



GRACE GROUP LEADER'S MESSAGE GUIDE

Leader note: This Message Guide is intended to help you facilitate discussion with your Grace Group. You can use the guide exactly as it is, ignore some of it, or add to it. We hope you view this guide as a flexible teaching tool, and not a rigid teaching task.

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 27th

Please review the Updates and Leader Information found at gracefellowship.cc/groupresources.

ICEBREAKER

What's the best habit you ever started? And, what's the hardest habit you ever stopped doing?

WATCH THE TEACHING VIDEO BY PASTOR JEREMIAH OLSON

RECALIBRATE - WEEK 4 (Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:7-8)

1. Did you ever train for a sporting event or race?
2. Are you a morning person or not? What is your best, most productive time of day?
3. It was said in the weekend message that repeated habits add up to who we are. What are the habits you repeat daily?
4. Read 1 Timothy 4:7. Here, Paul is saying to avoid all false teaching. How can we best avoid and distance ourselves from the false teaching and false narratives of our current day?
5. Read 1 Timothy 4:8, 2 Timothy 3:16, Ephesians 4:12, Hebrews 12:11 and Hebrews 5:14. How satisfied are you with the spiritual disciplines you currently have in place? (see *article below for listing and description of spiritual disciplines - maybe even print it and give to your group members*)
6. Read Matthew 16:24, Philippians 3:7-8, Galatians 5:24 and Colossians 3:3-5. What is in us that these scriptures are so adamant or direct in telling us to deny or suppress?
7. Which of these are you most comfortable with and why?
 - A. UP - Communion with God; worship, Bible study, meditation
 - B. IN - Authenticity with ourselves; prayerful listening, journaling, self-care
 - C. OUT - Connection to others; serving others, fellowship with believers, witnessing
 - D. DOWN - Denial of self; sabbath, fasting, contentment
8. Which of those listed in question 6 are you most dissatisfied with and why?
9. Spiritual disciplines are a means not an end. What's the end look like?

ACTION STEP

The action step out of the weekend message was to adopt one new personal discipline habit and fast one day. Check out <https://www.gracefellowship.cc/spiritualdisciplines/>.

SHEPHERDING / CARE / PRAYER

See the article below to help with your group members discussion on spiritual disciplines. You might even want to print it and give it to them!

10 Spiritual Disciplines to Strengthen Your Faith

Critical Spiritual Disciplines

For followers of Jesus, there are spiritual disciplines that are non negotiable. If you want to grow in your faith, these will definitely be part of your life.

1. Bible Reading: One of the first disciplines a Christian should prioritize is reading God's Word. It's important for Christians to be familiar with Scripture. This means regular devotional reading. How you make Bible reading a discipline is up to you. Maybe it's a chapter a day or multiple chapters on a weekend. In any case, it's critical that you're spending time familiarizing yourself with Scripture.

2. Bible Study: Bible study is a very different discipline than devotional reading. The goal is to examine the Scriptures for deeper understanding. Everyone can benefit from reading Scripture, but when you invest time into understanding the Bible on a deeper level, it gives you greater insight into what Scripture is communicating and how you can apply it to your life.

3. Bible Memorization: A third way you can incorporate Scripture into your disciplines is by committing key passages to memory. These could be passages that are particularly meaningful, that help you share your faith with others or that meet some specific need at the time. When you internalize Scripture, the Holy Spirit finds ways to make it come alive.

4. Prayer: It's almost strange to think of prayer as a spiritual discipline. After all, if you genuinely believe God is present, listening and available, there's no way around the importance of prayer. But if you don't approach prayer with a spiritual-discipline mindset, then it doesn't happen with the frequency and intensity that it should. If you don't have an established time of prayer, consider setting one. Prayer is too important to try and fit in when the occasion allows.

5. Generosity: Stewardship means thinking of and using your possessions in the light of the fact that God is the ultimate owner of everything and you are His manager. Generosity is a critical discipline that trains Jesus followers to steward God's resources better and be more thankful and appreciative of God's blessings. Making generosity a spiritual discipline means being intentional and strategic about how you give. Planning to give when the opportunity presents itself isn't the kind of regimen that makes something a discipline. When it comes to generosity as a discipline, regular and intentional giving is key.

6. Fellowship: From the start, Jesus' message was that the kingdom of God was at hand. This was more than an invitation to a relationship with God; it was also an invitation to reconciliation and relationship with others. Most of the New Testament focuses on the church's relationship with God as His people, so it's important to make room in your life for others. There are a number of ways to turn fellowship into a discipline, but the obvious one is committing to a church and attending regularly. Beyond that, you can create a plan to mentor or be mentored or look for ways to be intentional about relationships.

7. Fasting: God's people have used fasting as a discipline throughout history. Typically, fasting is denying yourself food in order to focus your attention on prayer and other spiritual pursuits. During the Babylonian captivity, the prophet Daniel practiced a very specific kind of fast where he denied himself rich foods (Daniel 10:2-3). Many Christians have integrated the practice of fasting into their lives in different ways. Some use fasting periodically to focus on prayer and practice self-denial. The 18th-century pastor John Wesley regularly fasted two days a week and encouraged others to do so, too. Food is not the only thing you can fast. Sometimes it's healthy to fast from social media, streaming services, or other things that may distract you from pursuing the Lord.

Helpful Spiritual Disciplines

When considering other spiritual disciplines, the key to getting the most benefit lies in choosing practices that correspond with areas of weakness or opportunity. It's essential to find ways to offset some of the bad habits so easily picked up from the world. The following are disciplines Christians have used throughout history to increase their faith and grow closer to Jesus.

8. Silence: The world is full of constant noise and distraction. Many people can't find 20 minutes of quiet in an entire day. This bombardment of stimulus makes it difficult to be spiritually present and to recognize God's leading. Many set aside times during their day when they can be quiet and aware of God's presence. This might be a half-hour of silence at the end of your day or something as simple as not turning your stereo on in the car. This habit is about being strategic and intentional in how you make room for the Holy Spirit.

9. Simplicity: There's a strong cultural pull to find value and meaning in what you own and what you do. As a discipline, simplicity seeks to counteract that influence by encouraging you to want less and to prioritize your focus and time better. As a discipline, simplicity can look like minimalizing what you own and getting rid of stuff that you don't need. It also can mean placing restrictions around what you acquire. For people who have a hard time turning down opportunities and expectations, the practice of simplicity can look like finding ways to prioritize your time better and being more productive while doing less.

10. Celebration: You don't have to read far into the Old Testament to discover how seriously God takes celebration. God encouraged regular festivals to commemorate His goodness, faithfulness and provision (Exodus 12:14-20). These activities are essential because they create opportunities to remember what God has done and they encourage the outward expression of delight. Christians should be known for their joy. If this is an area where you struggle, it might be a good idea to consider ways to find and express joy. This could look like finding ways to celebrate the small triumphs of friends and loved ones. Maybe try spending a year journaling about things that God is doing in your life. Or put together one big blowout celebration every year; invite the people closest to you and remember God's graciousness.

(from the article, "10 Spiritual Disciplines to Strengthen Your Faith" posted on cru.org)