptism and The Lord’s Supper as a way to remember what Jesus has done for us in the past, what he is doing for us in the present and the future that he has secured for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

• Pray that God would give us the maturity to offer rebuke to others with grace and love and to accept rebuke from others when we have gone astray from God’s perfect will for our lives.

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HABITS OF GRACE

Week 8, Part 4 - CODA

Habits of Grace by David Mathis
Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines

Read Chapters 19, 20, and 21 (p. 197-218) to prepare for this discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION

If you google the phrase, “I’m your parent, not an ATM”, you come up with several articles and even a book on this topic. Why is it that our children grow up thinking that money is limitless and all you have to do is go to a machine to get money for anything you want? On the rare occasions when we do say, “no,” because it is not good for our children, we often get pushback and threats of being unfair or not caring. But even as adults, don’t we often ask our Father, God, for things with an air of expectation or thoughtlessness? And when he does say, “no”, or “not yet”, our response is often the same as our children’s response to us. Share with the group a time when God said, “no”, or “not yet”, and when you look back you realize that God did have your best interest at heart.

LET’S TALK...

Last week we finished the principle, Belong To His Body. We discussed the Sacraments of Baptism and The Lord’s Supper and how we are to approach God when we participate in these Sacraments. We also looked at what Proverbs has to say about giving and receiving Christian rebuke (correction) in
a kind, loving way. God often rebukes us through our sisters and brothers in Christ when we are taking the wrong path. When we receive his rebuke, he blesses us. When we refuse his rebuke and continue to sin, we are cursed.

1. Chapter 19, The Commission

Mathis adds this last section, CODA, in order to complete his thoughts on the habits of grace. While evangelism and stewardship (money and time) are sometimes labeled spiritual disciplines, Mathis writes; “However, I find it most helpful to treat mission, time and money together as disciplines and pursuits that are first and foremost effects of our regular hearing of God’s word, having his ear, and belonging to his body. Receiving God’s ongoing grace for our souls sustains us, inspires us, and empowers us for evangelism and stewardship.”

MISSION AS A MEANS OF GRACE...

On page 198, Mathis writes, “We will only go so deep with Jesus until we start yearning to reach out. When our life in him is healthy and vibrant, we not only ache to keep sinking our roots in him, but also want to stretch out our branches and extend his goodness to others... getting on board with Jesus’ mission to disciple the nations may be the very thing he uses to push you through your spiritual lethargy and jump-start your stalled sanctification.”

DISCIPLEMAKING AS A MEANS OF GRACE...

Mathis defines discipleshipmaking (p. 199) as, “The process in which a maturing believer invests himself, for a particular period of time, in one or just a few young believers, in order to help their growth in the faith – including helping them also to invest in others who will invest in others.
Read the following Scripture passages and circle the action words that show us what Jesus expects of his followers.

Matthew 4:19 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”

Matthew 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

- According to Jesus, what is the mission he has left for us to accomplish during our time on earth?
- How do we make disciples?

The following (page 200-203) are four tips among many that we can use to become a more effective disciplemaker:

1. Disciplemaking Shows Us Our Smallness and God’s Bigness
   a. “Think big, start small, go deep.”

2. Discipleshipmaking Challenges Us to Be Holistic Christians
   a. Requires both intentionality and relationality; being strategic and being social.

3. Discipleshipmaking Makes Us More Aware of Our Sin
   a. More than truth-speaking; it is also life-sharing.

   b. Those who are looking to our lives and seeking to imitate our faith need to see us be honest and forthright about our sins, hear our confessions, witness our repentance, and watch us earnestly pursue change.

Read the following Scripture passages. Circle the words or phrases that indicate that disciples should share not only the truth, but their own lives as an example to others.
1 Thessalonians 2:8 so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

- How does discipleshipmaking expose our own sin?
- Why is important that we share not only our faith but our own sin when discipling others?

4. Discipleshipmaking Teaches Us to Lean Heavier on Jesus

a. Good disciples must learn, in reliance on the Spirit, how to deal with failure. And the Christian way to deal well with failure is to take it to the cross.

b. Jesus is the flawed and failing discipler’s great Comfort, who frees us from having to be the perfect discipler.

Read the following Scripture passages and underline the good behaviors discipler’s should practice and circle the behaviors we should avoid.

1 Timothy 6:20 Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge,

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

- What is it that has been entrusted to our care?
- When someone rejects the gospel that we share with them, who is it they are really rejecting? How does this realization give us encouragement to keep on sharing the gospel message even when it feels like no one is listening?
2. Chapter 20, The Dollar

Mathis begins on page 205; “For the Christian, the issue is not only that we give, but how. And giving gladly rests on the great why of Christian generosity: that Christ himself – our Savior, Lord, and greatest treasure – demonstrated the ultimate in generosity in coming to buy us back.”

Read the following Scripture passage and circle the words rich and poor.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

- What did Jesus give up to give us the gift of salvation?
- How does Jesus’ generosity towards you make you feel about being generous to others?
On pages 205-210, Mathis gives us “five truths to rehearse for spending and giving in the service of loving others and advancing the mission.”

1. **Money is a Tool**

   a. With all of the strong warnings in the Bible about how we orient toward money, it can be easy to forget that the problem isn’t money, but our hearts.

   b. Money is a tool that can be used for long-term Godward goals, not just short-term selfish purposes. And tools are made to be used. Holding onto money will not satisfy our souls or meet the needs of others.

Read the following Scripture passages and circle words that describe what happens when we let money become our priority. Underline the words that describe what happens when we let God’s mission become our priority.

1 Timothy 6:9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

Luke 16:9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

- What happens when our hearts are focused on gaining wealth rather than using the gifts God has given us to help others?

- When we are generous as a result of our faith in God, what assurance do we have for the end of our life here on earth?
2. How We Use Money Reveals Our Hearts

a. The greatest test of our treasure is not whether we’re willing to spend it, but whom and what we spend it on.

Read these Scripture passages and meditate on where your heart might lie today.

Matthew 6:20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

• How do we know for certain where our heart lies?
• Is there any reason to fear that when we give generously to God’s mission we will lack anything? Why or why not?

3. Sacrifice Varies From Person to Person

a. Nothing shows our hearts like sacrifice. When we are willing to not only to give from our excess, but to embrace some personal loss or disadvantage for the sake of showing generosity toward others, we say loudly and clearly, if only to our own souls, that we have a greater love than ourselves and our comforts.

Read the following Scripture passage and circle the words that describe how God desires that we give. Now underline the words that describe the attitude that God does not want us to have toward giving.

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
• How much should we give to God’s mission?
• What should our manner be as we share our financial blessings with others in need?

4. Generosity Is a Means of Grace

a. While the New Testament does not promise physical rewards in this lifetime for our giving, it does teach that generosity is a means of grace for our souls, and that God stands ready to bless those who give from faith.

Read the following Scripture passage and circle the words that express the extraordinary blessings that God gives to his people.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

• State in your own words what happens in our lives when we give generously to God’s mission.

• Does God give us just what we need or does he delight in giving us more than we need? What should we do with the extra blessings we receive from God?

5. God is the Most Cheerful Giver

Read the following Scripture passages. Circle the words that describe the blessings God has given us through his Son, Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
Hebrew 9:14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

• What are the many ways that God has shown his generosity toward us?
• How do you see these blessings being lived out in your life? Share one brief story with the group about how God’s provision has impacted your own life.

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3. Chapter 21, The Clock

In this final chapter, Mathis reminds us that we are “always on the clock”. So what does the Bible say about how we should spend our time?

Read the following Scripture passages and underline the words that describe how we should spend our time.

Ephesians 5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Psalm 90:12 Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

• How does the Bible say we should live out our days?
• What drives how you spend your time? Are you living a balanced life or are you chasing things that have no eternal consequences?

On page 212, Mathis quotes Donald S. Whitney:

“If people threw away their money as thoughtlessly as they throw away their time, we would think them insane. Yet time is infinitely more precious than money because money can’t buy time.”

Read the following Scripture passage and meditate for a few minutes on who it is that controls your time and what that means to your own plans. Write your thoughts down in the margin so that you can come back to this idea later and let it sink into your mind.

James 4:13 Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on
business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.

- Who is it that wills the number of days that we live on this earth?
- What is the warning that James is giving to us?
- Are you dependent on God’s leading or are you making your own plans for your life? What adjustments might you need to make to get back into line with God’s plans for your life?

Paul ends his letter to his protégé Timothy in this way:

Titus 3:14 Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

Mathis responds to this passage with the words, “Fruitfulness (productivity) means meeting others’ needs with “good works” – expenditures of our time, energy, and money in the service of love – which will be both proactive and reactive. Without scheduling, we will falter at the proactive; without flexibility, we’ll be unavailable for the reactive.

FOUR LESSONS IN FRUITFUL TIME MANAGEMENT

1. Consider Your Calling

Read the following Scripture passages and circle the words God, Lord and Spirit.
1 Corinthians 12:4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

1 Corinthians 12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

• Why does the Holy Spirit distribute these gifts to us?
• What are the specific gifts the Spirit has given you? If you are not sure, you can take a Spiritual Gifts Assessment by visiting https://thekirk.com/spiritual-gifts-assessment/ on The Kirk website.
• How should your particular gifts factor into how you spend your time?

2. Plan with Big Stones

• The “Big Stones” are the key priorities that make up the calling you have been given.

3. Make the Most of Your Mornings

Read the following Scripture passages and circle how many times the word morning occurs.

Psalm 5:3 In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.
Psalm 30:5 For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.
Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

- When do these Scriptures tell us is the best time of day to spend time with God?
- What common barriers distract us from beginning our day in the presence of God?

4. Create Flexibility for Meeting Others Needs

On page 218, Mathis writes, “...knowing our giftings and attending to our priorities and tackling them first thing in the morning also unleashes us to be reactive as the day unfolds, able to respond to the unplanned needs of others, whether big or small, obvious or subtle.

Mathis closes this final chapter of Habits of Grace with these words, “The greatest joys come not from time squandered, hoarded, or selfishly spent, but from self-sacrificial love for others to the glory of God, when we pour out our time and energy for the good of others, and find our joy in theirs. After all, acts of love don’t just happen.”

Take a few minutes to review the major points of this lesson:

- We are called to be disciplemakers.
- God is the giver of all blessings and he desires for us to use those blessings to serve others.
- God’s provision is abundant and we are to use those blessings to show the world his goodness and love.
- Only God knows how many days we have on earth so he tells us to be wise and to prioritize his mission in our lives.
Habits of Grace

PRAYER...

• Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.

• Ask each of your group members to share one blessing that God has provided for them during this study.

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ICE BREAKER QUESTION

Have you ever noticed that when you spend hours, days, weeks or even months preparing for a celebration, anticipating a grand adventure, or mastering a skill set, that there seems to be a feeling of relief when the celebration, adventure or skill is accomplished? Suddenly something that has been a priority is over and you move on to the next big thing. But developing the “habits of grace” is one of these long-term initiatives that never ends in this lifetime. Now that we are finishing this study, how can you continue to walk in God’s “means of grace” so that you complete the process of sanctification (remember Week 1?) until you are glorified and living in God’s presence forever?

LET’S TALK…

We did it! We finished David Mathis’ book, Habits of Grace! So what do we do now? Our prayer is that you have already begun to use the 3 principles; Hear His Voice (word), Have His Ear (prayer), and Belong to His Body (fellowship) as a means of receiving his grace.
The old saying, “practice makes perfect” is a good one but no matter how much we practice these principles, we will never be perfect unless we receive and know the One who is perfect, Jesus Christ. It is only through communing with him on a daily basis that we can know God and find the joy, peace and assurance in this life that one day we will live for eternity in his presence.

In the Epilogue, Mathis leaves us with 5 ways that we can continue the journey we have been on during this study of the habits of grace.

1. **Remember What Your “Habits of Grace” Are About**

   • Bible meditation is not about checking boxes, but communion with the risen Christ in and through his word... It is the regular pattern of communion with Christ that is vital, not extended time on one particular day.

   1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

   • How has your desire to spend time with God through his various “means of grace” changed you as a result of this study?

   • Share with the group one “habit of grace” that you have added to your routine.
2. Consider the Path of Love

On page 221, Mathis says, “Regularly communing with God allows us to be a better spouse, parent, friend, etc. But sometimes we need to get away from people for a few minutes, feed our souls on God and his goodness, and come back to our families and communities reenergized for anticipating and meeting other’s needs. But at other times, we need to die to our desires for personal time alone – even in such good things as Bible meditation and prayer – to give attention to others.”

• Which of these two situations do you find yourself in the most often? Do you have a healthy balance of the two?

3. Develop a Morning Routine That Is Adaptable

Mathis writes on page 221, “Taking crazy mornings into account, knowing that they will come and trying to be ready for them, may mean that you develop morning habits that are flexible.”

2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

• How does having a flexible morning plan for communing with God help us when we encounter a crazy morning?

• When we do encounter a crazy morning, how can we be assured that he will step in when we encounter troubles that we are unable to handle on our own?
4. Look for God’s Provision Through Others

On page 222, Mathis writes, “The means of grace aren’t simply personal. They are profoundly corporate. Even our personal Bible meditation and prayer are deeply shaped by our lives in the community, and by those who have taught us intentionally…Don’t neglect the power of fellowship as a means of God’s grace.

• Do you prefer the quiet times when it is just God and you, or is your preference to spend time in fellowship with God and others?

• Now that you have completed this study, do you have a better understanding why both are critical to our spiritual maturity?

5. Evaluate Later What You Might Leave for Next Time

The final words of Mathis’ epilogue on page 223 are as follows:

“The crazy days will come. And there are seasons of life…where all bets are off and it’s just a crazy season. But with a little intentionality, and with a modest plan in place, you can learn to navigate these days, and even walk with greater dependence on God, knowing full well that it’s not the ideal execution of our morning habits of grace that secures his favor and blessing. You can commune with Christ in the crazy days.”

PRAYER...

• Take a few minutes to share prayer requests and close your small group gathering by praying for one another.
• Thank God for the relationships that you have built during this study. Pray that you will be a disciplemaker that shares the love of God with others.

• Finally, pray that the Spirit would place in you the desire to continue on in the “habits of grace” that he offers. This study might be over but your relationship with God through his “means of grace” is just beginning!

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