

Introduction

Matthew 7:24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” (NIV)

For many OB/GYNs like myself, encountering a shoulder dystocia can be a terrifying experience. This occurs when the baby’s anterior shoulder is compressed behind the pubic bone, limiting delivery of the shoulders after delivery of the head. It is a true emergency that requires timely management in order to prevent profound complications for the baby. It is hard to predict and difficult to treat, but with the right actions guided by a discerning evaluation it can be managed effectively. When I was a medical student, I gave a presentation on shoulder dystocia during my OB clerkship. I think back to that lecture now and can recognize how rudimentary it was. These days, in the high-risk population that I work with, we experience shoulder dystocias on a somewhat routine basis and I don’t feel nearly the same terror that I did as a student. What happened to change me from the naive medical student that I was into the attending I am now? Practice. But that practice didn’t come through observation, or even fumbling through a few on my own. When I was a resident, I had a (terrifying) chief resident who sat me down and emphasized the necessity of conducting mental reps for how I would manage a shoulder dystocia. She had me walk through the scenario, the maneuvers, and the progression of what to do and encouraged me to do it over and over again in my mind. She “disciplined” me in several ways into the physician I am today, by teaching me how to take what I was learning and apply it to my life in a thoughtful and formative way.

How does all this relate to our faith and spiritual formation?

Jesus’ parable of the wise man who built on the rock comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount in which he lays out what it looks like to live the kingdom life that he was on earth to bring. He describes a new way to be human, a human marked by “eternal life” that is life with the character of the endless age to come. Jesus’ new way of being human was revolutionary for

his time, and it remains radical today. If you are anything like me, the Sermon on the Mount can feel oppressive at times. I would have a hard time finding myself in the Beatitudes and fear that the kingdom of God I would be welcomed into. I would hear Jesus teach on greed, pride, lust, anger, and reconciliation and feel as though I could never measure up. Too often, we preach these passages as “OK, now you are a Christian, go and do it,” but is that the way any of us learned anything? Too often we confuse the instantaneous spiritual power of justification with the slow, progressive work of sanctification. In *After You Believe*, N.T. Wright says “the qualities of character which Jesus and his first followers insist on as the vital signs of healthy Christian life don’t come about automatically. You have to develop them. You have to work at them. You have to think about it, to make conscious choices to allow the Holy Spirit to form your character in ways that, to begin with, seem awkward and ‘unnatural’”.[1] Christian discipleship is the process by which God works in us as the Holy Spirit to develop in us a second nature, a new, renewed nature, that eventually begins to look natural. God works in us, but he often chooses to do it through relationships. I love the way Dallas Willard paraphrases The Great Commission at the end of Matthew 28 by saying “As you go throughout the world, make apprentices to me from all kinds of people, immerse them in Trinitarian reality, and teach them to do everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20, PAR).[2] Jesus recognizes the necessity for disciples to be formed, usually by the active agency of someone who is further down the road of wisdom than the one they are leading. That’s what we want to accomplish in this process together. Too frequently, as Christians, we gather to hear the words of Jesus, but we must not lose sight of Jesus’ call to hear his words and put them into practice. Just like my relationship with my chief resident, and you with your mentors in life, growing in our faith often requires someone to be our guide. We need help knowing how to navigate obstacles in front of us, and we need encouragement to conduct “mental reps” such that the awkward and unnatural way of the Spirit can begin to look effortless and spontaneous as we live out the character and the qualities of the age to come as Jesus’ kingdom representatives on earth here and now.

The beauty of the sort of discipleship method that we are proposing in this book is that the opportunities for growth are often bidirectional. In this context, we will be seeking to foster developmental relationships between wise mentors and medical trainees either in school or residency. The guide in front of you is not meant to be an exhaustive collection of everything you need to know to live the Christian life, nor is it meant to be a collection of encouraging thoughts to help you through your day. The purpose of these eight sessions will be to give you a rubric for formative conversations that end with plans to put the material into practice in a meaningful way that helps the trainees make trackable progress throughout a year of interaction. Based on my experience, the benefits of this sort of relationship are not only afforded to the trainee. For practicing providers and other mentors, ministering to younger people can be one of the most life-giving, faith-transforming endeavors we can take up. It is a perilous journey to put your life on display and engage with a learner as you seek to inspire them towards a wholistic life of relational, emotional, physical, and spiritual health. In doing so, you will see areas in your life in which you need to grow. Perhaps you have become blind to some aspect of the Christian life because of your generational biases. Maybe the passion you once felt in your twenties has been snuffed out by the pressures of life in your forties. Do not be afraid to let the growth and development be bidirectional. As you call someone to follow Christ, examine your own life and be stirred up to go deeper in your own practice of discipleship.

Why are you prescribing this sort of approach?

There seems to be an awareness rising up, particularly amongst American evangelicals, that the way we approached spiritual development in the late 20th and early 21st century didn't achieve the outcomes that we thought would accompany all the methods we pursued. In *Faith for Exiles*, David Kinnaman and Mark Matlock build on a decade of research from the Barna Group that demonstrates that young Millennials and Zoomers are either avoiding Christianity or abandoning a faith they experienced in childhood. We live in a digital age which is native for Millennials and Zoomers, but also thoroughly inhabited by older generations. They describe this new age notable

for an accelerated, complex culture that is marked by phenomenal access, profound alienation, and a crisis of authority as “digital Babylon”. God’s people know what it is like to live as exiles in a foreign country. In the Old Testament, Daniel and his generation lived in ancient Babylon, a “pagan-but-spiritual, hyperstimulated, multicultural crossroads”[3] which serves as a fitting metaphor for the digital Babylon we now find ourselves living in. The proper response of an exile is not to dismantle the regime where they live, in fact in Jeremiah 29 the Lord tells Israel to seek the welfare of the city where they are exiled. Our calling is also not to assimilate and become so indistinguishable from the culture that we no longer feel like exiles. Kinnaman and Matlock describe the proper response as becoming resilient disciples, meaning that we are capable of experiencing the stresses and deformational tendencies of our times, but these forces do not overwhelm our integrity. A resilient structure is able to withstand outside pressure, respond appropriately and return to its intended state. They outline five essential practices for churches and ministries to emphasize which correlate with the development of resilient disciples in their research [3]:

1. To form a resilient identity, experience intimacy with Jesus.
2. In a complex and anxious age, develop the muscles of cultural discernment.
3. When isolation and mistrust are the norms, forge meaningful, intergenerational relationships.
4. To ground and motivate an ambitious generation, train for vocational discipleship.
5. Curb entitlement and self-centered tendencies by engaging in countercultural mission.

The point of our mentor relationships is to effectively create meaningful intergenerational relationships highlighted in practice 3, but we also have the opportunity to guide students and ourselves to pursue each of these aspects together.

Why do we use the word practices?

For too long, the focus in Western Christianity has been on helping people develop right doctrine. There was a prevailing theory that if one could know all the right things and make time-punctuated commitments to them that spiritual development would flow effortlessly as a result. One could argue ways in which that theory could have worked effectively, but it fails to take into account human nature. As modernity progressed, the space in our lives for contemplating and applying proper theology became increasingly limited. Culturally, we began to emphasize theological nuances championed by our brands of subculture rather than embracing the harder road of following in the way of Jesus to be a person of love in every sphere of our existence. It became apparent that one could believe a lot of right things about Jesus, but fail to be a person who was living in communion with him. We could have a long discussion about this, but the analysis would boil down to the fact that we are defined much more by the things we do rather than the things we aspire to. We might say we love Jesus and want to follow in his way, but in fact we take actions towards self indulgence and neglect of our neighbors that would beg to differ. The Pulitzer Prize winning Annie Dillard so poignantly said “How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.”[4] The call to take up a Christian life marked by certain practices is not a call to monasticism or perfectionism. It is a faithful surrender to an awareness that we are formed by the actions that we take. As you grow further in medicine, your identity as a physician will be shaped by the practice you take up. You will deny yourself of certain opportunities and actions in order to live more fully into the doctor you are aiming to become. In medical school, this feels paralyzing and liberating at the same time. We live sometimes with the illusion that we can hang on to everything, but every well seasoned physician will tell you, that you must decide what skills you will enhance in order to serve your patients and community. There is a similar argument that one could make for the Christian life. Focusing on a set of practices to incorporate in your life is a declaration of who you want to become. A common slogan in a popular book on this subject, *The Common Rule*, encourages Scripture before screens.[5] There is nothing sinful with owning a smart phone, checking email, reading news, and watching wholesome entertainment, but there is something deformational about doing

that at the expense of communing with God in scripture. You might be the type of person who mentally ascents to a desire to be shaped by scripture, but your practical reality betrays your inner desire. The practices we outline in this study are not exhaustive, and they are not meant to be exhausting. We know there is a tremendous weight upon medical students as you strive to learn all that you need to know, prepare yourself for residency, and solidify your identity as an emerging adult and professional. We have observed that many students think they can put their faith on hold during medical school, while they pursue these other important things, believing that they can easily resume a focus on faith that will be strong and robust on the other side of 7-10 years of training. The reality is that you will be a different person on the other side of training. If you do not learn how to develop faithful practices now that nurture and sustain your faith in the midst of this trying time, there is a strong likelihood that your faith will either be feeble or nonexistent when you go to pick it up.

How do we do this freshly in our vocation?

We are inviting you to journey with a mentor over the next year through eight sessions typically lasting 60-90 minutes. The purpose of these sessions is to foster a meaningful intergenerational relationship that helps you value intimacy with Jesus, implement formative spiritual practices, and develop your vocational calling during this crucial period of your growth and maturity. So many medical Christian ministries want to talk about praying with patients, sharing the gospel with patients, or serving in a missional capacity. We believe each of those things are wonderful manifestations of a medical professional's discipleship to Jesus, but they will not produce the desired effects unless they flow out of a life that has developed whole-life communion with Christ. Each month, we invite you to examine your "Healthy REPS" described in the following pages where you talk to your mentor about the health of various aspects of your life summarized into the categories of relational, emotional, physical, and spiritual. We hope this monthly check-in can be a loving time where you can process your life and be encouraged by the wisdom of your mentor to help you see how perceived needs in these areas of your life are affecting other areas of your life.

The first two sessions meeting together with your mentor are meant to help you form a relationship. We invite you after reading this portion of the practice guide to share your story with your mentor. Talk about what God and faith mean to you, how you resonate with this material, and what you hope to gain out of this relationship. Hear from your mentor about where God has brought them in life and learn to appreciate each other. The next session we will talk more about growing in your faith and help you develop a vision for who you would like to be both during training and on the other side.

Our practices are organized in three directions of our human experience. There are other ways these could be organized and other aspects of spiritual life that could be emphasized. We feel like these practices will help you develop the rhythms of a mature life that will help you become a resilient disciple in our tumultuous times. We begin with the upwardly directed practices of prayer and scripture reading. These serve as the well-established foundation of the spiritual life for thousands of years of Christians as the way of connecting with God, hearing from him and speaking with him in communion. Next, we will focus on inwardly directed practices that invite us to shape our identities by what we simultaneously embrace and reject. We will discuss what it means to embrace relational wholeness as we reject our culture's standards for relationships and pursue God's intention for love. The following month will explore the countercultural idea of sabbath and what it means to embrace God's call to intentionally rest as we reject the insatiable urge to define our lives by what we consume and accomplish. We will then build on these discussions to consider how we can practice outward giving of ourselves to seek kingdom activities like our vocational calling and generosity. Each month, you will work with your mentor to consider what you need to take up in order to take your next step of spiritual growth. It is our hope that this process will help you build your life on a firm foundation, so that when the storm comes, you may be sustained. Attention to the practices is not what makes God love you, but building your life following his ways in his truth is the way we demonstrate our love back to him. How wonderful it is that we are invited to love what is promised to give us life.

References:

1. Wright NT. After you believe: why Christian character matters. 1st ed. New York, NY: HarperOne; 2010.
2. Willard D. The divine conspiracy: rediscovering our hidden life in God. 1st ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco; 1998.
3. Kinnaman D, Matlock M. Faith for exiles: 5 ways for a new generation to follow Jesus in digital Babylon. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books; 2019.
4. Dillard A. The writing life. New York: Harper Perennial; 1990.
5. Earley JW. The common rule: habits of purpose for an age of distraction. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books an imprint of InterVarsity Press; 2019.

Healthy REPS

If you take the time to notice during medical school, you will find that we learn far more about how to treat diseases than we do about how to promote health. It becomes clear practicing medicine that many of the ailments our patients face in one area of their anatomy are in fact the product of negligence, disease, or deterioration in another aspect of their body. Spiritually speaking, we are multifaceted beings, journeying through life seeking to relate with God and others. Jesus' invitation to practice his way is a call to life that is fully life that involves submitting our whole selves to him, letting him heal our wounds, and walking with the Spirit into new life.

Each month, as part of our shared discipleship journey, we want to invite the mentees to examine some core aspects that we refer to as spheres of life, namely relational, emotional, physical, and spiritual (REPS) spheres. We recommend that mentees take time prior to meetings to examine their health as it relates to each of these spheres and pick one or two to talk about with their mentor. Consider some of these questions to guide you as you sit and consider your degree of health with the REPS.



- Who is in your path that you can bless? (family, friends, roommates, non-believers)
- Are any of your relationships strained and in need of reconciling?
- What does it look like for you to properly invest the in relationships?



- How do you feel when you step back from your busy life to reflect on your inner world?
- What is making you feel stressed, anxious, or angry right now?
- What refreshes your soul and how can you incorporate that into your life?



- Are you caring for your physical body through balanced eating, exercise, and sleep?
- Is there any discomfort or difficulties that need to be addressed?
- Are you honoring God with your body in all matters related to sex?



- Does your relationship with God hold a proper place in life in terms of time and priority?
- What are you doing to deepen your understanding of God and align your life to His will?
- What have you learned about God or realized about yourself recently?
- Is there any recurrent sin that is hampering your spiritual health?

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Practice basics-Value Long-Term Growth

Learning and growing are vital aspects of life. From the moment a baby is born, observation begins, and with it, her journey of development. We all recognize that this growth process is a slow one for children. We would not expect our 2-month-old to begin to walk, or our 3-year-old to be able to read, or our 10-year-old to understand Calculus. But, concern arises when growth stagnates or when previously achieved milestones slip away. In order for development to continue progressing well, children need modeling, teaching, and practice in increasingly complex skills. In much the same way, when we begin a new life in Christ, we embark on a journey of spiritual development that is often slow and requires intentional effort to cultivate. But just as parents lead their children through development, God, in his fatherly love, offers Christ to us as our model and the Spirit as our guide. We've been given Scripture as our map and the community of believers both past and present to journey with us as we grow.

Many Christians are satisfied to have lives of religious ambivalence, content that one day they will go to heaven because they believe in Jesus while living their time on earth seeking temporal fulfillment. But this is not the abundant life that Jesus invites us into. It is actually a really hard way to live. Such a person is haunted by vague notions of moral expectations and religious beliefs, without savoring the joy of a deep relationship with God.

We naturally assume that moving forward on this path of spiritual maturity means that we sin less and do good more. While those things are hopefully true, I would contend that a better measure of spiritual maturity is a growing desire for God and his ways marked by an intimacy that is present throughout our days, not just an isolated morning devotional. Slowly over time, we can embrace true transformation as we come to know the heart of God and allow the Holy Spirit to align our desires with his.

Psychologist Henry Cloud, writes about how an environment of **grace, truth** and **time** fosters growth.[1] He describes the importance of unmerited favor (grace) to feel safe to engage in the messiness of the growth process, the necessity of understanding the ultimate reality provided in God's word (truth) to serve as a guide, and the value of time to produce real change. When we focus only on grace, we are not aware of our need to change. When we sway too far toward truth, we become paralyzed and disheartened. When we are impatient in the process, we will get discouraged and weary.

Think back to our slowly developing child, now 4 years old and ready to learn to ride a bike. The reason the kid wants to learn to ride is likely based on a **vision** she has of cruising on the sidewalk wind in her hair, racing her older sibling whom she's watched already. Any change we make begins with a vision of what we'd like to become. Riding a bike is intuitive, but until you confidently **intend** to learn, you will only be left imagining yourself as capable. A child must commit to the **methods** of learning to balance, pedal, and steer slowly through trial and error. Parents can offer guidance, instruction, encouragement, modeling, but unless the kid embraces the methods, strengthened by intention, invigorated by a firm vision the skill will never be mastered.[2] A child must learn to overcome the fear of giving themselves fully to the mechanics of the bicycle before they can experience the exhilaration of the ride. This is the invitation on offer when seeking to intentionally grow in your faith. Hopefully your mentor can help you develop a motivating vision for what faithfully walking with Jesus your entire life can look like. You will have to decisively intend to pursue that vision instead of alternative visions that exist. Much of this guide will focus on the methods, but never lose sight of the underlying mechanics of the process. While God offers to us everything we need for vibrant spiritual growth, He does not drag us along unwillingly. We must choose to pursue an environment that fosters growth and seek out things that grow our affection for God. As we do this, living the way God desires becomes more natural, just like riding a bike.

Resources

- Hunger and Thirst Sermon- Matt Chandler 6/15/21
- "Learning the Language of Life: New Creation and Christian Virtue." NT Wright Sermon
- An Eternal Perspective- Roger Hershey (article)
- How We Grow-CRUPress (article)

References

1. Cloud H. Changes that heal: how to understand your past to ensure a healthier future. 1996.
2. Willard D. Renovation of the heart: putting on the character of Christ. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress; 2002. *source of the VIM pneumatic for vision, intentions, and methods*

Discussion Starters

1. Have you ever thought about spiritual growth as a life-long journey? What have you traditionally considered as the tools or path of growth? What actions, thoughts, beliefs served as signs that growth was happening?
2. Has there been a time that you were growing significantly in your faith? What elements contributed to your growth?
3. What impedes your growth, causing it to stall or regress? How can you get “back on the bike” and move forward?
4. What would you like your life to look like 10 years from now after a growth process marked by grace, truth, and time?
5. What needs to be true about your life now to make that vision a reality?

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Practice 3-Be devoted to prayer

How do you feel about your most recent research project? Perhaps you have one that is ongoing. Maybe you are a medical student doing research because it is required by your school. Maybe you are striving to put yourself into every available project in the hopes that you will qualify for your chosen profession. Having been around research for a while, I get the sense that about 10% of people love it and the other 90% tolerate it, frequently only participating out of drudgery or fear. Here's the other problem, so you publish your project in a random journal, does it really change anything? Now how would that paragraph change if I replaced the word research with prayer? Do you ever approach prayer uncertain whether it is really amounting to anything? Sure, 10% of your Christian friends are really into it, maybe your grandmother loved it, but in all honesty your experience is a confusing milieu of obligation, trepidation, and speculation. You are not alone.

Prayer serves as the foundational practice that facilitates the transformation we can experience as the disciplines usher us into a deeper relationship with God. Unfortunately, many of us relegate prayers to a word of thanks before mealtime or a last resort when life feels tough, rather than experiencing the fullness that God offers when he invites us into conversation with him.

It is important to think about what we think about when we pray. Many of us likely have a functional (subconscious) image of God somewhere between a cosmic vending machine that automatically dispenses if the inputs are right and a disappointed father who really wishes we could just get it right. I will raise my hand for the later. Either way, we come to that functional image driven by dysfunctional motivations such as obligation or greed to name a few. If we are to have our lives transformed through the practice of prayer it is essential that our view of God be consistent with his revelation of himself. At its core, prayer is an interaction with the Divine, which can seem ethereal and elusive, but the model that we are given is that of conversation between a loving Father and his child. Prayer, above all else, is communion with God. John Mark Comer summarizes the opening of the Lord's Prayer as a reminder that

“the primary goal of prayer is joyful, grateful, worshipful, enjoyment of the Father’s company.”[see link]

Hopefully the offer of deep communication with a Heavenly Father stirs in you a desire, but our meritocratic personalities shaped by medical culture eagerly ask “What do I need to do to get this? Teach me the techniques so I can get it right!” We have strong desires for good things we think God should provide like a residency spot, future spouse, and healing for our grandmother, but often there is this fear of performance that leads us to seek out various techniques that will ensure we get what we want. Robert Mulholland in the book *Invitation to a Journey* writes, “Our prayer tends to be a shopping list of things to be accomplished, an attempt to manipulate the symptoms of our lives without entering into a deep, vital, transforming relationship with God.” [1] There is much that could be said about various techniques and approaches to prayer, but until we lay down any notion that our performance merits God’s response we are merely manipulating the symptoms instead of growing into a true experience. Jesus teaches that we are to pray faithfully, but not to worry about the performance because God already knows what we need before we ask. (Mt 6:8) Paul teaches us in Romans 8:26 (ESV) that “the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”

The philosophically minded among us love to read verses like these and throw their hands up saying, "See, prayer is meaningless, God does whatever he wants." There are many things that may seem true in a logical argument that contradict what God has actually communicated to us in scripture. Understanding how this can be true should prompt you to search the scriptures, seek guidance, and commune with God in prayer. Coming to our father in prayer is the practice that transforms us and shapes the future. “Prayer is awe, intimacy, struggle—yet the way to reality. There is nothing more important, or harder, or richer, or more life-altering. There is absolutely nothing so great as prayer.”[2]

Resources

- John Mark Comer—Teach Us to Pray, opening to prayer series at Bridgetown Church ([YouTube](#))
- John Mark Comer-Fixed Hour Prayer ([audio or video](#))
- Dan Hayes-Motivating Reasons to Pray ([article](#))
- John Piper-Be Devoted to Prayer ([audio or text](#))

Further Reading

- Tim Keller- Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God ([Amazon](#))
- Paul Miller- A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World ([Amazon](#))

References

1. Mulholland MR, Barton RR. Invitation to a journey: a road map for spiritual formation. Revised and Expanded. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 2016. p. 122
2. Keller T. Prayer: experiencing awe and intimacy with God. New York: Dutton, Penguin Group USA; 2014. p. 32

Discussion Starters

1. After reading the introduction and any related materials, what ideas resonate with you? What do you take issue with?
2. How were you taught about prayer growing up? What role models did you have? How has prayer been a part of your life?
3. Have you ever experienced answers to prayer? How about prayers that seem to have not been answered? What mental, philosophical, spiritual, and practical barriers do you have regarding prayer?
4. Talk to your mentor about their practice of prayer. How does it fit into their routine, how is it interjected into various moments of life? Is prayer present in their practice of medicine? How so?
5. How can your mentor help you to pursue a life shaped by the practice of prayer?

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Practice: Be formed by Scripture

The precise pharmacologic mechanism by which heparin is cleared from the body is not typically high-priority information for an OB/GYN to know, but for Dr. Lentz a GYN Oncologist who frequently had elderly patients with organ failure at risk of blood clots, it was an essential question for gauging the commitment level of us as residents. Dr. Lentz was a force of nature, a relatively small framed man hunched over from endless hours of surgery, his very presence in a room commanded respect. He was the kind of attending whose voice filled your nightmares during training, but now remembering his words in crisis situations is profoundly comforting. Some of Dr. Lentz's rules of surgery included: restore normal anatomy, start with the easy part first, remember the steps and do it the same way every time, and a fourth that was common in our training program was never sweat alone. What I eventually came to learn about Dr. Lentz was that while he possessed a wealth of experience, he also was a man of the book. **As I apprenticed under him for two months a year, I started to follow his instructions, and often he was pointing us back to "the book".** While it might seem that the method by which heparin is cleared from the body is an esoteric bit of information, it is written clearly in TeLinde's Operative Gynecology. I started to see that, I may never develop the surgical prowess Dr. Lentz possessed, but I had access to the book that had shaped his approach to his practice. He had studied that book so thoroughly, that he had essential chapters nearly memorized, and his difficult questions were in fact, subtle checks to see if we had read those chapters. It was his subtle way to beckon us to search for wisdom in the book.

On the path of discipleship to Jesus, as we apprentice under Him and learn to walk in His way, we too have been given a book to serve as a guide. The phenomenon of scripture as a collection of writings gathered over thousands of years authored by a diverse set of individuals which tells a cohesive story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration is a miraculous gift of a loving

God who is searching for relationship with humanity. As we think about the place of scripture in your life, I want to invite you to become people of "the Book." If we view navigating life as analogous to conducting surgery, we can see that a commitment to the Bible is how we "restore normal anatomy". Just like scar tissue and disease can distort anatomical planes, our souls can become maligned by competing ideologies and complicating traumas in our life. The practice of reading scripture reminds us how life was meant to be and who we are now called to be in Christ through the Spirit's work and our own commitment to growth. It is wise to "start with the easy part first". If you are not familiar with the Bible, you can start with the Gospels and a good guide to help you come to know the person and work of Jesus so you can see how other portions of the Bible are pointing towards Him. In reading scripture and allowing it to be rooted in us through memorization, meditation, and mental memory we can begin to "know the steps" to living a life of wisdom. Just like surgery can feel confusing and awkward at first, the more you practice the steps, the rhythm of clamping, cutting, and tying can begin to feel like second nature. If we are to become wise people capable of navigating life with a Christlikeness that seems natural, we will have to embrace the formative value of focusing on scripture over our screens each day. **Only when we learn to internalize timeless truths of God's word can we begin to externalize godly behaviors in our time.** Finally, we are not called to manage all this on our own. We have the opportunity through discipleship and community to engage in a deeper experience of the word of God as we flesh out our understanding and application of scripture with people.

Discussion starters

1. What role has reading scripture played in your life up to this point?
2. What barriers do you perceive to reading scripture on a regular basis?
3. Are there portions of scripture or the historical nature by which it was compiled that hinder your devotion to it?
4. When you experience difficult circumstances in life, do biblical principles seem to guide your behavior, or do you feel guided by different ideologies?
5. What habits do you need to start in order to live more fully as a “person of the Book”?

Reading Scripture Supplemental Guide

Life in the 21st Century can be characterized by a frenetic pace that leaves us feeling weighed down and overwhelmed by pressing responsibilities, entertaining opportunities, and smoldering emotions. Knowing that every generation would lack all that it needs for human flourishing, Jesus calls us to pursue knowing him, as it is the only pursuit that offers us the abundant life we desire. He invites us to learn about how he is at work redeeming the world and equips us to join him in making all things new. He beckons us to walk in his ways, especially when we feel heavy laden, because only he can offer us the rest that we need. For all of these things, we are given the gift of Scripture to serve as our guide to know God and the way of life that he, as the Creator of life, has laid out for our good and his glory. So I invite you to take up the daily practice of reading the Bible to learn what the Creator and Sustainer of the world has to teach you.

Regularly studying your Bible is a difficult habit to form, but, once started, it opens us to a path of wisdom that leads to the fullness of life that we seek. We are surrounded by ideas and opinions that beckon our attention. Without conscious effort, our minds are being molded by what is around us. If we want to be people who grow as disciples of Jesus, we must intentionally seek the formative work of being immersed in the Scripture.

Below are several suggestions of ways you can engage with Scripture. It is important to keep in mind that studying the Bible is a commitment that is best pursued slowly, often at a specific time and place each day. Below are different approaches you can use to decide what you are going to read and how to make your study meaningful. Studying the Bible is a lifelong endeavor that will reveal more and more to us as we engage in different forms and content of study.

Four methods of pacing:

1. Narrative arc: Reading long swaths of scripture over time. An example would be reading through the Bible in a year or the gospels in a month. The point of this method of reading is to take in large portions of scripture while looking at themes and gaining understanding of various passages in their broader context.
 1. [The Bible Recap](#) is a podcast that follows a chronological reading plan and can offer further insight after you do your own processing of the text.
 2. [The Bible Project](#) offers summary videos of each book of the Bible that can help you understand the genre, composition, context, and themes as you read. You can use the [Read Scripture App](#) to provide a Bible reading plan with these videos integrated in with the reading.
 3. [Daily BREAD reading from Reality Church San Francisco](#) offers a plan to read through the New Testament slowly over a year. They utilize the BREAD acronym:

1. BE STILL: Find a place where you can encounter God, ask Him to fill the space and then take a minute in stillness.
 2. READ: Read through the passage slowly and look for one verse that stands out, grabs your attention, or interests you.
 3. ENCOUNTER: Take your chosen verse and meditate on it, consider what God might be saying to you.
 4. APPLY: Turn your focus outwards, think about how you might be able to apply this to your day.
 5. DEVOTE: Close by writing a simple prayer of devotion to God.
2. Book-by-book: Slowly covering a particular book of the Bible and accompanying your reading with a commentary or some other substantial piece of work someone has compiled to help explain that individual book. This can be very helpful for understanding the cultural context, historical placement, and theological themes of particular books.
 1. Choose a book of the Bible and use an Observation, Interpretation, Application study method (for further guidance check out: [Village Church resources](#)).
 2. [The Bible Speaks Today](#) series from Intervarsity Press is a helpful commentary series that offers in-depth analysis for educated readers.
 3. Many pastors offer multi-week sermon series on books of the Bible that can serve as a supplement to daily Bible reading. Several resources are available on RightNow Media or via podcasts. Some of my favorite speakers include Tim Keller, JD Greear, Matt Chandler, and Ben Stuart.
 3. Word studies: In-depth look at a major Biblical theme with the use of an online index to find all the passages related to love, prayer, poverty, etc. A reader can process 3 to 4 small passages a day and ultimately work to draw out themes and connections across 100s of passages in the Bible where a particular word is used.
 1. In the past, learners have used large books called “concordances” to do this. With the advent of the Internet, these tools became obsolete.
 2. You may want to consider downloading the Blue Letter Bible app for its helpful resources tracking and understanding the words used in the original language the Bible was written in—either Hebrew or Greek.
 3. [BibleGateway.com](#) and [ESV.com](#) are helpful resources for building a word list and using a print version or digital version to study from.
 4. Scripture memory: memorize books of the Bible or extended passages going at a slow pace of one verse per day. This method of Bible study can help believers deeply meditate on the Word and gain insights through repetition. This practice can be remarkably helpful in prayer, when talking to unbelievers, or counseling our believing friends.
 1. Some books or passages that that are conducive to memorization in a 2-3 month timeframe are Ephesians, James, First Peter, and the Sermon on the Mount.

2. You may want to download a flashcard app or use paper flashcards to help you with memorizing.
3. Dr. Andy Davis at FBC Durham [provides more in-depth information](#) on this practice, but the gist of his method is to memorize one new verse a day, review the older ones each day, and review multiple times a day to have the verse really sink in.

If you don't know where to start.

- Get started with this [30 day Bible Study Guide](#) that provides everything to help you build this habit into your day. In addition to suggested scriptures to study, it offers questions to help you engage with what you are reading.

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Practice 5-Seek Relational Wholeness

I was involved with a thousand deliveries during my OB/GYN residency, but there are a few that I will never forget. One evening, as a woman was laboring and reaching a point of exhaustion, she cried out, "I didn't get into this situation alone, but right now I feel so alone." It felt like a chill went through the room, because we all knew the stark contrast she was highlighting. There is a way that love, marriage, and intimacy are meant to proceed, but when we diverge from this path one or both parties are usually left feeling victimized and alone. Relationships are intended to be encouraging and sanctifying but they become destructive when we selfishly use them to satisfy our own desires or when we depend on them to provide us meaning and fulfillment.

This ideal of mutually edifying relationships stands in sharp contrast with our current cultural narrative that falsely elevates sexual relationships while simultaneously viewing them too casually. We, as Christians walking on the path of apprenticeship to Jesus, find ourselves in a hypersexualized environment in which sexual desire is provoked to entice us to make decisions based on our carnal nature, and sexual identity is dismantled to falsely liberate us into isolated echo chambers of confusion. Jesus offers a better way. God's original intent for creation was for men and women to be in loving and supportive union as his image bearers in the world. Christian community was meant to create loving and supportive environments that facilitated human flourishing apart from marital commitment. For those called to marriage, sexual union was intended to be the natural outworking of the whole-life donation involved in covenanting with someone in self-giving love.

For you now, as students typically in your early twenties, relationships can be difficult. The isolation and hardship which accompany medical training can leave many students feeling cutoff and alone at a time when friends are progressing further in relationships. For others, the hours of studying marked

by a deceptive milieu of stress and boredom can cause some to seek sexual gratification in profile scrolling, pornography, or hooking up. It is also common for those in a relationship to ask the question, "What's the big deal, why should I deny this instinctual drive if I am living up to the cultural standard of a consensual, committed relationship?" No matter where you are on this spectrum, the call for the disciple is the same: trust the path. For those who long for a loving marital relationship, the way of the disciple is to trust in the Lord, surrendering your cares to him because he cares for you. If you are involved in extramarital sexual activity, the call of discipleship is to be faithful to the teachings of Jesus and deny these things of yourself because you believe there is a better way. If you don't believe there is a better way, search out the Scripture, talk with your mentor, and be willing to take an honest look at your choices.

Because your dating relationships, the person you marry, and even your close friendships have a profound impact on your relationship with God and the trajectory of your life, we want to come alongside of you to process how to pursue relationships that build up rather than tear down. We want you to be surrounded by others who spur you on toward Christ and for you to be a person who draws others toward Christ. One of the highest marks of Christian dating is that two individuals can walk together for a while, and if they decide to end the pursuit, both parties are better for it. It takes a Spirit-wrought maturity to live in this way in one's twenties. While the choices we make in regards to sex are only one facet of relationships, they can both reveal and influence whether we are walking in faithful surrender to all God has said. We want to walk with you as you grow in your understanding of the relational wholeness God created you for and the path he designed for your thriving.

Resources

- Tim Keller-Sexuality and Christian Hope (podcast) (YouTube)
- Ben Stuart-The Gift of Singleness sermon
- JD Greear-Why We Should All Be Preparing for Marriage sermon
- Henry Cloud- How to Go from Fantasy to Reality in Your Relationships article
- Matt Chandler-The Long Game sermon
- Jen Wilkins- Kindred Allies sermon

Further Reading

- Ben Stuart-Single, Dating, Engaged, Married: Navigating Life and Love in the Modern Age
- Paul David Tripp-Sex and Money: Pleasures That Leave You Empty and Grace That Satisfies

Discussion Starters

1. After reading the introduction and any related materials, what ideas resonate with you? What do you take issue with?
2. How were you taught about relationships growing up? Were you (are you) guided by mature adults? Did you pick up cues from music and movies? Did you experience negative relationships that you now want to avoid?
3. How does your discipleship to Jesus speak into your sexuality and desire for future relationships? In what ways are you called to surrender and faithfulness in your life?
4. The concept of Christian dating being a focused time of healthy consideration that builds up both people involved has been wonderfully articulated by Ben Stuart in his book *Single. Dating. Engaged. Married.* Has this concept been present in your dating relationships?
5. How can your mentor help you to pursue a life marked by surrender and faithfulness in the arena of relationships?

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Practice 6-Rest as Worship

Perhaps one of the most frustrating elements of our humanity is that we need rest. Dolphins are able to swim with one half of their brains asleep and zebras sleep standing up always prepared to run from a pursuing lion, but we as humans must lay down regularly, be unconscious of the world, and receive the reparative healing of sleep. Rest is woven so deeply into our being that even our heart depends on rest for its own perfusion. You may remember from Cardio/Pulm that during systole the left ventricle sends blood coursing through our arteries, but it is during diastole that it actually perfuses itself. If the rest interval is too short or the surrounding pressures are too great the cardiac tissues become hypoxic and devastation ensues. God has woven rest into the fabric of our existence, but we, in the modern West, and especially in medicine, attempt to live in resistance to that reality. We can often believe two lies when it comes to rest. The first is that we don't need it, and the second is that we know how to find it.

When God gave his people the Law in the wilderness, remembering the Sabbath makes the top 10 list we refer to as the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5). He calls his people to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy, a practice rooted in God's act of resting and delighting in the Creation story. When God gave them this command, the Israelites were not a settled and secure people. In Deuteronomy, they are a weary and tired generation, leaving the wilderness about to face significant struggle with enemies in the land and a real need to work to survive. Despite all this, God establishes rhythms of rest for his people that will set them apart and teach them to rely on him. Students face the temptation to be perpetually productive seeking a few more hours of studying or adding on additional extracurriculars and in so doing deny their need to be renewed and restored by rest. We deceive ourselves that we don't need rest as much as we need success, but because we are opposing our natural wiring, we are sabotaging ourselves. Remarkably, scientific data, productivity gurus, and Biblical wisdom affirm this to be true. Ask any neuroscientist or thoughtfully-minded educator and they will

emphasize how important rest is for your brain's ability to be able to organize, process, and retain information.

You might have heard some of this before, and even tried to institute restful activities into your life, but we can fail to experience all that God intends for us because we often seek rest in things that are not able to restore us. In response to fatigue, we can seek out what John Mark Comer calls escapist behaviors that don't actually renew our souls. I have nothing against the wise consumption of alcohol or subscribing to Netflix, but too often we can feel tired and turn to a bottle of wine and binge watching as a means of being renewed only to wake up more tired and frustrated than we were to start. This second lie leads us to pursue things that feel effortless and cathartic when what we need are rhythms of intentional rest and delight to give us capacity to do all the vital things God has created us for and prepared us to do.

In *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer teaches that Sabbath is intended to “index your heart toward grateful recognition of God’s reality and goodness”. The key words that define what it means to intentionally stop and delight are “rest” and “worship”. This doesn’t mean that you need to have a particular kind of music playing in the background all day or that you do whatever you enjoy for some “me-time”. Instead, it is a conscious choice away from the enslaving pursuits of self-reliant success and satisfaction and towards enjoyment of and trust in God. When you begin to practice this type of intentional rest, a funny thing happens that Sabbath becomes less about the day, and more about a way of life. It involves moving through life with a non-anxious awareness of God’s presence and sufficiency no matter your performance. So what would Sabbath look like for you? Perhaps you need freedom from your phone and all forms of social media, or maybe you need a good FaceTime call with your best friend. Maybe you need 4 hours of silence and solitude, or maybe you will go to church, volunteer during one service, and go to lunch with a group of friends to celebrate God’s goodness through queso. Talk with your mentor and check out some of the resources to explore how you can build this essential practice into your life.

Resources

- Brad Gray- Walking The Text Series on Sabbath
- Beth Broom- A Rest Better Than Vacation (article)
- Dave Lomas- A Community of Rest in a Culture of Exhaustion (sermon)
- John Mark Comer- How to Unhurry-Sabbath (short video) (workbook)

Further Reading

- John Mark Comer- The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry
- A.J. Swaboda- The Subversive Sabbath

Discussion Starters

1. After reading the introduction and any related materials, what ideas resonate with you? What do you take issue with?
2. Have you ever consistently take a day of rest each week? Have you ever seen this modeled in your family or spiritual community?
3. How do you decide how you will spend your time during the week? What do you turn to for rest? What behaviors are you using that seem restful, but perhaps are not?
4. If you were to dedicate an intentional period of time to rest and worship of God, what would this look like for you? What is the next right step you would need to take to grow in this practice as you apprentice to Jesus at this stage in your life?
5. How can your mentor help you to implement this practice into your life?

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Practice 7-Live out a vocation

Most people go to medical school because they want to help people, but let's face it, some seem more capable than others. The president of my class was an incredible man named Gabe who had a brilliant mind, indomitable positivity, and adventurous spirit (he had been on *Survivor* for crying out loud!). I admired Gabe, but something about him always perplexed me. He embodied so many wonderful attributes, which believers would call fruit of the Spirit, yet he had no allegiance to Jesus. Maybe you've met similar colleagues along the way and asked the question, "What does God have for me as a Christian physician if non-believers can do the same thing, maybe even more effectively?" The answer lies in understanding the Christian practice of vocation. It is a common grace that non-believers can be effective doctors, but we as believers are called to so much more.

As disciples following the way of Jesus, each of us has a dual vocation. One is general and the other specific. Every believer is called to fulfill the cultural mandate found at the close of Genesis 1. In striking contrast to the cultural narrative of the Ancient Near East, Genesis describes all humans, not just royalty, as created in the image of God and called to follow in the footsteps of their first parents to "be fruitful and increase in number, to fill the earth and subdue it." Much ink has been spilt over the precise meaning of this mandate, but what is essential to understand is our role as stewards of this world with a calling to expand God's loving will over the created order. N.T. Wright expounds on this reality saying "The main task of this vocation is "image-bearing," reflecting the Creator's wise stewardship into the world and reflecting the praises of all creation back to its maker. Those who do so are the "royal priesthood," the "kingdom of priests," the people who are called to stand at the dangerous but exhilarating point where heaven and earth meet." [1] How would your days in the library or on the wards be different if it felt like you were fulfilling a priestly role at the exhilarating point where heaven and earth meet?

For us now as followers of Jesus living after the resurrection, that is precisely our primary vocation. If you follow the imagery of the temple throughout Scripture, what began as a cosmic temple in the garden of Eden and then was built as an edifice in Jerusalem has now become true of believers who are the dwelling place of God by the Spirit. Learning to practice vocation begins as we meditate on this reality and seek to embody it in the places where we live.

This does not mean that every follower of Jesus ought to pursue occupations typically deemed "ministry" such as pastoring or serving as a missionary. The second component of the practice of vocation is for us to learn to carry out the first component in our individual sphere of influence. Learning to steward dominion in our roles as physicians requires firstly that we not be dominated by the profession. If we root our identity and sense of purpose in the profession of medicine, it will surely exhaust us. If we whole heartedly bring the first aspect of vocation, our role as image-bearers, into our work as physicians, the possibilities are inexhaustible. We have a tendency to over-identify with our jobs, being prone to practice the cultural ideology of careerism defined as "an idolatrous overemphasis on work, such that we look to our job as the core place for spiritual and emotional fulfillment. There is a tendency in a mind shaped by careerism to see our performance in our profession as justifying our existence." [2] In practicing vocation, we intentionally seek to have our mind shaped by Biblical wisdom instead of cultural trends. We form our internal world by practicing the way of Jesus and learn to joyfully engage with our career striving to see it as a means of blessing the world. In so doing, we strive to pursue work that is done well, motivated by love, guided by a biblical worldview to expand God's dominion over sickness and despair. "It is in this pursuit that we will find our labor is not in vain (1 Cor 15) and that every good endeavor, even the simplest ones, pursued in response to God's calling, can matter forever." [3] Practicing vocation is not a one-time decision, but a habit we take up to renew our minds daily as we build a healthy lifestyle which includes our jobs, but is not defined by them. In the practice, we can glimpse our priestly profession to mediate the presence of God, to experience it in our own lives and carry it with us as we engage in the days that become our life.

Resources

- Connecting Your Faith to Your Work- Matt Chandler ([4 minute video](#))
- Redefining Work-Tim Keller ([YouTube sermon](#))
- What Makes Our Work Christian-J.D. Greear ([audio sermon](#))

References

1. Wright NT. The day the revolution began: reconsidering the meaning of Jesus's crucifixion. First Edition. San Francisco: HarperOne; 2016.
2. A Community of Contribution in a Culture of Careerism-Genesis 1:26-28 03.21.2021 Future Church series at Reality SF preached by Matt Barrios <https://realitysf.com/category/series/future-church/?audio=16573>
3. Keller T, Alsdorf KL. Every good endeavor: connecting your work to God's work. 2016.

Discussion Starters

1. After reading the introduction and any related materials, what ideas resonate with you? What do you take issue with?
2. How were the concepts of career, work, vocation etc taught or modeled to you growing up? How did this early exposure effect your desire to enter medical school?
3. Prior to this discussion, how would you have articulated your vocation as a Christian? Do you tend to see yourself (perhaps functionally if not intentionally) as a student/doctor first and Christian second?
4. How would your habits, thoughts, activities be different if you committed to practicing vocation? What about this practice still seems abstract?
5. How can your mentor help you to develop an intentional practice of vocation?

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Practice 8-Live generously

When I first visited Kenya as a college student and walked the dirt roads of the rural village we came to serve, I was overwhelmed with a deep awareness of the crushing weight of poverty and the enormity of God's love for the world. Many of us experience an awakening to the plight of the majority world as we are coming of age or coming to faith. Experiencing the depths of material need in the world and trying to process those disparities in communication with our faith causes many of us to feel helpless and uncertain about how to live. We encounter Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler and reflexively infer that we are expected to sell our possessions and take on a life of poverty if we are to follow Jesus. Many Christians have made that decision throughout history and some of you may be called to make a similar choice. If you carefully follow the narratives in the New Testament you will find that Jesus and his early disciples did not mandate poverty as a universal Christian lifestyle. In fact, the church spread throughout the Roman world meeting in homes of wealthy people capable of hosting large gatherings, through churches supporting each other in times of need (Rom 15:26), and donors supporting missionary endeavors. Even Jesus enjoyed fancy dinners every now and then and had no problem being in close enough relationship with Joseph of Arimathea to be buried in his costly family tomb. Thankfully he didn't need to stay there long.

Becoming a physician opens up the opportunity for access to significant wealth. But what is a disciple of Jesus to do? The apostle Paul addressed the issue of wealthy Christians advising his protege, Timothy, to teach the rich "not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." [1] (1 Tim 6)

The whole point of Christian discipleship is to take hold of that which is truly life. True life as defined by Jesus, not by the "American Dream". In John 17, the

only time Jesus ever defines eternal life, he says "This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Our experience of eternal life this side of the grave involves an intimate knowledge of God that permeates our heart, mind, and soul and exudes out of us in an abundant life as we follow the teachings of Jesus. As educated believers in a postmodern, secular age we long to have our knowledge of God feel deep, intimate, and tangible. Jesus taught that when we are generous to those in need we are literally encountering him, if we have the heart to see it. Meditate on Jesus' description of the final judgment in Matthew 25. In the message, he speaks to a hypothetical group of people who are perplexed by Jesus' recognition that they have served him in this life by providing for the poor. They ask "Lord, when did we do these things for you?" Jesus responds "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." (Mt 25:40)

Learning to live as a disciple of Jesus means we must wrestle with how we practically manifest the teachings of Jesus in our life. We are invited to do good works and be generous and in doing so we worship the God who is present in and with the poor. Such a relationship with money runs counter to our American desires and general understanding of "the good life." Practicing generosity involves giving away significant amounts of money as a way of blessing others and liberating yourself from the undercurrent of consumption we all experience. A 2015 study analyzed philanthropic giving, reporting that only 8-9% of earners with physician-level incomes give to charity, and those that do give on average 3.4% of their income away. If as a practicing physician you compare your way of life with your peers, it becomes apparent that giving away thousands of dollars, amounting to a tithe of your income annually, will seem outrageously generous. Going beyond a traditional tithe to meet other needs in your community and around the world will require an intentional practice of loosening your grip on the wealth God has entrusted you with. Search out with God and wise guidance what breaks your heart and His, dream and think practically about how you may use your wealth to minister to that issue. In doing so, you may see Jesus and know life that is richer than you ever imagined.

Resources

- Everyday Discipleship: Matthew 6:19-21, 24 on Generosity-Damein Schitter ([audio link](#))
- A Community of Justice in a Culture of Consumerism and Careerism-Dave Lomas Reality San Francisco ([audio/video/podcast link](#))
- Foundations of Christian Stewardship from Sound Mind Investing ([article link](#))

Further Reading

- God and Money by John Cortines and Gregory Baumer ([Amazon link](#))

References

1. (The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (1 Ti 6:17-19). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)
2. Who Gives Most to Charity? Philanthropy Roundtable. <https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/statistics/who-gives> Accessed Dec 1, 2021.

Discussion Starters

1. After reading the introduction and any related materials, what ideas resonate with you? What do you take issue with?
2. How were you taught about money and giving growing up? Were you guided by mature adults? Did you pick up cues from culture around you? Are you naturally a saver or spender?
3. Read over the extended passages in 1 Timothy 6 and Matthew 25. What teaching stands out to you? What questions do these passages raise for you?
4. What does generosity look like in this season of life? What dreams/plans do you have for being generous in the future?
5. How can your mentor help you take practical steps now to develop a mindset that delights in generosity, both now and in the future?

The first and most basic thing we can and must do is to keep God before our minds. David knew this secret and wrote, "I keep the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure" (Psalm 16:8-9).

This is the fundamental secret of caring for our souls. Our part in this practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to Him. In the early time of our practicing, we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits—not the law of gravity—and can be broken. A new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north, no matter how the compass is moved. If God is the great longing of our souls, He will become the polestar of our inward beings. . . .

Dallas Willard The Great Omission

