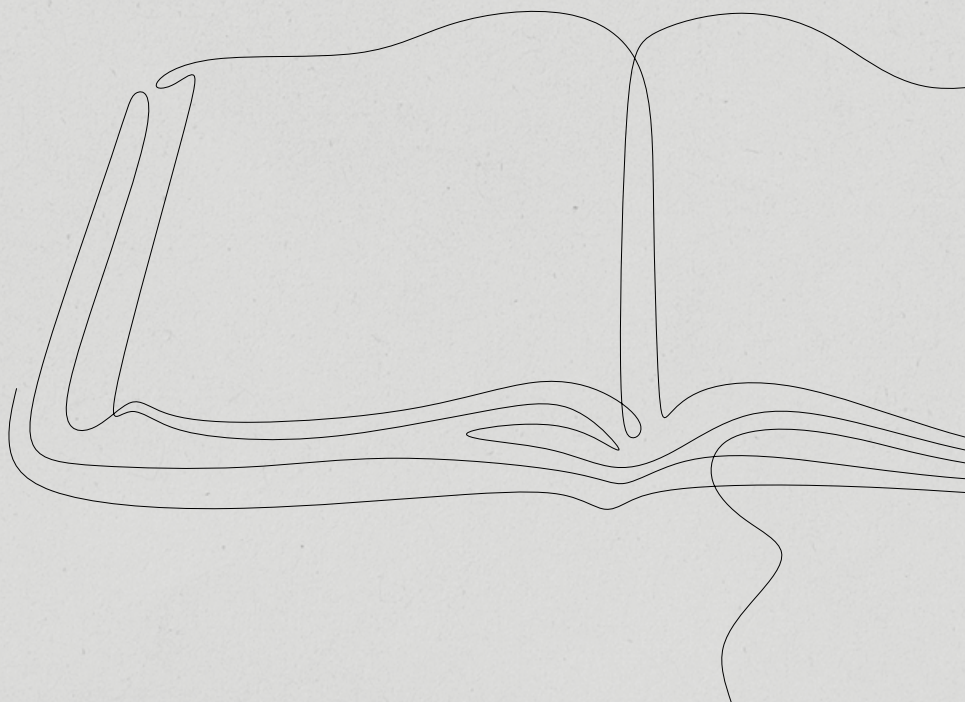




Transformation Church

Spiritual *Habits* Guide



Intro

When someone says “yes” to Jesus, they are often excited about what their new life will hold. New Christ-followers enter into the phase of sanctification—where they experience growth and are formed into the image of Jesus. Christ-followers begin to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) as they abide in Jesus (John 15:1-8).

This is called discipleship. It’s the process of becoming more like Jesus. To aid in our discipleship, we practice spiritual habits. As we are intentional in developing these habits, we grow and mature in our relationships with God, ourselves, and others.

This guide will review some core spiritual habits that you can incorporate in your life. Each section will introduce a different spiritual habit, explore the purpose of the habit, review the scriptural basis for the habit, and give you practical tips on how you can make this habit a part of your regular rhythms. We also provide additional resources in case you want to explore further.

It is our prayer that this guide will be one you can return to again and again as the Holy Spirit guides you in the discipleship process.

For additional resources, visit our website at:
transformationchurch.tc





Spiritual Habit: Scripture Reading

The Purpose of Scripture Reading

In *Matthew 4:4* Jesus says, “Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” The Bible is God’s Word. It’s through the pages of the Bible that we learn the grand narrative of Scripture—God’s Story. In the Bible God tells us about Himself—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. If we want to know God more intimately, then we must know the Bible intimately.

As we learn to know God better, we will be more conformed to the image of Jesus—we will become more like Jesus. This takes both the discipline of reading Scripture and obeying what we read in Scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, what is the Bible? The Bible is made up of 66 “books” and divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old and New Testaments are verbally inspired by God, the only written revelation from God to Man. The Bible is infallible and is the authoritative rule of faith and conduct for mankind.

When reading the Bible, it’s important to know that the various books of the Bible have different literary forms. The Bible uses poetry, allegory, narrative, and parable. The Bible was also written at certain times in history and in specific cultures. Keeping all of this in mind will help in you interpret what the passages are saying as you read. Always consider the context and the literary form when reading. Since the Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to us, this is a crucial part of the discipleship process.

Scriptural support for this habit

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16 CSB

Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

Psalms 119:105 CSB

The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Acts 17:11 CSB

For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures. Romans 15:4 CSB

Practical tips to implement this discipline

- **Find a reliable translation you can understand.** People often wonder what the best translation of the Bible is—there are so many! At Transformation Church we most often use the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). We also recommend the New Living Translation (NLT) and the New International Version (NIV). However, don't get caught up in all the different translations available; focus on getting a translation you can understand and that you will read.
- **Pray and trust the Holy Spirit.** Remember that when you said yes to Jesus, you were given the Holy Spirit. Trust that the Holy Spirit will help you understand the words you read in Scripture.
- **Read in community.** The Bible was meant to be read in community. Often you will see that even in the Bible there are references to Scripture being read aloud in community. Find a friend or join a small group so you can discuss what you read together.
- **Use a commentary.** While we don't suggest going to a commentary right away (give time for the Holy Spirit to direct your interpretation), there's no harm in referencing a commentary to help you understand Scripture. Check the resources section for our suggestions.

Additional Resources:

- *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*
by Eugene Peterson
- *Free Bible Commentary*
freebiblecommentary.org
- *Faithlife Study Bible App*
- *The Bible Project – How to read the Bible series*
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/how-to-read-the-bible/>





Spiritual Habit: Prayer

The Purpose of Prayer

Prayer often feels daunting and overwhelming. Maybe you struggle to stay engaged during prayer or can't find words to form to God. Sometimes you may feel like you're talking to a wall. Often, these frustrations are rooted in a misunderstanding of prayer. Instead of approaching prayer as voicing a list of requests or grievances, view it as an invitation to spend time with God.

Just like spending time with your best friend, prayer is not a task to gain things but a time to commune with the One with whom we are in relationship. Prayer is not a means to an end to receive what we want; rather, it's about becoming more like Jesus and aligning our hearts with His will. The Apostle Paul tells us to "pray constantly," inviting God into every aspect of our lives and seeking Him in all that we do. In this, prayer becomes a lifestyle rather than a monologue to God.

Scriptural support for this habit

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He [Jesus] got up, went out, and made His way to a deserted place; and there He was praying. Mark 1:35 CSB

Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 CSB

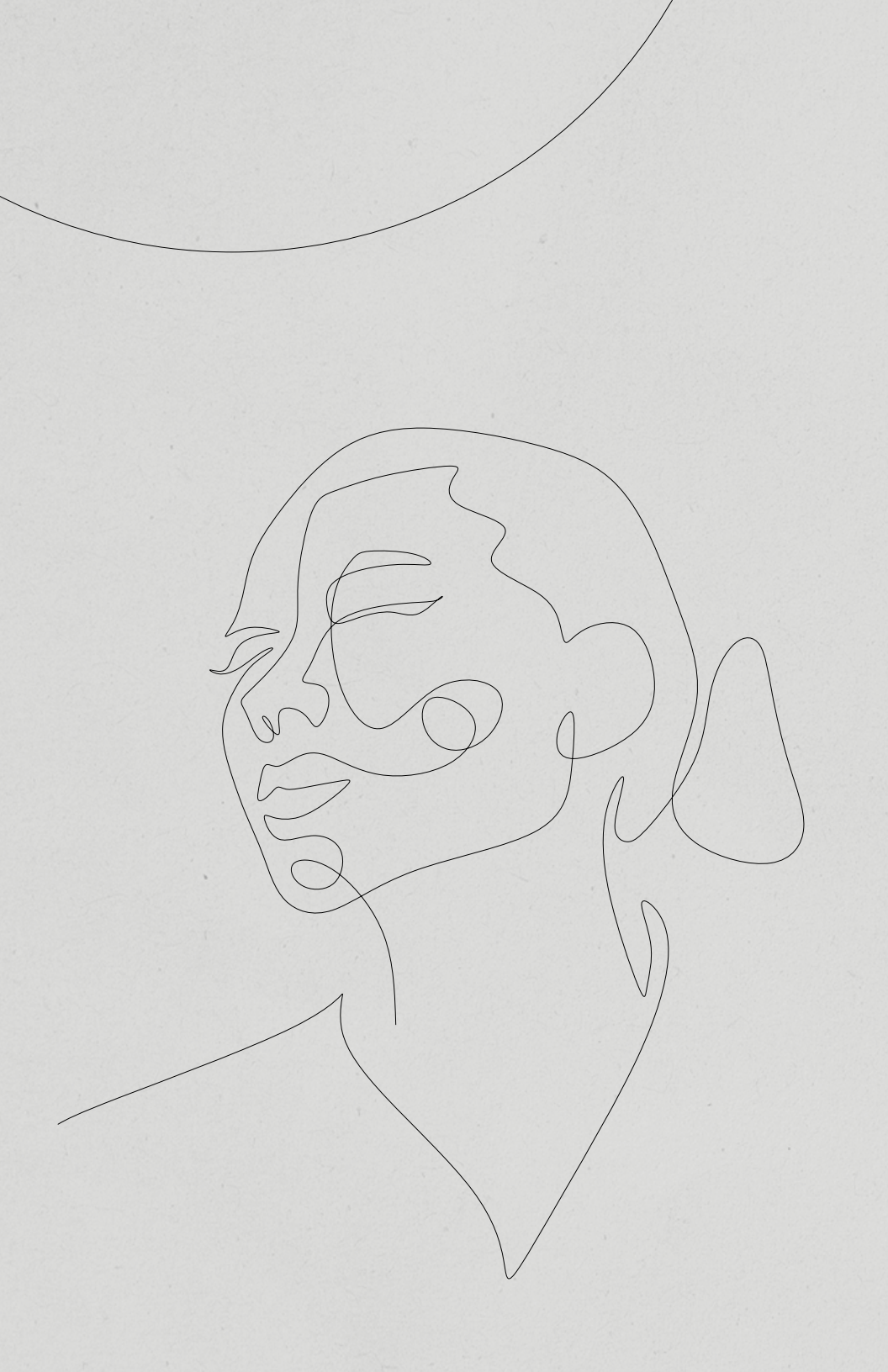
Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 CSB

Practical tips to implement this habit

- **Practice the Daily Office or Fixed Hourly Prayer.** The Daily Office, or Fixed Hourly Prayer, is an ancient practice to implement regular prayer throughout set times of the day. Set a reminder or alarm on your phone for a specific time to encourage you to pause, pray, and commune with God.
- **Pray in community.** One of the best ways to implement a new habit is to ask a friend to join you. Invite a friend into your journey of making prayer a regular rhythm in your life.
- **Recite the Lord's Prayer every morning and evening.** During His earthly ministry, Jesus gave His disciples a framework for prayer in the form of the Lord's Prayer. We can follow this model by saturating our lives in the Lord's Prayer, praying it multiple times a day. You can find this prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.
- **When you don't know what to pray, visit the Psalms.** The book of Psalms is a beautiful compilation of prayers and songs to God. The Psalms reflect every human emotion: grief, anger, joy, jealousy, fear. When you struggle to form words to God, turn to the book of Psalms. Remember that prayer is not a monologue; it is posturing our hearts before Jesus. Take some time during your prayer to sit and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be prompting you to do.

Additional Resources:

- *God, Do You Hear Me?* by Dr. Derwin L. Gray
- *Prayer* by Timothy Keller
- *Lectio365* Prayer App
- *TC Sermon Series: God, Do You Hear Me?*
<https://transformationchurch.tc/series/god-do-you-hear-me/>



Spiritual Habit: Self-examination & Confession

The Purpose of Self-examination & Confession

A recurring theme in Scripture acknowledges the reality of darkness in our world and the power of light to overcome the darkness. We see this theme in John 1:5, where Jesus is referred to as the light of the world that cannot be overcome by evil or sin. One of the ways we can partner with Jesus in exposing darkness in the world is by recognizing the effects of sin and evil in ourselves. The effects of sin and evil may show up in our lives in the form of an addiction, idol, bad habit, or unconfessed sin. We highlight sin and fleshly patterns (things we do that are not in line with God's best for us) in our lives, not to shame or condemn ourselves, but to make space for God's redemption and restoration to show up.

It may be puzzling as to why we confess our sins when, as followers of Jesus, we've already been forgiven of our sins as followers of Jesus. Despite this truth, it is an important spiritual habit to search our hearts and confess our sins. The practice of confession allows us to surrender ourselves to Christ's transformative love, so that we might walk in the freedom of who He has created and called us to be. This is an important part of the sanctification and discipleship process in our lives.

Scriptural support for this habit

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. James 5:16 CSB

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 CSB

Lord, you light my lamp; my God illuminates my darkness.

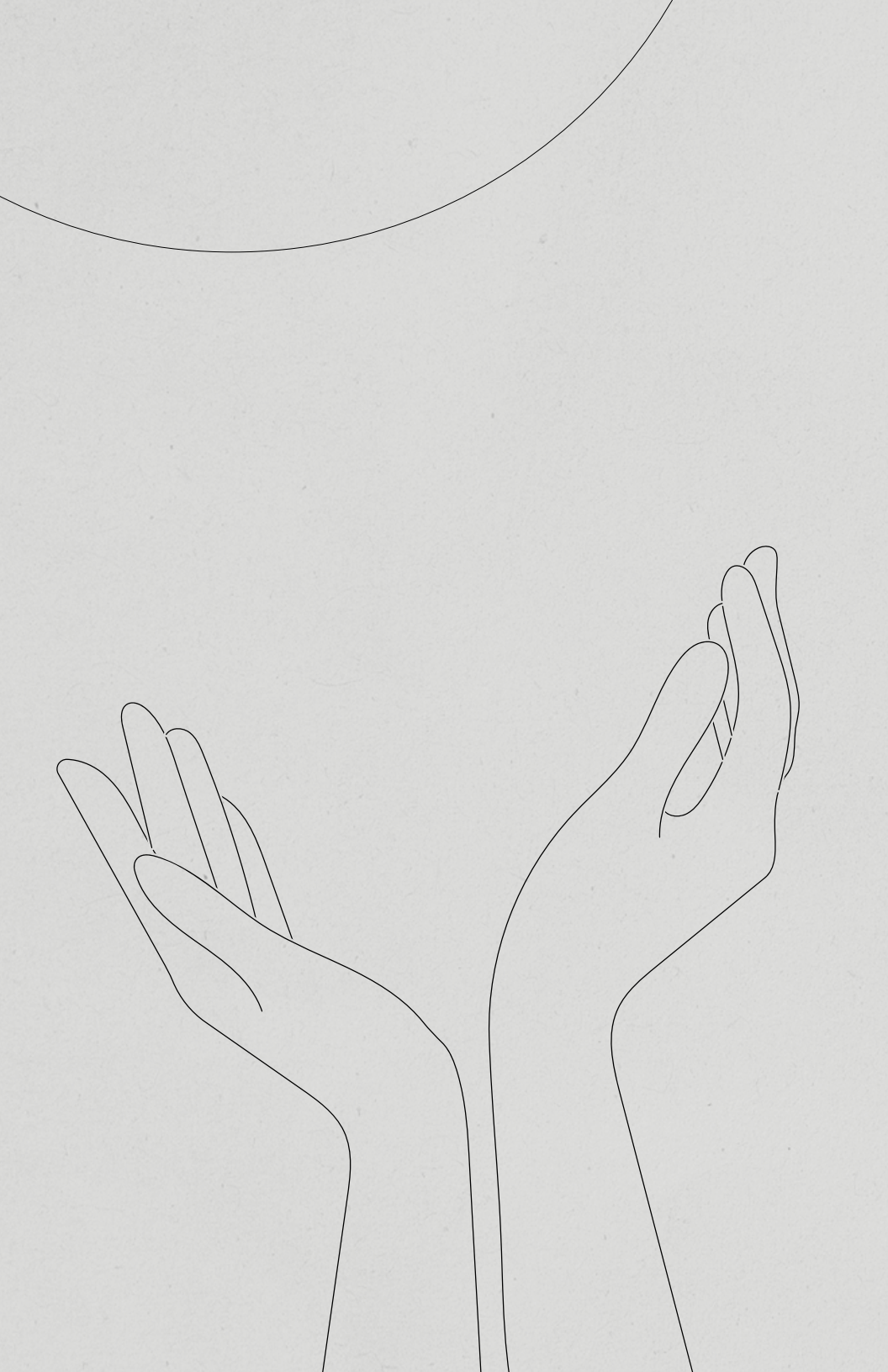
Psalm 18:28 CSB

Practical tips to implement this habit

- Pray that God would give you a humble heart. Humility is the first step in releasing our whole lives to Christ's love and healing power. We cannot surrender what we do not acknowledge. Pray that God would give you the eyes to see your own sin and the willingness to let Him work in you.
- Make confession a regular part of your prayer life. Take time every morning or evening to ask God to search your heart and help you acknowledge any sins that need to be confessed. Practice symbolically laying your sins at the foot of the cross. Thank God that you are already forgiven because of the blood of Jesus.
- Find an accountability partner. Think of a close friend or mentor whom you trust. Ask them if they will help hold you accountable as you walk in freedom from sin and do the daily work to surrender your temptations to Christ.
- Make a genogram to better understand how family patterns or habits may influence you today. A genogram, often used by brain health therapists and pastoral counselors, is a tool that maps out one's family history through a relational and emotional lens. One of our favorite books at TC, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, provides a great template to create your own.

Additional Resources:

- *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* by Pete Scazzero
- *The Deeply Formed Life* by Rich Villodas
- *TC Sermon Series: Beneath the Surface*
<https://transformationchurch.tc/series/beneath-the-surface/>



Spiritual Habit: Fasting

The Purpose of Fasting

Fasting is a ritual of abstaining from food and/or drink for a predetermined amount of time. In the Bible we see fasting practiced for various reasons. Sometimes it was a means of mourning or a response to suffering. Fasting is also used as a spiritual discipline that is meant to help us focus on spiritual matters. In the words of Ken Boa, “The spiritual discipline of fasting is abstention from physical nourishment for the purpose of spiritual sustenance.” Throughout the Bible we see people fasting when they are in need of strengthening their prayer life, looking for God’s guidance, or to express love and worship for God.

We fast to express our devotion and desire for Jesus. We fast to remember our dependence on God. We fast to kill our idols and focus our eyes and hearts back on Jesus. Fasting brings about greater intensity in our prayer life, builds our faith in God, and can help us hear from God with greater focus. Fasting is not a legalistic routine and is not used as a way to make God answer our prayer “faster.” The focus is not on us, but on God.

Jesus never teaches on how long or how often to fast. Although it is important to note that, in the Jewish culture in which Jesus lived, fasting was usually practiced from sunup to sundown. Fasting is simply an opportunity to seek God as often as the Holy Spirit leads you to do it.

Scriptural support for this habit

The whole Israelite army went to Bethel where they wept and sat before the Lord. They fasted that day until evening and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the Lord. Judges 20:26 CSB

There was also a prophetess, Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well along in years, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and was a widow for eighty-four years. She did not leave the temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayers. Luke 2:36-37 CSB

As they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after they had fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them off. Acts 13:2-3 CSB

Whenever you fast, don't be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting isn't obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:16-18 CSB

Practical tips to implement this discipline

- Start with prayer and confession. It's important to begin with a humble heart. You can also use Scripture in your prayer time (Psalm 35:13).
- Prepare your body. You may need to consult a doctor before beginning your fast, especially if you've never done it before. There is no need to cause physical harm to yourself. If fasting from food is not an option for you due to physical or health limitations, consider fasting from something else such as television, social media, or other forms of entertainment.
- Don't boast. Fasting is not meant to be a time where you show off your spirituality. This is a sacred commitment between yourself and God (**Matthew 6:16-18**).

Additional Resources:

- *Conformed to His Image* by Ken Boa (certain sections of the book address fasting)
- *Exploring My Strange Bible Podcast* – Feasting and Fasting episode <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/practicing-faith-part-2-feasting-fasting/>



Spiritual Habit: Evangelism

The Purpose of Evangelism

Before ascending into heaven after His resurrection, Jesus gathered His disciples and commissioned them to share the Gospel, the Good News: “Jesus came near and said to them, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20). Essentially, Jesus was calling His disciples to be “evangelists.” An evangelist is a person who tells others about Jesus.

Evangelism is one of the spiritual gifts listed in the book of Ephesians (Ephesians 4:11). Does that mean that some of us are called to be evangelists while others get a pass on sharing the Gospel? Not at all! We’re all called to share the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection with others. However, our methods of doing so may differ from person to person. While some may evangelize by writing books or teaching from a stage, others do so by building relationships with co-workers at their corporate jobs and inviting them to their small group. Regardless of our methods, Jesus invites us to be His hands and feet, helping others to know Him. But, we don’t have to do it alone. Right after He commissions His disciples in Matthew 28, He reminds them that He will always be with us, His Spirit working in and through us. God gives us everything we need in order to share His Good News with others. You don’t even have to have all the answers. You can live an “inviting life” simply by showing people God’s love and grace. As we receive God’s complete love and learn to love ourselves correctly, the overflow of that will be to love others compassionately—and that includes sharing the Good News of Jesus with them.

Scriptural support for this habit

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. Romans 1:18 CSB

Declare His glory among the nations, His wondrous works among all peoples. Psalm 96:3 CSB

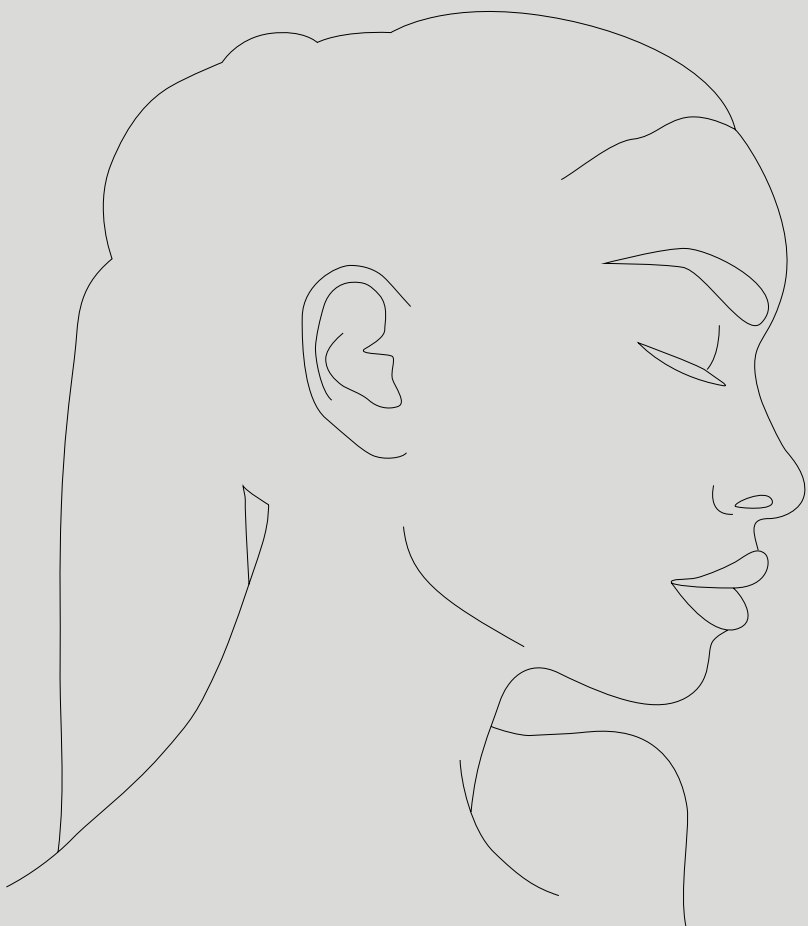
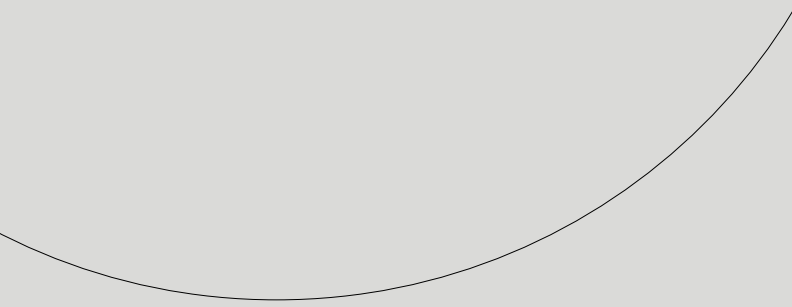
Then He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:15-16 CSB

Practical tips to implement this habit

- Remember that loving others compassionately shouldn't come with an agenda. Trust God to work in and through you; others' salvation does not depend on you but on the work of the Holy Spirit. Be obedient to Jesus, knowing that He will fill in the gaps. It is your job to love others; it is not your job to convince them.
- Ask God to bring someone to mind whom you can invite to a church service or your TC Group. Pray for an opportunity to invite them.
- Be intentional about friendships with individuals who aren't like you. Build relationships with those in your community with a different background, job, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. As you make it your goal to love everyone with whom you come in contact, God will empower you to be His hands and feet to those who do not yet know Him.
- Learn the art of listening. When building relationships with others and sharing the gospel, listen more than you speak. Show people the love of Jesus through your actions, not only through your words.

Additional Resources:

- *Conformed to His Image* by Ken Boa
- *TC Sermon Series: Action*
<https://transformationchurch.tc/series/action/>



Spiritual Habit: Lamentation

The Purpose of Lamentation

It's no secret that the world is riddled with sadness. You may be experiencing the loss of a loved one, an unrealized dream, or a temptation that won't subside. Often, Christians tend to gloss over grief in favor of more encouraging emotions like hope or joy. We may decide that we have no right to mourn when we've been given so much by the power of the Cross. There is certainly something to be said for allowing grief to harden our hearts and cause us to become spiritually or emotionally paralyzed. However, there is also a place for mourning and lamenting over the reality of sin, death, and evil without discounting the hope of Christ.

Throughout Scripture, God mourns the brokenness of the world. We see this in the form of Jesus, the Son of God, weeping after his friend Lazarus passed away – even knowing that He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead in a matter of minutes! Grief and joy are not mutually exclusive; we can acknowledge both simultaneously. Embracing grief allows us to recognize what is not right about the world and surrender it to Jesus, rooted in the reality that God will restore all things in the new heavens and new earth.

Scriptural support for this habit

Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:15 CSB

The Lord is near the brokenhearted; He saves those crushed in spirit.

Psalms 34:18 CSB

As soon as Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at His feet and told Him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died!" When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, He was deeply moved in His spirit and troubled. "Where have you put him?" He asked. "Lord," they told Him, "come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how He loved him!" John 11:32-36 CSB

Then [Jesus] withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and began to pray, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me—nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. Being in anguish, He prayed more fervently, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:41-44 CSB

Practical tips to implement this habit

- Avoid numbing and escapism. When life gets hard, it often feels better to saturate our lives with numbing techniques. We may choose to binge Netflix, spend hours on social media, shop extensively, or abuse substances to keep ourselves from grieving. Instead of allowing escapist tactics to rule your life, choose journaling, physical exercise, or prayer to guide you through your feelings rather than hide from them.
- Go to therapy. Spend time intentionally caring for your brain health. Seek a licensed counselor in your community to walk with you through areas of your life that still need healing. This is not a substitute for spending time with Jesus but a great addition to it. At TC we have a Care Team that can help you find the help you need.
- Immerse yourself in community. Instead of hiding from others and ignoring your reality, spend time with safe friends who can weep with you. If you are searching for biblical community, joining a TC Group is a great place to start.

Additional Resources:

- *Walking with God through Pain & Suffering* by Tim Keller
- *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* by Mark Vroegop
- *TC Sermon: The Suffering Servant-King*
<https://transformationchurch.tc/sermons/the-suffering-servant-king/>



Spiritual Habit: Silence & Solitude

The Purpose of Silence & Solitude

We live in a fast-paced world. Everyone is busy. We pack our schedules and our minds. Many of us are uncomfortable with silence and solitude. We prefer being around people or always having the TV on or music playing in the background. Think to yourself, when was the last time you sat in a quiet room all by yourself?

We all need room to breathe. Scripture is full of instances where Jesus “withdrew” to be with God (Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35, Matthew 14:12-13, Luke 22:39-41). Even though regularly withdrawing from the noise of life is necessary, many of us find it challenging to do so; but we will find, when we make this spiritual habit a priority, we will be healthier, we will hear God’s voice more clearly, and we will begin to value our “being” over our “doing.” Silence and solitude are our opportunity to enter more deeply into the intimacy of our relationship with God. Sometimes we feel like God is far away, but the reality is that God is always with us. When we commit to silence and solitude, we leave behind the noise and busyness of our lives and enter into a greater awareness of our communion with God.

Scriptural support for this habit

Yet he often withdrew to deserted places and prayed. Luke 5:16 CSB

Then he said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the Lord’s presence.” At that moment, the Lord passed by. A great and mighty wind was tearing at the mountains and was shattering cliffs before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And

after the fire there was a voice, a soft whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. 1 Kings 19:11-13 CSB

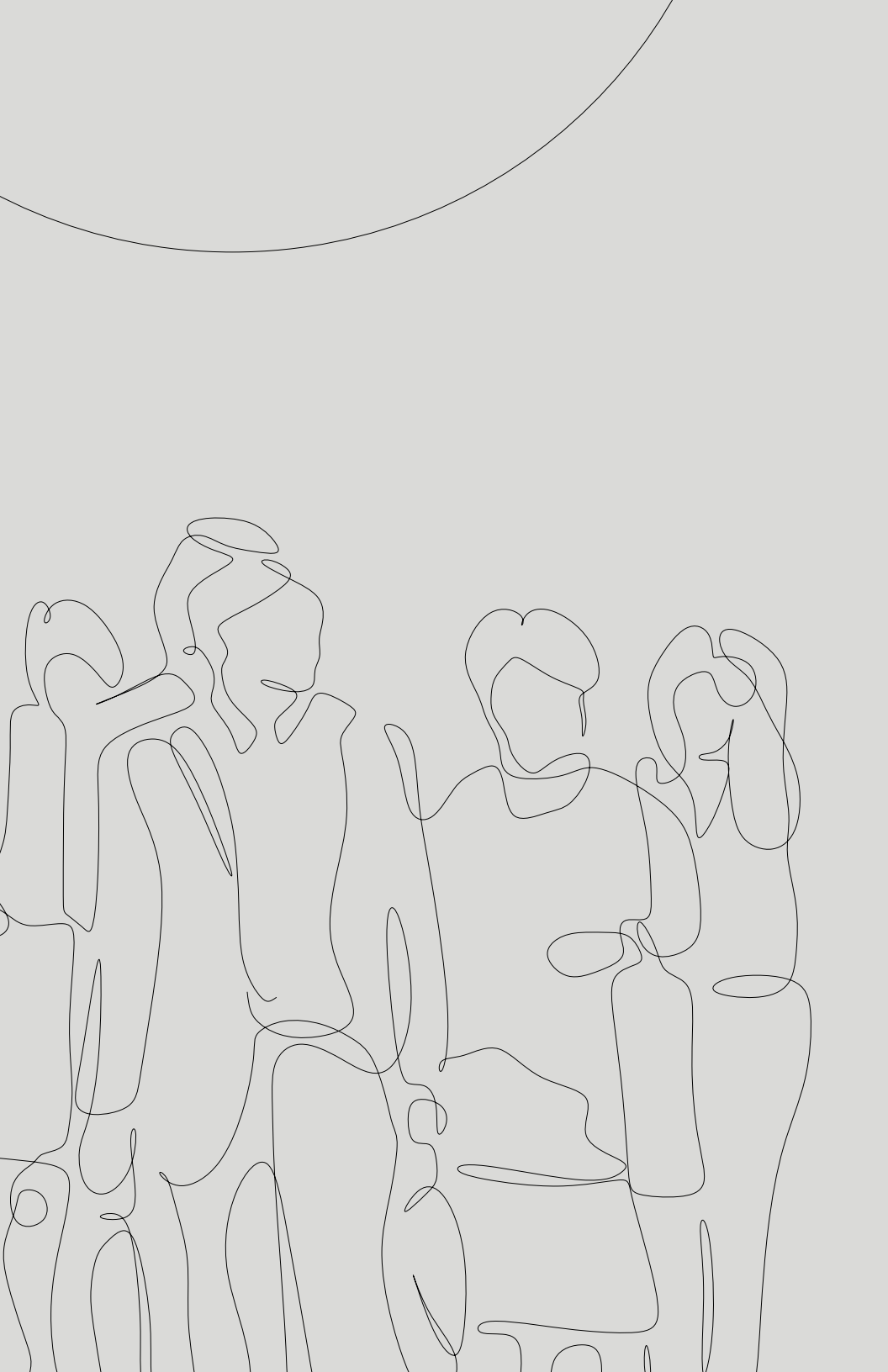
The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. It is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord.
Lamentations 3:25-26 CSB

Practical tips to implement this discipline

- Identify a sacred space and time. Choose a time of day and location that is as free of distractions as possible. Pick any time and place in which you can regularly be alone. Tell your family members or roommates about your new sacred space and time so they can be aware and honor your new commitment.
- Start small. If this is a new practice for you, don't start off with a lofty goal. Instead choose to begin with 10 or 15 minutes. As you make this a regular practice in your life, you can increase the time. More important than the amount of time you spend in silence and solitude is that you do it with regularity.
- Get comfortable. Make sure that you are seated in a comfortable position, yet still alert. Perhaps sitting in a comfy chair with your feet on the ground and your hands open in your lap is a good place to start.
- Choose a simple prayer. This doesn't have to be a time where you pray long complicated prayers. Focus on a simple phrase or Bible verse.
- Don't judge yourself. Know that distractions will come and that's okay. The more you practice the habit the easier it will become to allow distractions to float by. Be grateful for your time no matter what it ends up looking like.

Additional Resources:

- *Invitation to Silence and Solitude* by Ruth Haley Barton
- *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer
- *TC Sermon: Holy Habits—Royal Priests are a People of Rest* by Pastor Derwin Gray <https://transformationchurch.tc/sermons/royal-priests-are-a-people-of-rest/>



Spiritual Habit: Living in Community

The Purpose of Living in Community

Often Christians today get the idea that faith is an individual activity, but the truth is that when we say “yes” to Jesus, we are incorporated into His family. This is a multiethnic, multigenerational family. It is flawed because we are all people in process, but it is beautiful nonetheless.

Living in community is an important spiritual habit because we are not meant to walk this faith journey on our own—we are created for community; we are created for connection. Just as God is a community unto Himself—three in one: Father, Son, and Spirit—we too are meant to live in community. This is good news! We have a built-in support system where we can be encouraged and reminded of who God is and what He has called us to do.

As Christ-followers, we are intentional about connecting to biblical community. At TC this is possible in many different ways: participating in weekend services, connecting in a mid-size or small group, and joining a ministry team are a few of those ways. When we connect to biblical community, we are sharpened. Our perspective grows and we are able to see the image of God in the people around us. Our unity within our diversity is a sign to the world of a loving God who is able to reconcile all things and all people to Himself.

Scriptural support for this habit

Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another.
Proverbs 27:17 CSB

Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction. 1 Corinthians 1:10 CSB

Carry one another's burdens; in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2 CSB

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47 CSB

Practical tips to implement this discipline

- Connect to the local church. Transformation Church is a multiethnic, multigenerational, mission-shaped community committed to helping you connect to God and to others. If you're not local to TC, perhaps there is another church in your community you can connect with. Make a commitment to attend weekend services. Your presence matters, and as each week passes you will begin to make connections with others.
- Join a biblical community. TC offers small groups and mid-size groups throughout the year where you can have more intimate conversations with other Christ-followers. In these groups you read the Bible, engage in discussions, and connect with others.
- Serve on a ministry team. When you serve on a ministry team it gives you a chance to meet other Christ-followers with similar interests. As you regularly serve together, bonds will form.

Additional Resources:

- *How to Heal Our Racial Divide* by Derwin L. Gray
- *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *The Bible Project Podcast Series* – The Family of God <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/series/family-of-god/>

