



# **GOSPEL PRACTICES**

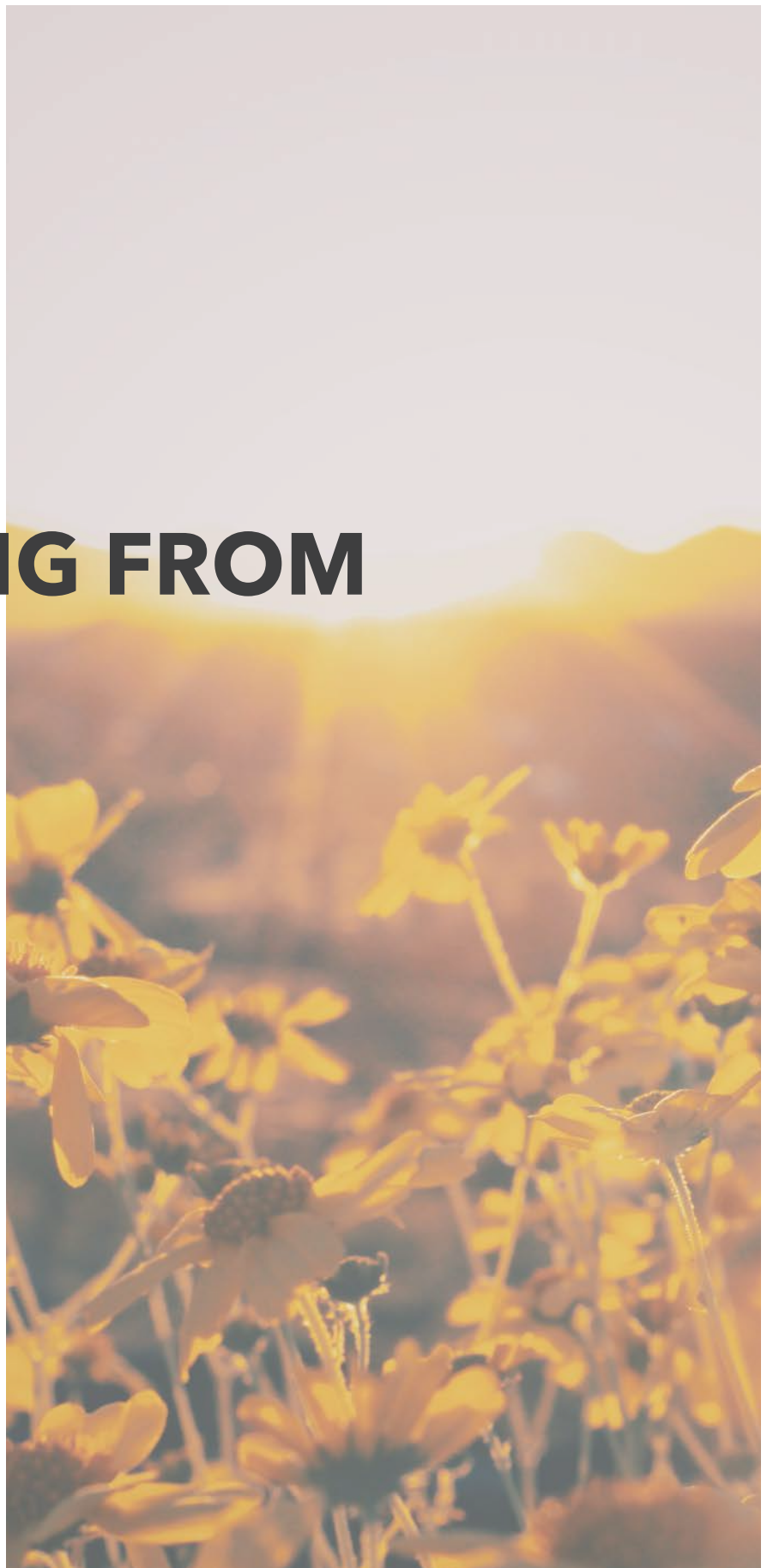
## PART 2



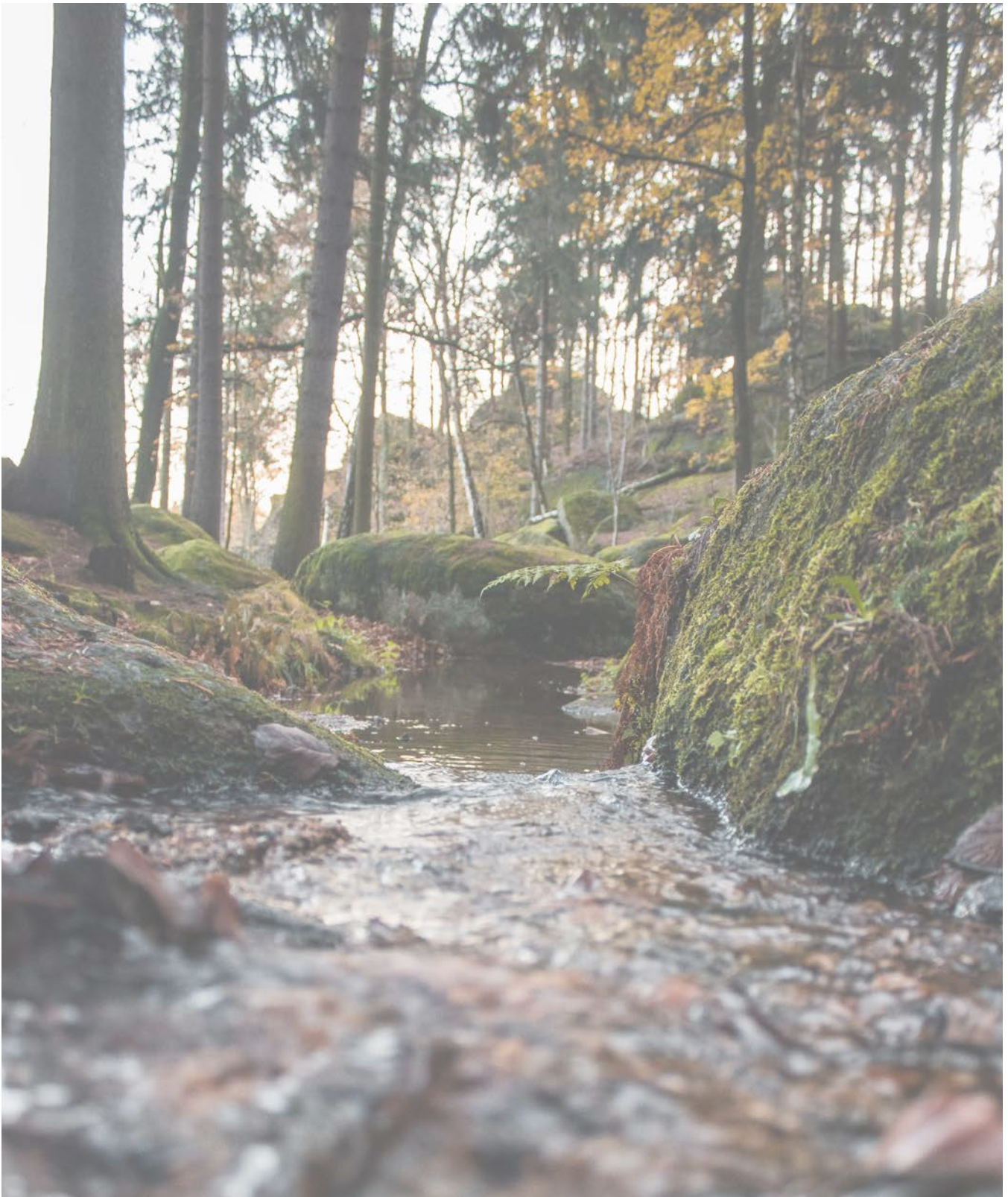


# RECEIVING FROM GOD

WEEK 4







**"Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me." -John 13:8**

# DAY 1 - MONDAY

JOHN 13:1-11

## Reflection:

Take time to get away and be alone with God today. Make sure this time alone with Him is extended from your regular time with Him. That extended time could be 5, 15, 45, or 60 minutes. Whatever length of time you choose, spend that time intentionally seeking to open your life more fully to God. Think through the places where you don't want God to be in your life and begin to ask Him into those places. This takes time. Don't rush it. Be willing to return to it throughout the day and over the coming weeks, months, and years. Today, begin to foster the practice of inviting God into your whole life. Be willing and open to receive Him.

## Open to Receive

Peter is a disciple I can relate to. He's a disciple we can all relate to. He is passionate, confident, and stubborn. He is like us in our everyday lives but reflects us most in his interactions with Jesus. He comes to the literal feet of Jesus (as we see in John 13) with such faith and confidence in His pursuit of Jesus and His desire to serve Him, but he misses a pivotal piece of the Christian life.

Peter, like us, missed the point Jesus was making to the disciples, the point He makes to all of us. Jesus was specifically teaching in John 13 that, like Peter, to be His disciples, we must be open and willing to receive Him. To experience a real life with Jesus means being open to receiving Him in every part of our lives. Jesus comes to us in our places of humility and vulnerability. Jesus works and moves in the heart that is open and willing, and ready to receive Him.

Jesus demonstrates through the washing of feet that He is in our dirtiest, lowest, most hidden, and most vulnerable places. Jesus sees the worst in us, sees the broken parts of us, sees the neediness in us, and meets us there. He wants to serve, save, and sanctify us, but we must be willing to receive Him. That means we must be humble enough and willing enough to open our lives to receive Him, every part of Him into every part of our being. The question we have to ask ourselves is: are we open to receiving Him?

# DAY 2 - TUESDAY

1 JOHN 4:16-19, ROMANS 8:31-39, 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

## Reflection:

Sit with each attribute of love listed in 1 Corinthians 13 and ask God to help you trust and rest in this attribute of His love.

## Receiving His Love

What does it look like for us to receive God's love? God is love, so He can't be anything but loving to us. This is often hard for us to grasp, especially when circumstances are hard, or we feel unlovable. When we put our faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are told we can "rest in His love." The struggle comes in accepting and receiving God's love in the everyday moments of our lives. God wants to lavish His love upon us, and He wants that love to radiate into every part of our lives. In difficult times, we have to place our total trust in God's love for us. It is easy to lose faith when we rely on earthly things to carry us through; those things are forever changing. When we rest in God, we rest on a firm, unshakable foundation. When we rest in God's love, we get to have faith that God is with us through it all. Not only is God with us, but He cares for us. He is there to give us peace as we go through it.

## Signs that you are resting in God's love:

- › You run to Him for refuge and strength instead of hiding or running from Him.
- › You welcome His discipline and instruction instead of fearing His judgment.
- › You view Him as a Father who knows what's best for you instead of viewing Him as a taskmaster or cruel dictator.
- › You long to spend time with Him in prayer and in His Word instead of dreading your time with Him.
- › You care more about what God's Word says about you than worrying over the opinions of others.
- › You are confident in who God made you to be, looking to His Word for your direction instead of beating yourself up when you don't live up to other people's expectations.
- › You move at the pace of Jesus in order to gain deeper connection and peace instead of moving at the pace of the world.
- › You lead with love in your relationships with others instead of rushing to judgment or condemnation.

If Romans 8:39 is true that *"nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* We need to start living as children who trust in the Father's love, rest in His love, and seek ways to give His love away to the world.

*"I want to be gentle with myself and with others and to remember that our life with Christ is measured not with boundary lines, right practice, or perfectly made decisions but only by the love that is experienced in the Trinity and handed out to us in abundance."* -Emily P. Freeman

# DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

JOHN 15:1-11, JAMES 1:2-3, ROMANS 15:13

## Reflection:

When you became a Christ-follower, what did you think it would be like? Has it been what you expected? Why or why not?

How do you know there is a greater joy we receive from living for Jesus?

## Joy

The thing we often think when we become Christ-followers is, "now everything is going to be easy." It makes sense when you think about it. In life, we're being marketed to constantly to buy this product, start this program, join this organization, and your life will be better. This thing will make you happy; this commodity will make your life easier. Sadly the Christian faith has been marketed in much the same way. Churches and Christian organizations are "selling" or marketing the gospel and the Christian life as the "fix" to our worldly problems. For many, salvation is a gift that saves us from an unhappy, unfulfilled life and an assurance for a cozy eternity.

The motive behind "selling" the Christian faith this way comes with good intentions, but far too often creates confused and disappointed believers because if you spend more than a few months in the Christian life, you learn that life isn't suddenly easy by following Jesus. The opposite is true. The Christian life is a life of self-denial, trials, conviction, and work. Jesus Himself described the Christian life as carrying a cross or great burden (Matthew 16:24). So, what's the point?

Well, the good news that we too often miss is this: the Christian walk weeds out the pointless things we think will bring us joy (this is the work, self-denial, trial, and conviction of the Christian life) and puts its roots in what brings true joy to our lives. All of humanity has in common a desire to be happy and experience real joy. The good news for the Christ-follower is that true joy is found, multiplies, and abounds as a relationship with Jesus grows. A life with Jesus points us to what really matters; it redirects our lives to authentic relationships, and it shapes our hearts to go after what's important and to let go of the things and pursuits that aren't.

This is why Jesus speaks of the fruit of the vine that comes with pursuing a life in Him. Joy is found when we are rooted in the vine of His love and goodness. Fruit is born from the life that follows Jesus, and that fruit brings greater joy. We can rest assured that the Christian life still feels hurt, experiences struggle, and walks through trials, but despite it all, we can experience these things and the unending joy of an eternity of fellowship with Him.



# DAY 4 - THURSDAY

ACTS 1:6-8, HEBREWS 4:14-16, 2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-6,  
2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-9, HEBREWS 13:6-8

## Reflection:

Would you consider yourself a confident person? Why or why not?

Do you feel confident in your ability to share the gospel? Why or why not?

## He is our Confidence

In Acts 1, Jesus is about to leave His disciples, and they ask Him if He will restore the Kingdom. This is the moment when Jesus reminds them that He is leaving power with them as He goes. Jesus is leaving them with the task of spreading the good news of the gospel to the ends of the earth, the same task that is in front of us. Like us, the disciples likely felt ill equipped to do His work. Jesus is assuring them (and us) that they will not be alone in this mission. His power will live on inside of them through the Holy Spirit. This should infuse them (and us) with confidence, but it likely leaves more questions than answers.

We know our own weaknesses and that we are incapable of bringing peace and hope to the world on our own. But we often forget that we have the privilege of a personal relationship with God through Jesus. Hebrews 4 tells us that Jesus understands our weaknesses, and because of that, we should be able to boldly come to Him and ask for His help in our times of need.

The ESV Study Bible reminds us that Hebrews 4:16 means *“that Christians may come before God and speak plainly and honestly (yet still with appropriate reverence), without fear that they will incur shame or punishment by doing so. God the Father, with Jesus at his right hand, graciously dispenses help from heaven to those who need forgiveness and strength in temptation.”*

We are equipped for our journey only because of what Jesus does in and through us; this is where our confidence lies. But often, we rely on our strength and gain confidence in our abilities rather than leaning on the Lord to give us confidence and strength. 1 Corinthians 4:7 reminds us that *“our great power is from God, not from ourselves.”*

We all are battling something: insecurity, anxiety, temptations, lies, worry, just to name a few. God is offering His power and strength to us on a daily basis, but it will require us to lean into our relationship with Him and receive it. Are you tired of going it alone? Remind yourself of Hebrews 13:6, *“So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?’”*

# DAY 5 - FRIDAY

1 PETER 5:6-11, MATTHEW 18:1-6, 2 CHRONICLES 7:14-15

## Reflection:

Reflect on where you feel prideful in your life. Does your pride come from looking down on someone in your life? Does pride come from your ability to do things? Does pride come from believing you live the Christian life better than those around you? Wherever it is, seek it out and reflect on it.

Next, take that area of pride and offer it to God in humble confession. Ask Him specifically to remove that area of pride from your life. Ask Him to humble you. Spend time reflecting on His humble sacrifice for you. Remember the humble way in which Jesus walked this earth. Ask Him to help you walk in the same way. Receive humility from God today.

## Humility

So if...you have been convicted of pride in any form, of failing to humble yourself or failing to glorify God, take time now to flee to the cross. Flee immediately to the cross and receive forgiveness for this sin of pride that God hates.

Confess specifically to the One you have offended. And receive forgiveness from the Father who loves you.

Thank Him that He's given us means and ways to weaken pride and cultivate humility including confessing our sins and speaking truth to ourselves rather than listening to ourselves.

Tell Him you want to declare war on pride in your life-that you want to declare war on this active, daily tendency toward self-sufficiency, this desire to live independently of Him when in truth we're totally dependent on Him for every breath. Gladly announce and declare your dependence! Make this confession humbly and repeatedly for the rest of your life: "I'm dependent on You. I'm not self-sufficient! And I'm confident in the work of Your Son for me, and in the work of Your Spirit within me."

*"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 1:6). The Lord has begun a work in our lives to weaken pride and to strengthen humility! And we want to apply all the means of grace to accelerate this sanctifying process in our hearts and lives so that we might be the ones to whom He looks, so that we might please Him.

Ultimately, there can be no effective expansion of your life's mission and ministry, no fulfillment of the specific purpose He's called you to, apart from the cultivation of humility in your heart and the weakening of pride in your life.

- Written by C.J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness*



# DAY 6 - SATURDAY (REFLECTION DAY)

JOHN 13:1-11

## Reflection Notes and Questions:

This week we began to look at our first gospel practice of this study. The gospel points to beliefs we need to receive in our lives and practices we need to begin to adopt in our lives. If we believe the things we studied in part 1 of this study, we are invited to begin to put the practice of receiving from God into our lives. The things we are invited to receive from God are numerous, and this week we just scratched the surface by looking at a few of those practical things.

As we wrap up week 4 of this study, reflect on what we looked at this week that we can receive from God, think through what some of the other things are that we can receive from Him, and follow these reflection practices below:

- › Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
  
- › What is something we looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
  
- › How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

# DAY 7 - SUNDAY

REST DAY

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's reading you missed. Use today as a rest and preparation for your heart towards next week's time with God in this study.