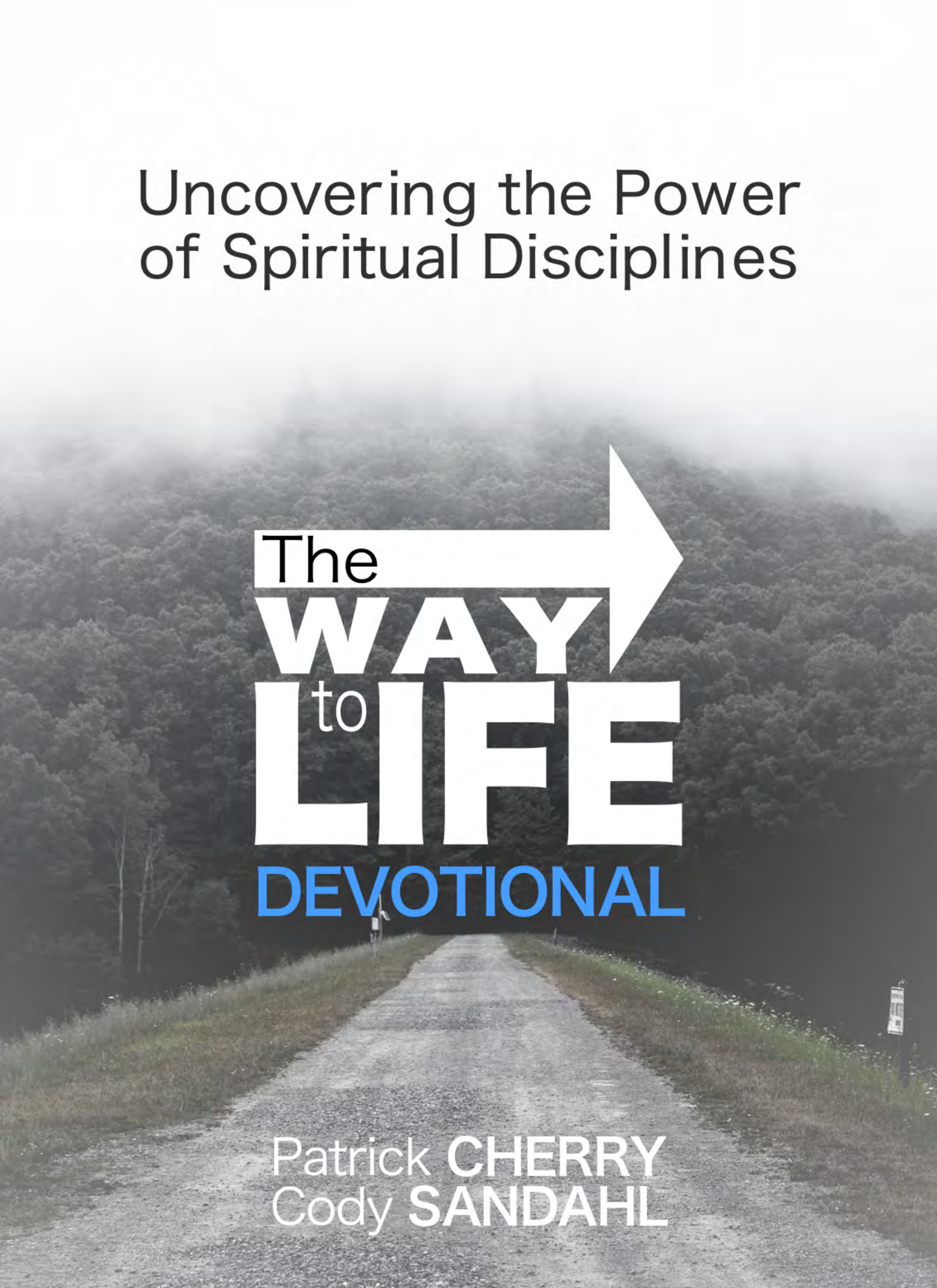



# Uncovering the Power of Spiritual Disciplines



The  
**WAY**   
to  
**LIFE**  
**DEVOTIONAL**

Patrick CHERRY  
Cody SANDAHL

# **The Way to Life:** **Devotional**

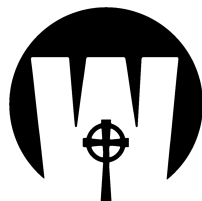
By

Patrick Cherry  
Cody Sandahl

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Patrick and Cody met while attending seminary in Austin, Texas. They became fast friends once they noted their shared interests in technology, science fiction, and other nerdy pursuits (*though Cody is by far the more nerdy of the two!*) Their interest in technology and faith made for an interesting combination at times. On one occasion they joined forces for a World Religion class project. Apparently a multimedia presentation, that would have been a fairly easy A, was too easy so they decided to make a video game for their project. Far too many hours were spent on this "simple" project. They got the A but you will not likely ever see that game in stores near you!

This friendship that began in school extended beyond these early years as they found two beautiful women that they married and both started families (both with two sons a piece!) Ministry can be a lonely and stressful call, but having a trusted brother and friend can make all the difference.

Patrick and Cody remain close friends at a distance. They may be known to write sarcastic text messages back in forth with bad puns and irreverent humor. They continue to join forces, as they tend to plan sermon series together and projects such as this, relying on Cody's intellect and Patrick's creativity.

Yet be assured, beyond the banter and nerdy interests are two brothers in Christ who love Jesus, see great hope for Christ's Church, and are passionate about their call to point people to the coming Kingdom of God.



## INTRODUCTION

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. | **John 14:6 (ESV)**

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. | **John 10:10b (ESV)**

We live in a culture preoccupied with death. In particular, we are obsessed with avoiding, eluding, and cheating death. **Yet, there is a big difference between living life and escaping death.** But what does it look like to live life?

In sharp contrast with death, Jesus presents himself as a way to life. He even goes as far to say that he came that we might live life and live it to the fullest. His point is further accentuated in light of His resurrection on Easter. In Jesus, through Jesus, and because of Jesus, He has conquered death, the absence of life, with his abundant life. If this is all true, drawing closer to Jesus is the only real way to experience a life overflowing. So how do we draw closer to Jesus?

In his seminal book, ***Celebration of Discipline***, Richard Foster takes an extensive look into the classic practices of spiritual disciplines. Today, these common disciplines are often overlooked or considered too legalistic and antiquated. Yet, might we be overlooking some age-old wisdom? In the beginning of his book, Foster shares, ***"The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths."*** Could it be that Jesus' offer to live an abundant life is a call to live deep?

Spiritual disciplines may not save us and frankly, they can be challenging to commit to do (*hence the name discipline*), BUT they are a worthy pursuit in the Christian life. Why? Foster speaks to the purpose of scriptural disciplines when he states, **"We must always remember that the path does not produce the change; it only places us where the change can occur. This is the path of disciplined grace."** This change happens at the feet of Jesus!

Will you join with us on a spiritual journey through these ancient disciplines? Each week we will highlight a different discipline and invite you to commit to practicing that discipline for that entire week. At times, it may be challenging and be forewarned, you may never be the same...such is the experience when we discover the WAY TO LIFE that is Jesus!

**GRACE & PEACE,**  
Patrick Cherry  
(& Cody Sandahl too!)



## Week 1 | WORSHIP



### PONDER

**28** Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.<sup>2</sup> Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it.<sup>3</sup> His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow.<sup>4</sup> The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.<sup>5</sup> Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.<sup>6</sup> He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying.<sup>7</sup> And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you."<sup>8</sup> The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message.<sup>9</sup> And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him.<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there." | [Matthew 28:1-10 \(NLT\)](#)

**34** Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism.<sup>35</sup> In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right.<sup>36</sup> This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.<sup>37</sup> You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee, after John began preaching his message of baptism.<sup>38</sup> And you know that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.<sup>39</sup> "And we apostles are witnesses of all he did throughout Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a cross,<sup>40</sup> but God raised him to life on the third day. Then God allowed him to appear,<sup>41</sup> not to the general public, but to us whom God had chosen in advance to be his witnesses. We were those who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.<sup>42</sup> And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of all—the living and the dead.<sup>43</sup> He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name." | [Matthew 14:6-14 \(NLT\)](#)

**POINT**

We begin with the most popular discipline, yet arguably, it is also one of the least understood in today's culture. Worship is simply a human response to God's divine work, but is God always the object of our worship? I (Patrick) more often hear people discussing what they got from the service of worship. People shop around for churches that meet their spiritual hunger. Don't get me wrong, there are plenty of places of worship that stray from biblical truth and the people suffer, but worship is not primarily about us, what we might receive, or our personal preferences. Worship is not about getting our fix, a perfect attendance sheet, or just something that sometimes fits into our family calendar. Worship is about our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sustainer. Worship is a response to the goodness of God already at work in our lives. We spend most of our time focused on our own pursuits, but in worship we abandon self to turn our attention wholly upon our Triune God! Worship is so much more than an hour plus of our time on a Sunday and we can worship every moment, but if we are honest, do we really worship God in every moment and with every breath? Do we worship God during our morning commute when we get cutoff in traffic? Do we worship when our kids are trying our patience? Do we worship when the frustration, heartache, and sickness set in? This is why a weekly time, routinely set aside for worship is so important! Can you really claim to love Jesus if you spurn His bride the Church and fail to join with her in worship?

**PRACTICE**

- **Priority** | Perhaps you do not worship with your faith family regularly. What would it look like to commit to going every week (*or at least increasing your frequency*) by making it a priority in your schedule? Perhaps you are a regular attender, but it has become more about checking off a to-do or a search for what you can get out of it. What might it look like to make God the priority and not yourself? Have you yet to commit to a particular congregation? Worship is not intended to be a drop-in and fly-out affair. Worship draws us into the presence of God and into God's adopted family. We can worship alone, but worshipping God draws us toward others in committed relationships that nurture God's spirit within us. For the remainder of this series (*and hopefully beyond*), what would it look like to make worship a priority in your life?
- **Prep** | We prepare for important things and events. We even prepare for our day by brushing our teeth and getting ready. Do you prepare for worship? We live fast passed and distracted lives, so far too often our minds and hearts are not in the best place to worship. This can be a challenge in our busy schedules (*especially if children are involved!*), but there are lots of things we can do to prepare for worship. Many pastors share the Scripture focus for each worship service ahead of time (*I know this is the case for both of our churches because we plan months ahead together!*) Perhaps you can spend time each day reflecting on the passage for that coming Sunday. Might you come a little earlier before worship to sit in silence and quiet your soul? What are some ways that might help you prepare?
- **Participation** | We often miss understand the term worship *services* and begin to treat worship as a commodity or service rendered for us. Worship should ultimately inspire us to step out into our world to serve. What might it look like to begin by more actively participating in worship? Sing a little louder or join the choir/band. Take notes during Scripture reading and during the message. Volunteer to serve as a worship leader/liturgist. What might this look like for you?

**PRAYER**

**Lord, I'm coming back to the heart of worship, for it is all about you. I am truly sorry for the thing I made it, for it is all about you, and only you. AMEN.** \*adapted from "Heart of Worship" by Matt Redman

## Week 2 | PRAYER



### PONDER

<sup>15</sup> But despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. <sup>16</sup> But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. | [Luke 5:15-16 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

<sup>7</sup> "When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. <sup>8</sup> Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! <sup>9</sup> Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. <sup>10</sup> May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> Give us today the food we need, <sup>12</sup> and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. <sup>13</sup> And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. | [Matthew 6:5-13 \(NLT\)](#)

### POINT

Imagine in your mind what prayer looks like. Got it in your imagination? What does your imagined prayer look like? Typically, we imagine prayer with head bowed, hands clasped together, eyes shut, while we either silently or in whispered tones lob petitions in God's general direction.

But there are many ways to pray. Wayne Cordeiro, pastor of New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu, defined prayer as "thinking about something God has asked you to do in the presence of the Lord." Read that again and think about it.

I (Cody) have a hard time sitting down, head bowed, hands clasped, and eyes shut. My mind wanders pretty rapidly. But I often check in with God to see how he wants to lead me. It might not look like much, and the person sitting across from me at Panera might not notice that I'm praying, but that is a form of prayer.

How do you pray? How do you check in with God? It might not look like the prototypical prayer position, but perhaps you have a different way of praying.

### PRACTICE

- **Visual Prayer**
  - Think of a moment recently where you felt God was far away. Recreate that moment in your imagination as vividly as possible. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you smell? What did you feel? Why did you feel that God was far away?
  - Think of a moment recently where you felt God was very near. Recreate that moment in your imagination as vividly as possible. How did you know God was near?
- **Ripple Prayer**
  - Expand your circle of prayer like a ripple expanding out on the water. Pray for yourself and your family. Pray for your friends and co-workers. Pray for your church. Pray for your city. Pray for your state. Pray for your country. Pray for people around the world.
- **Bodily Prayer**
  - Try praying in a different body position than your normal routine.
  - Praise: eyes open, head and arms lifted toward heaven.
  - Confession: lay down on the floor or a bed, head down, and with your legs and hands make the shape of the cross
  - Walking: try walking slowly in a circle as you pray, or some other walking pattern

### PRAYER

**Loving God, we desperately want to know you on a personal level. Help us to open the lines of communication with you. Help us to speak what we need to say, and help us to hear what you need to say. Amen.**

## Week 3 | **FASTING**



### **PONDER**

<sup>16</sup> “And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. <sup>18</sup> Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. | [Matthew 6:16-18 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry. <sup>3</sup> Then the devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread.” <sup>4</sup> But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone.’” | [Luke 4:1-4 \(NLT\)](#)

### **POINT**

Fasting is essentially depriving yourself of something you need for the purpose of increasing your connection with the Holy Spirit. A fast doesn't have to be complete. Some people fast from every food except for crackers, or from every liquid except for water. You can also fast from just a single meal. While food is usually the object of a fast, there are other ways to deprive yourself.

Most importantly, a fast is a spiritual activity rather than a dieting activity. The whole point isn't to draw attention to yourself (as Jesus points out in Matthew 6), the point is to connect with God. Jesus also highlights that the more we let people know that we're fasting, and the more we talk about the spiritual topic on which we are seeking direction, the less effective the fast will be for those spiritual purposes.

### **PRACTICE**

- **Step 1: Choose a Spiritual Purpose**
  - Perhaps you are seeking guidance on an issue, or perhaps it is simply seeking a connection to hear what God has to say to you. Whatever it is, write down your spiritual purpose.
- **Step 2: Choose a Fasting Format**
  - Will this be a total food fast? Will there be any liquids or solids still allowed? Will you fast for a single meal every day or fast for the entire day? Write down the details of your fast.
- **Step 3: Choose a Prayer Method**
  - How will connect your hunger/deprivation to your spiritual purpose? What prayer will you say when you would otherwise be eating? Write down your spiritual connection or prayer.
- **Step 4: Choose an End Point**
  - When will your fast be complete? How will you know if you have heard from the Holy Spirit? Write down when you will finish and how you will check in with yourself to see if you received the guidance or direction you sought in Step 1.

### **PRAYER**

**Holy God, we know in our heads that we depend on you for every bite of food, every drop of water, every thread of clothing, and even the air we breathe. As we remove something important for a time, remind us of our deep dependence on you. Help us to hear your guidance as often as we are hungry or thirsty. Amen.**

## Week 4 | MEDITATION



### PONDER

<sup>24</sup> “When an evil spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, searching for rest. But when it finds none, it says, ‘I will return to the person I came from.’ <sup>25</sup> So it returns and finds that its former home is all swept and in order. <sup>26</sup> Then the spirit finds seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before.”

<sup>27</sup> As he was speaking, a woman in the crowd called out, “God bless your mother—the womb from which you came, and the breasts that nursed you!”

<sup>28</sup> Jesus replied, “But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.” | [Luke 11:24-28 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> But at a birthday party for Herod, Herodias's daughter performed a dance that greatly pleased him, <sup>7</sup> so he promised with a vow to give her anything she wanted. <sup>8</sup> At her mother's urging, the girl said, “I want the head of John the Baptist on a tray!” <sup>9</sup> Then the king regretted what he had said; but because of the vow he had made in front of his guests, he issued the necessary orders. <sup>10</sup> So John was beheaded in the prison, <sup>11</sup> and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. <sup>12</sup> Later, John's disciples came for his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened.

<sup>13</sup> As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns. <sup>14</sup> Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. | [Matthew 14:6-14 \(NLT\)](#)

## POINT

What comes to mind when you think of meditation? I (Patrick) would be surprised if you did not think of a Buddhist monk or your yoga instructor at your local gym. Meditation is most often considered an Eastern religious practice, but there is such a thing as Christ-centered meditation. There are some distinct differences. Eastern mediation is most often the practice of emptying oneself, while Christ-centered meditation is quite the opposite. It is the practice of filling oneself with the very presence of God!

It would be easy to confuse meditation and prayer, but, while very similar, they have a different function. While prayer is a spiritual conversation, meditation is more of a listening. Richard Foster notes, "Human being seem to have a perpetual tendency to have somebody else talk to God for them. We are content to have the message secondhand." We trust pastors, priests, and others to translate God's will for us instead of going to the source ourselves. Meditation is the act of quieting your mind to return to the source.

## PRACTICE

For the next week commit to finding a regular time to meditate using one of the following techniques (*use a timer to so that you will have no need to stare at a watch, clock, or phone*):

- **Meditate on Scripture** | Pick a small passage of Scripture (*such as Psalms 33:6-12*) and spend 30-minutes each day quietly reflecting on this one passage by reading it, reciting it, and memorizing it.
- **Re-collection** | Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Begin by placing your palms down as a symbolic indication of your desire to turn over any concerns you may have to God. Begin by inwardly giving over fears, concerns, anger by releasing them to God (*Example "Lord, I give to you my anger toward John. I surrender my anxiety over all my bills."*) After several moments of surrender, turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord. Spend a few moments asking God what you would like to receive. (*Example "Lord, may I receive love for John. Lord, may I receive the assurance of my trust in you."*) After this spend the remainder of your time in silence before God.
- **Creation Meditation** | Find a quiet place where you can sit silently with no distraction to watch nature and God's created order. Contemplate the design of each flower, each tree, each bird, and every creature. Consider the majesty of God's design.

## PRAYER

End each day's meditation with the following selection from the Prayer of Saint Patrick:

**Christ shield me today against wounding  
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me.**



## Week 5 | CELEBRATION



### PONDER

<sup>9</sup> "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup> When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! <sup>12</sup> This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup> I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. <sup>16</sup> You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. <sup>17</sup> This is my command: Love each other. | [John 15:9-17 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

<sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. <sup>9</sup> Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. | [Philippians 4:4-9 \(NLT\)](#)

### POINT

Out of all the disciplines we are covering, I (Patrick) would bet this was the one you least expected! Church is not often synonymous with celebration. Perhaps that points to a deep need within our communities. Augustine of Hippo famously wrote *"The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot!"* A full grasp of the good news of Jesus is something worth celebrating. Lives being rearranged, redeemed, restored, and resurrected through the powerful love of Jesus is truly amazing to witness. It doesn't help that we "frozen chosen" Presbyterians have earned a more stoic image and are not known for being very charismatic. Hand raising is tough to do when your hands have only been trained to extend up far enough to hold a hymnal and no further! How do we find this joy that causes us to celebrate? Richard Foster believes that true joy in God can only be found in obedience. The more thought I give it, the more truth it proclaims. God has designed a holy way for us to live. It was not designed for us, be we for it! When we fall outside of God's will and disobey we throw our lives out of alignment. As my chiropractor often explains, a few things out of alignment in your spine have a way of affecting many more things than just your back. Our obedience to God is like that. But our obedience is not just a list of do not's or a cause for us to take ourselves too seriously. Humor and laughter should play a prominent role in our churches. Finding ways to celebrate God's good work in exciting ways is a good thing. But it starts with you. What do you have to celebrate? In what ways is God calling you to be more obedient? How can you celebrate those successes when you follow God's call?

### PRACTICE

- **Celebration Journal** | Perhaps you can start a small journal this week and commit for only a week to catalogue every conscious blessing you can bring to mind. Add this discipline to your daily prayers and meditation. You can even add to your list throughout the day as blessings come to mind. Perhaps noting all these blessings will build your appreciation for our active God and therefore, urge you to be more obedient to His daily call. Joy comes in our obedience to God and aligning our lives with His design.
- **Celebration Dinner** | Celebrating is something that is meant to be done with others. Perhaps you can join around the dinner table every evening this week with your family or friends and take turn sharing your blessings. You could even designate each evening for a different family blessing. Think of ways to make it special. A cupcake or two (or three or four) wouldn't hurt. Just make sure to compensate with an after dinner walk!
- **Celebrating Worship** | How is your church at celebrating? Are there things, ministries, or people that are being missed? Are there creative ways to celebrate things in different and new ways? Ponder these questions and consider sharing them with your pastor or worship leadership. Better yet, join the team/committee and help stoke creativity. Be kind and joyful in your sharing and be the first to applaud everything that is done well. A kind word can go a long way!

### PRAYER

**Lord, when I ponder your goodness I am overwhelmed. When I consider your love I am filled with joy. Help give me eyes to see your blessings all around. Make straight my path before you and send your Spirit to convict me to remain in your ways. May your boundless grace never cease and the celebration continue from this day into eternity. AMEN**

## Week 6 | SOLITUDE



### PONDER

<sup>35</sup>Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. <sup>36</sup>Later Simon and the others went out to find him. <sup>37</sup>When they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you." <sup>38</sup>But Jesus replied, "We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came." <sup>39</sup>So he traveled throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons. | [Mark 1:35-39 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>9</sup>There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the Lord said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>10</sup>Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too." <sup>11</sup>"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" | [1 Kings 19:9-13 \(NLT\)](#)

### POINT

Solitude is often a blessing to the introverts and a discipline for the extroverts, but we all sometimes need to be alone to truly hear what the Lord is saying. We see in the Scriptures above that Jesus prayed alone, and we see that the prophet Elijah needed to be alone on the mountain to be able to talk honestly with God.

The great college coach John Wooden once said, "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are...the true test of a man's character is what he does when no one is watching." Solitude is an opportunity to practice your faith when no one is watching except your Maker. No one will praise you. No one will commend your faithfulness. Because no one will know.

### PRACTICE

- Find a time and place where you can be truly alone. If you have to do it in your house and you have a family, ask for a set amount of uninterrupted time. Turn off your phone. Leave the computer and TV off. Disconnect. Ask, like Elijah, for God to show up.
- Go for a walk in nature. Let the Creation around you speak of God's character. Try to find God in the "gentle whisper" as Elijah did.

### PRAYER

**Ever-present God, we confess that we rely on praise and attention from others. Help us to practice our faith even when no one is looking. Help us to connect with you directly, not just through other people. Amen.**

## Week 7 | SERVICE



### PONDER

<sup>43</sup>Awe gripped the people as they saw this majestic display of God's power.

While everyone was marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, <sup>44</sup>"Listen to me and remember what I say. The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies." <sup>45</sup>But they didn't know what he meant. Its significance was hidden from them, so they couldn't understand it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

<sup>46</sup>Then his disciples began arguing about which of them was the greatest. <sup>47</sup>But Jesus knew their thoughts, so he brought a little child to his side. <sup>48</sup>Then he said to them, "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me also welcomes my Father who sent me. Whoever is the least among you is the greatest."

<sup>49</sup>John said to Jesus, "Master, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he isn't in our group."

<sup>50</sup>But Jesus said, "Don't stop him! Anyone who is not against you is for you." | [Luke 9:43-50 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. <sup>2</sup> It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. <sup>4</sup> So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, <sup>5</sup> and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

<sup>12</sup> After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing?" <sup>13</sup> You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. <sup>14</sup> And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them. | [John 13:1-5, 12-17 \(NLT\)](#)

## POINT

A called to become a disciple is a call to serve. When you think of modern heroes of the faith, who comes to mind? Perhaps one of the most endearing figures of our time is that of Mother Teresa. She may have died back in 1997, but the legacy of her ministry in Calcutta lives on. In her book Love: A Fruit Always in Season she says, "*Faith in action is love-and love in action is service.*" By its very nature, faith is meant to be active and the church out in the world, serving the world. One of my (Patrick's) favorite quotes from Emil Brunner is, "*The church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning!*" Our active work in the world and in our communities is essential to our walk of faith. But we must be careful to mind our motives. A lot of good acts are done to self-promote or make us feel better about ourselves. We would do well to note what made Teresa so compelling. Her fame came not from her efforts to be famous, but by people noting the power of her simple life focuses on serving others. True service is focuses on the need of the other and not on us. Many of the truest acts of service are done in quiet. Where are the needs in your neighborhood, community, and city or town? How might you take up your cross and follow Jesus as a suffering servant? If the God of the entire universe stepped down from heaven to serve, might we also step out to serve?

## PRACTICE

This one is as straightforward as a discipline can be. Consider some ways you would like to serve others in your community.

- **Service Project** | Pick a small or big project to do out in your community this weekend. Help a neighbor in need with yard work or project. Volunteer at a soup kitchen. Volunteer with a tutoring program. Offer to wash your pastor's car (*okay, that one is wishful thinking but it would be appreciated and I won't even give you credit...to keep you humble of course!*)
- **Random Acts of Quiet Kindness** | This can be done in a variety of forms. Pay for the person behind you in line at the drive-thru. Or become a neighborhood sleuth and figure out a particular need of one of your neighbors you do not know very well. Based on their need, buy or build them a needed gift, but leave it on their doorstep with no note giving you credit. The key is not in the randomness, as you can plan. The key is in the quiet kindness. When we receive credit for our service, we still serve ourselves.

## PRAYER

**Father, Allow me to serve others with a joyful heart;  
 Never keeping score; Always giving; Never expecting to receive.  
 Allow me to give of myself, To give of my talents and of my goods,  
 To give of my time and of my energy, To give of my heart and of my soul.  
 Help me understand the needs of others, Never criticizing, Never demeaning,  
 Never scolding, Never condemning. You have been so gracious to me,  
 Always Loving, Always forgiving, Always restoring; Never gloating over my defeats,  
 Even when I have been so wrong. Father, keep a condemning spirit  
 Far from my heart and further from my lips. Allow me to serve others as You serve,  
 With gentleness, compassion, and tenderness, Never diminishing the worth of another,  
 Choosing to extend mercy to the brokenhearted, Like You have repeatedly shown it to me,  
 Amen.** —Jack Watts in his blog [Pushing Jesus](https://pushingjesus.wordpress.com/2010/07/26/a-prayer-about-serving-others/) <https://pushingjesus.wordpress.com/2010/07/26/a-prayer-about-serving-others/>

## Week 8 | SUBMISSION



### PONDER

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. <sup>25</sup> If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. <sup>26</sup> And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. | [Matthew 16:24-27 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

<sup>5</sup> You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. <sup>6</sup> Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. <sup>7</sup> Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave<sup>1</sup> and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, | [Philippians 2:4-7 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. <sup>4</sup> And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

<sup>13</sup> But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. <sup>15</sup> These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. <sup>16</sup> No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike— and they will prophesy. <sup>19</sup> And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below—blood and fire and clouds of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives. <sup>21</sup> But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' | [Acts 2:1-4, 13-21, \(NLT\)](#)

## POINT

The great Reformer Martin Luther once said, "*A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.*" Others might add that everyone has a master, so who do you serve? How might you set aside your pride to kneel before others? Do a simple Google search for the word submission in scripture and study what you find.

## PRACTICE

The practical outflow of submission will primarily be found in our prior discipline of service, but Richard Foster in *Celebration of Disciple* invites us to consider seven spheres of submission:

- **The first act of submission is to the Triune God.** We should begin each day submitting our will for this day to the will of our creator. We should surrender each evening to God in prayer as we reflect upon the day.
- **The second act of submission is to the Scripture.** If we are to submit and commit to the living incarnate Word, Jesus, we must also submit to the written Word. Is Scripture reading a part of your daily routine? What might it look like to memorize Scripture throughout the day?
- **The third act of submission is to our family.** The call to serve and submit often begins in our own home. How can you submit to the needs of your spouse and serve them in small ways without comment or sigh. How might you serve your children or friends?
- **The fourth act of submission is to our neighbors.** Who is your neighbor? Your neighbor lives next to you, but also encounters you throughout your day. How can you serve your neighbor? Share food. Offer free baby-sitting. Mow their lawn.
- **The fifth act of submission is to the believing community, the body of Christ.** Are you involved in the ministry at your church? Sadly, very few often do the bulk of the ministry in a church. How can you step up to serve and submit to God in doing so? Are you being called into leadership? Are you being called to join a team or committee? Are you being called to serve in some other capacity?
- **The sixth act of submission is to the broken and despised.** The world is full of people in need. Who are the underserved in your community? Who are the forgotten? Find ministries serving these individuals. Research local resources such as Bridges out of Poverty to learn more.
- **The seventh act of submission is to the world.** We are citizens of heaven, but we still live in the world. Our world is interconnected. Oceans and boundaries may divide us, but we all share the human condition. Consider how you can pray for the world.

## PRAYER

**Make me a captive, Lord, And then I shall be free; Force me to render up my sword, And I shall conqueror be. I sink in life's alarms When by myself I stand; Imprison me within Thine arms, And strong shall be my hand. AMEN** \* [George Matheson - Hymns for](#)

[Worship \(Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1963\), p. 248.](#)



## Week 9 | STUDY



### PONDER

<sup>1</sup>And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup>Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

<sup>3</sup>Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. <sup>4</sup>Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, <sup>5</sup>so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

<sup>6</sup>In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. <sup>7</sup>If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. <sup>8</sup>If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly. | [Romans 12:1-8 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>23</sup>"What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." <sup>24</sup>The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!" | [Mark 9:23-24 \(NLT\)](#)

## POINT

I (Cody) still remember the title of our Theology textbook from seminary: ***Faith Seeking Understanding***. The title is meant to convey a very important point. We start from a place of faith. We believe, even if we don't understand everything. From that place of faith we can try to understand more fully. Like the father of the sick child in Mark 9, we believe, but we need Jesus' help to overcome our unbelief.

Some people might have understanding seeking faith – they know a lot but don't know if they believe that Jesus is God. It is very difficult to study your way to faith. Others might have faith without understanding – they have a powerful emotional connection with God but don't know how to apply it to their life.

We are called to have both – faith seeking understanding.

## PRACTICE

- **Observation, Interpretation, Application**
  - Read a passage in the Bible. If you don't know where to look, try Matthew 28:16-20.
  - First, write down what you Observe – who is speaking, what are they saying, where are they physically, etc. These are the “what” and “how” questions.
  - Second, write down what you think it means. Why did the person say what they said, did what they did, etc. These are the “why” questions.
  - Finally, write down how this could apply to your life in the coming days or weeks. How could your decisions be different as a result of this passage. These are the “so what” questions.
- Go to **<http://www.openbible.info/topics/>** and type in a topic. Maybe you want to know what the Bible says about marriage, or God's purpose for you, etc. Read through the Bible passages, ask God for guidance, and then write down what you've learned and what you could do about it.

## PRAYER

**Almighty God, You are the curator of the soul, the guardian of the heart, and master of the mind. Renew my mind and cultivate within me a curiosity for Your Word and Your creation. Guide me with wisdom into the assurance of Your love. AMEN**

## Week 10 | SIMPLICITY



### PONDER

<sup>10</sup> How I praise the Lord that you are concerned about me again. I know you have always been concerned for me, but you didn't have the chance to help me. <sup>11</sup> Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. <sup>12</sup> I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. <sup>13</sup> For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength. <sup>14</sup> Even so, you have done well to share with me in my present difficulty.

<sup>15</sup> As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. <sup>16</sup> Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. <sup>17</sup> I don't say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness.

<sup>18</sup> At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> Now all glory to God our Father forever and ever! Amen. | [Philippians 4:10-20 \(NLT\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. <sup>3</sup> "Take nothing for your journey," he instructed them. "Don't take a walking stick, a traveler's bag, food, money, or even a change of clothes. | [Luke 9:2-3 \(NLT\)](#)

### POINT

The jig was up. I (Cody) was discovered. After almost a year of anonymity, my basketball group finally figured out I was in seminary to become a pastor. As per usual, they first said, "I'm so sorry for cursing in front of you." I don't know why people think that's the #1 thing on a pastor's hit list, but I've heard this too many times to count.

But after the usual statements and questions, one of the guys asked a great question. He said, "I heard there's a pastor that has a helicopter fly him to the church services to make sure he's always on time. What do you think about that?" I replied, "I think I'd rather spend that money on helping some people rather than a helicopter."

There are two spiritual issues when we seek to be lavish rather than simple. First, it can be a negative witness for Christ, as that helicopter was. Second, as Paul alludes to in Philippians 4, we can have a heart problem when we seek to be lavish rather than simple.

Paul said he "learned the secret of living in every situation...with plenty or little." When we aren't content with what we have, our hearts constantly seek more. But the heart will never be filled that way – there's no such thing as "enough." By contrast, being content with what we have allows us to appreciate the blessings we have and the blessings we will receive. Being content allows us to give freely without bitterness. Simplicity is a positive witness to Christ and a great way to shape our hearts to be more like Jesus'.

### PRACTICE

- **Pray for God to help your heart be content with what you already have.**
- **Before you get out of bed one morning, list all the reasons you have to be thankful.**
- **If you are worried that you don't have enough of something, give some of it away.**

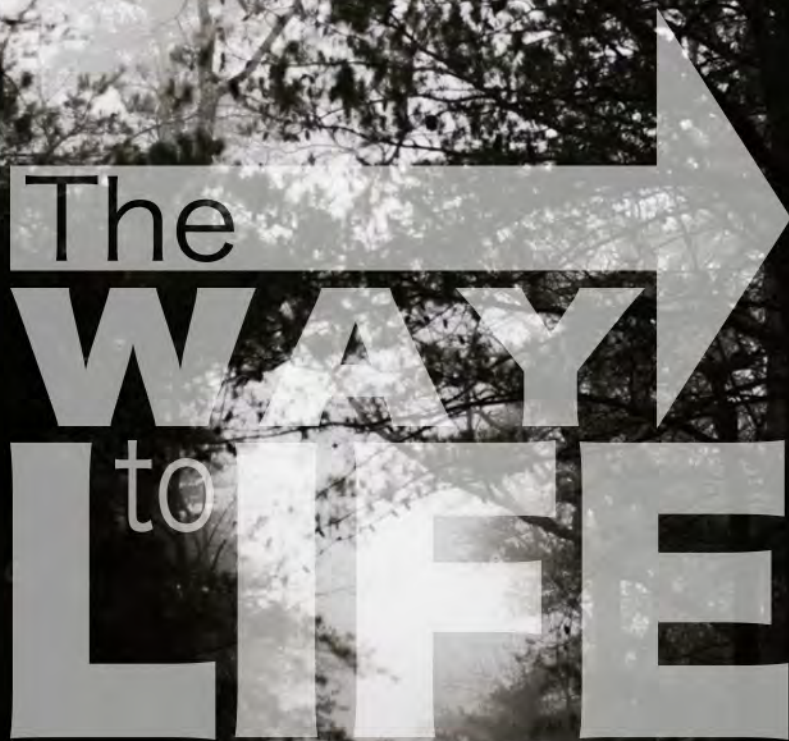
### PRAYER

**Lord of True Liberty, You who commissioned Moses to lead Your chosen children from bondage in Egypt to the freedom of a new land, help me to find a real freedom in simplicity. Cure me, Lord, of "buyer's itch"; heal me of the consumer's consumption that keeps me constantly discontent and continuously craving more and more. Show to me the joys of a simple lifestyle whereby in my "freedom from things" I shall have more time and energy to invest in my relationships with those I love, with myself, and with You, my God. Help me, by the example of Your Son, Jesus, to place my value in those things that neither moth nor thief can take from me. And, as I strive for greater simplicity—in my prayers, my lifestyle, my desires—I shall find greater happiness in life itself. May my efforts at simplicity not cease and looking into my closet and counting clothes, but may they take on their greatest energy and zeal when looking into my heart and removing all that is not in the fashion of Your divine heart, all that blocks my loving others. May I be reminded frequently that whatever form my attempts at simplicity may take that it is a simple heart which You first and foremost desire. I ask this, Lord, through the intercession of Your Son, Jesus the Christ, who lives with You and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen\***

\* A Prayer For Simplicity, by Edward Hays <https://thevalueofsparrows.com/2014/04/21/prayer-a-prayer-for-simplicity-by-edward-hays/>

## **CONCLUSION**

We hope you found this devotional helpful as you walked the WAY to LIFE. As in any discipline, mastery is not something that comes quickly, but takes time. In a sense, these spiritual disciplines are never meant to be mastered, but continually practiced. In the diligent practice we experience deeper levels of intimacy with our Savior. The point all along is not to become more holy than someone else or even about your works justifying your salvation. The spiritual ways of these disciplines are merely tools to draw us closer to the One who does save. Our God wants to be close. Are we brave enough to venture every closer to experience true abundant life? The Way is always open!



# The WAY to LIFE

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**Rev. Cody Sandahl** | currently lives in Littleton, Colorado with his wife and two boys where he is the head pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Littleton. He spent the first years of his ministry at the First Presbyterian Church of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania as the Discipleship Pastor and then Executive Pastor. Cody is also a self-proclaimed geek. Prior to becoming a pastor he was a computer programmer. On the off chance that life and kids permit some free time, you can still find him in the basement tinkering with computers and 3D printers.



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