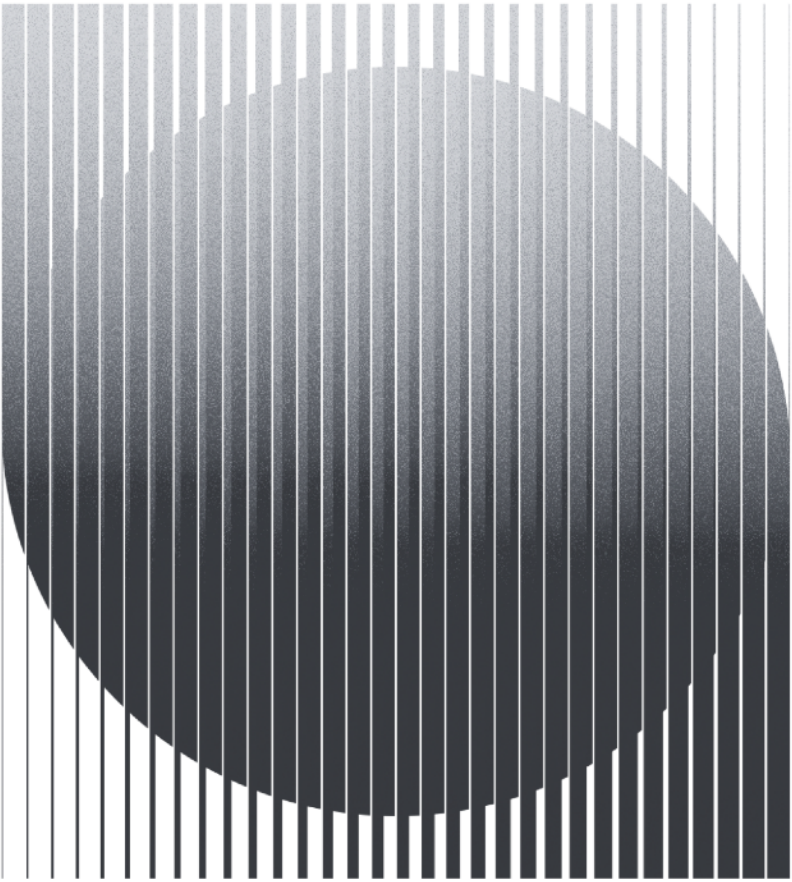
SOAP



JOURNAL

scripture. observation. ask. praise.

this journal belongs to:

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start date:

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Spending regular, unhurried time with Jesus is the foundation of a life that looks like his. Our first calling is to **be with Jesus**. Dick Brogden (author & international church planter) calls this "spending extravagant time" with God—giving the first and the best of the 24 hours God gives us everyday back to him as an offering of gratitude. The French monk, Brother Lawrence, called it "practicing the presence of God." Jesus himself simply called it "abiding."

These moments are the lifeblood of divine friendship with Jesus, the necessity of utter dependence on his Spirit, and the joy of ultimate contentment in our heavenly Father's generosity.

Being with Jesus regularly leads us to **become like Jesus**. This is the goal of everyone who self-identifies as one of Jesus' disciples (think apprentice). The more time we spend with the Master, the more we learn to think like him—to love what he loves, and hate what he hates. Jesus taught that this abiding would lead to a lifestyle united to his own way of life.

As we become like Jesus, we will naturally and authentically **do what Jesus did**. This is the overflow and practicum of a life immersed in Jesus' presence and lock-step with his Spirit. Jesus called it obedience—a response to and cooperation with what the Father is already doing.

> "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you."
> - Jesus, in John 15.10-14 (NRSV).

This journal is simply a small tool to help us begin the journey. As we do, there are a few things that we find helpful to do or at least to keep in mind.

1. **Set an appointment.** Yes, like the doctor or the dentist (whichever you keep better)! We tend to make time for the meetings or moments that we *believe* (not just think) are important. Find the ideal time and place to spend with Jesus, and put it in your calendar.
2. **Think subtraction, not addition.** Don't attempt to add this *on to* an already full schedule. Start by deciding what you will *subtract* from your daily rhythm. Maybe it's time on your phone, social media, TV, or other activities that you don't feel are essential to the life you want to lead.
3. **Start where you are.** This isn't about doing something *for* God, it's about doing something *with* him. He doesn't reward you for your performance, but for your *persistence* (read Luke 18.1-8). If you've never done this, start with eight minutes, two minutes for each phase (to be explained!). Once you've done that for a week, try 16 minutes. Then try 20! The idea is to keep growing and delighting in God's presence and friendship.
4. **Share the journey.** Your *communion with* Jesus is designed to be shared with the *community of* Jesus. Find a friend to join you, and share some of the things you write in your journal. Maybe do it together with your C2 Group. Our relationship with God is the healthiest when we intentionally practice it alone, together, and often!

5. **Shift for Sundays.** Because this is about practice and not performance, allow yourself flexibility for special days. On Sundays, instead of doing the exact same thing as the rest of the week, treat the weekend service as your daily communion with Jesus and his community. Use the space in your journal that you would normally use for the SOAP practice (explained later), to write down notes from the sermon, someone's need that you would like to pray for that week, or just something you are grateful for from the previous week. The sky is the limit, but use that day's page uniquely for the unique day that it is!

Much of the information, techniques, and advice in this journal originate from other brothers, sisters, saints, and fellow believers around the world, and we would be remiss not to express our gratitude for their influence and wisdom. Exceptional among these would be **Wayne Cordeiro** and his pioneering of the SOAP method, **Matthew Hunt** (*faithchurchks.org*) and his innovation on Cordeiro's model (which we have adopted), as well as **John Mark Comer** (*practicingtheway.org*) and his work to help the lifestyle of Jesus become commonplace among followers of Jesus.

We hope you discover this time with Jesus, like a certain man discovered treasure hidden in a field—he sold everything he had in order to buy that field. We pray Jesus' kingdom comes rushing into your world as you do the same.

so what is SOAP, anyway?

SOAP is an acronym to describe four different phases of interaction with God and his Word. The strength of these combined phases is two-fold. They 1) provide a helpful framework for starting to spend regular time with Jesus, while 2) remaining versatile to any timeframe or availability.

For many, just starting to spend time reading the Bible, praying, practicing silence, meditation, or any number of the spiritual disciplines can feel quite overwhelming, even to the point of despair "paralysis." SOAP provides a great framework for avoiding "the pit of despair" and just getting started. Once you take the first step, a whole new world opens up, and the framework grows as you do. If it's helpful, the back cover of this journal is a sample of how this journal might be used!

Each letter in the acronym, SOAP, stands for an activity of drawing close to Jesus and we will be using the following words for each letter:

Scripture. Start by identifying a key passage from your daily reading (find a good plan or join us in one that we are following as a church!) that strikes you as important. It does not have to be long—keeping it to a singular, complete thought can be helpful. Write it down in your journal. One helpful way of choosing this would be to ask yourself the question: Which verse(s) of this reading section would be helpful to memorize?

Observation. Explore and reflect on the passage. Look beyond the passage that you wrote down, and read around it—what can you find out about the context? Write down any observations that you make from the above passage. You can even access the resources listed on the last page of this journal to help you! Does anything surprise you or seem significant? Is there any interesting or repetitive language being used? Are there any confusing parts? Do you have any questions about what you've read? Write it all down here.

Ask. Speak directly with God's Spirit, and ask questions like:

- What are you saying to me?
- What are you doing in my life and surroundings?
- How can I cooperate with you?
- What do you want to teach me about what I've read?

Take some time for silence and write down what comes to mind. This is also an excellent place to ask questions that came up in the previous phase as well!

Praise. Take time to write down at least one or two specific things you are grateful for that day. Take a moment to thank God in your own words and to worship him. You can do this with or without music. If you want to use music, you can find worship music on Spotify, and/or sing, or play an instrument if you are able! Feel free to get creative. The use of visual art, movement, poetry, etc. are all great ways to engage in praise! Also, remember that praise doesn't always mean you have to be happy—some of the most meaningful praise comes from suffering lips. The Scriptures are full of praise that is **lament**—expressing our sadness and confusion *to* God, instead of running *from* him because of them. Be honest with him—even your articulation of your problems, fears, or grief counts as praise (and sometimes is the very moment he gives you peace from his presence).

> "Yes, whoever continues to ask will receive. Whoever continues to look will find. And whoever continues to knock will have the door opened for them."
> -Jesus, in Matthew 7.8 (ERV)

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extra resources...

...for reading:

- The Bible App: bible.com
- Dwell Audio Bible App: dwellapp.io
- Streetlights Audio Bible: streetlightsbible.com

...for studying:

- Filament Bible by Tyndale: bit.ly/3RqXt1H
- BibleGateway.com
- BlueLetterBible.org
- BibleHub.com
- Logos.com
- StepBible.org
- NetBible.org

...for learning:

- BibleProject.com
- BibleRecap.com
- PracticingTheWay.org
- BibleEngagementProject.com

SCRIPTURE: Psalms, chapter 1

> "Instead you thrill to God's Word,
> you chew on Scripture day and night.
> You're a tree replanted in Eden,
> bearing fresh fruit every month,
> Never dropping a leaf,
> always in blossom." - psalm 1v3-4 (msg)

OBSERVATION:

* lots of journey/posture language: walk, way (x2), stand, path, sit, seat.
* what does it mean, "stand in the judgment?"
* there's a lot of tree/garden words being used: tree, fruit, streams, leaf, etc.
* what in the world is "chaff?"
* how can I (or anyone) "delight" in law?

ASK:

I think God might be inviting me to see the importance of my choices and how they come from what I delight in. All the plant and fruit language reminds me of the garden of Eden... which was also a place of choice, ironically involving two trees. I asked God about delighting in the law...I'm not sure I feel like I have an answer or understand it any better yet, but maybe it will come as I keep reading and asking. Oh, and I looked up chaff-it's the husk of grains when they've been separated from the grain itself—kind of like the unwanted waste, and usually lightweight enough to fly away in the wind. It seems clear that God wants me to live a rooted, fruitful life, instead of a windblown, worthless one. It seems to come from that "delighting in His law" thing...I asked Him about it, but I'm still struggling to see how "law" could be something even remotely connected to the idea of "delight."

PRAISE:

I am grateful for food today! I missed lunch, and by the time dinnertime rolled around, I was feeling it. It is an incredible blessing to have access to sufficient food, and I hope I never take it for granted. I hope I can develop a desire similar to hunger for this time with God. Also, the weather was SO beautiful today! Crazy how God creates a world that itself creates beauty in perpetuity...like God created a creation that keeps on creating...mind-blowing!