

SIT
WITH
ME

AN INVITATION TO
MEET WITH JESUS
IN GOD'S WORD



A FAITHPATH RESOURCE



THEFAITHPATH.ORG

SIT WITH ME

A **FAITHPATH** Bible Study

Faith Bible Church of The Woodlands, Texas

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This study is a part of your growth in discipleship. Most people involved at any level in a local Jesus-centered church would tell you that discipleship is important, but ask people to define discipleship and many will stumble.

Jesus explained the essence of discipleship in **Matthew 10:24-25**: *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher and the slave like his master."* This is what we see first: Christian discipleship is about becoming like Jesus.

Again in **Mark 3:13-14**, the author describes Jesus' invitation to discipleship and its nature: *"And He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed the twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach..."* Next, discipleship is about being with Jesus.

It is from these and other beautiful passages that we arrive at a clear and biblical definition for discipleship:

Christian discipleship is the lifelong pursuit of nearness and submission to Jesus our Master, developing in yourself Jesus' character, values and mission.

This is discipleship. It is beautifully complex yet powerfully simple. It is all about following near to Jesus and becoming like Him. But how do you actually do that?

In an effort to answer this question, a team and I have worked hard to represent all that Jesus and the New Testament says about Christian discipleship in a manner accessible to everyone interested in following Jesus. It was not easy and took many years of study, research, prayer and conversation. The final product is alarmingly simple.

We call it **FAITHPATH**. It is a map of twelve circles, with each circle representing a specific biblical aspect of discipleship. While the map is simple, it captures a lifelong adventure on multiple levels of knowledge and practice, grace and truth, being and doing.





There are three critical points to understand about the **FAITHPATH** map. First, it is just that - a map. The content, practices, study and relationships involved in each step of discipleship cannot be fully represented in a map, just as the beautiful diversity of any city cannot be represented by a dot and a name.

The map is a teaching tool. Parents and mentors can easily sit down with a disciple and walk through the map, asking if an individual understands each step and where they have and have not taken significant action. It also functions as a diagnostic tool for an individual wanting to track her own spiritual maturity in specific steps of discipleship. (See www.thefaithpath.org for content, studies and action steps.)

Second, and most critical, there is one and only one starting point for Christian discipleship: trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation. This is the first circle in the map, with a double border. Discipleship is all about Jesus and personal faith in Jesus is the non-negotiable starting point. Jesus, the Son of God, accomplished all that is necessary for our redemption and salvation by His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Jesus Himself and the Scriptures constantly represent faith as the only requirement for salvation. "...*whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*" (**John 3:16**)

Where are you with Jesus? Have you trusted Him for salvation and life? It is God's design for each individual person to move toward a Jesus-centered life. This is where you will find the deepest meaning, the greatest joy and the best relationships.

Apart from this essential first step, Christian discipleship is not a strict chronological or sequential journey. While the Scriptures communicate specific elements of discipleship, each individual life will follow a unique path. In addition, while some actions may naturally come earlier than others may, Jesus has invited all of His followers to discover and experience the same things. That is why the twelve circles on the map will work with any 7 or 97 year old, male or female, across cultures. Every follower of Jesus is invited to explore His distinct and individual invitation in each of these steps.

Finally, after placing faith in Jesus for salvation, the disciple will never graduate or fully conquer most of the steps on the map. You need baptism only once to publicly profess your faith in Jesus and to identify with His death and resurrection, but you will also need to understand baptism in ever-deepening ways as you share and mentor others. Learning how to spend time with Jesus, how to be generous and how to practice grace with others are all lifelong pursuits. Most of them are.

Take some time examining the **FAITHPATH** map for yourself. Become familiar with it. Refer to it often. Create your map by determining in which steps you have experienced significant growth and on which steps you need to focus for more growth, prayer and maturity. Finally, become familiar enough with the map to walk someone else through the steps of Christian discipleship.

FAITHPATH

DISCIPLESHIP MAP





CONSIDERATIONS AS YOU EXPLORE THE FAITHPATH MAP FOR YOURSELF

1. Have I trusted in Jesus for salvation?

If you have placed faith in Jesus Christ, then you have begun the journey of discipleship.

2. What circles have you already explored as you follow Jesus?

While these may not be completed yet, you have already enjoyed some movement in this area.

3. What circles are new to you and need your attention?

You have not considered this aspect of discipleship yet or have not experienced great movement in this area.

4. Identify 2 or 3 circles from the second list (those that need more attention).

Pursue intentional exploration in these areas. For help go to www.thefaithpath.org

Learning how to spend time with Jesus is perhaps the most important aspect of Christian discipleship after the starting point of placing your faith in Jesus for salvation. This step involves several specific practices and pursuits that will occupy the rest of your life, such as worship, prayer, fasting, Scripture study and many others. While one can achieve great success in these things, complete mastery is always out of reach. You will always be a learner in this area. Spending unhurried time with Jesus your Master is critical to becoming like Him. Remember, That is the first thing mentioned in **Mark 3:14**, *“that they would be with Him.”*

Like any relationship, this nearness with Jesus must be developed and deepened over time. You must actually learn how to spend time with Jesus, and in the ways that He most desires.

This study zooms in on only one of these elements. It is all about relearning how to read, study and enjoy God’s Word. After His Spirit, the Bible is one of the greatest gifts and tools God has given His children. Through the Scriptures, God transforms your heart, teaches you how to hear His voice, instructs you, convicts you and trains you for holiness. It all begins by saying yes to Jesus’ invitation, *“Sit with Me.”*



SIT WITH ME

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF TIME SPENT WITH JESUS

On a recent family vacation to the Massachusetts Cape, I picked up the book *In the Heart of the Sea* by Nathaniel Philbrick. It is the story of the whale-ship Essex, whose home port was the island of Nantucket, an island just off the Cape where my family and I were staying, and the epicenter of the whaling industry in the 19th Century. Because I was reading from this location, it was as if the drama was playing out in the waters before me.

I started the book only slightly familiar with the story. I had not seen the recent movie by the same title, nor had I read *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, which is based on the true story of the Essex being sunk deep in the Pacific Ocean by a unruly sperm whale. I was expecting drama, intrigue and adventure in the book, and it did not disappoint. However, the story of the Essex, its captain and crew is less about a whale than it is about survival. Stranded with no food and little else at perhaps the most remote spot on Earth, the story quickly turns to matters of willpower, leadership, nutrition, starvation, and death. Philbrick's vivid and lengthy description of what happens to the human body in the starvation and dehydration process is both fascinating and stomach-wrenching. By God's grace, some survived the unimaginable experience. Most did not.

I wonder how many followers of Jesus are suffering from similar effects today. Spiritual starvation and dehydration have distanced many Christians from health, strength, vigor and power in the Lord. Distance from regular time in God's Word is at the very center of this problem. This life-stealing separation from regular time in the Scriptures, as we will see, can be created by guilt, intimidation, fear or any of their ugly grandchildren.

The remedy is a feast. God has untold stories of delicacies and delights to give and share. Your Heavenly Father desires to speak to you, to heal, to guide, and to transform. Again, it all begins by accepting Jesus' invitation, "Sit with Me."

Multiple studies have shown that most Christians struggle to read their Bible on their own. Some have revealed that as much as 80% of church-going Christians rarely or irregularly read their Bible outside of church worship services. This alarming statistic reveals a shocking level of spiritual starvation in most churches. This reality is directly connected to the daily experience of Christians in these churches.

But there is an opportunity for great change. Consider the following statement from the book *Move*, an extensive ministry survey conducted by Willow Creek Church in Illinois.¹ ***Reflection on Scripture is the most powerful Spiritual Practice for every segment of the Local Church Family.*** In all of their study of various events, ministries, life-stages, programs and needs, their conclusion was so simple that it runs the risk of being missed: Daily reading of Scripture is the single most important aspect of spiritual growth in a church family.

Did you catch that? That simple idea is the heart behind this study. The single most important aspect of spiritual growth in a church family is regular reflection on Scripture. Reading God's Word is not only critical for the individual soul, it is vital to the health of the local church. This is why a study like "Sit With Me" is necessary.

Many Christians "eat" only on Sunday. With one meal a week, the Sunday sermon, many believers have learned how to survive on very little, irrespective even of the quality of the sermon. What is more, typical church attendance in our area of the country is sporadic at best, with most people who identify as churchgoers or church members showing up somewhere between one to three Sundays a month. This is very little spiritual food.

Are you starving? Worse, have you become so used to scant spiritual nourishment that you have become acclimated and accustomed to malnourishment and starvation? Have you ever experienced what it is like to be healthy and full? Please know that only a spiritually healthy person can make great spiritual impact and produce great spiritual fruit. It all begins with sitting with Jesus, spending time with God. It is the start. It is the center. There is no substitute.

Consider with me, the great power and wide benefits of consistent, unhurried, fruitfully "loud" time with God in His Word. What would change if your heart became hungrier for consistent time with Jesus? What could happen if your mind became trained to read and understand God's Word for yourself? What if hearing from God became a regular occurrence? What if you enjoyed it? A lot?

What you hold in your hand is a powerful tool. It has the potential to change your life completely. It is, at the same time, training for the individual Christian disciple and a community project. There is work to be done privately first. Then there is conversation and prayer to be done with at least one other believer. If you are a part of a small group, that is the perfect setting for a study like this. If you are not, then now is the time to join one. This is also perfect for families.

I believe you can do most of this study in about 20 minutes a day. Of course, you could spend a lot longer, and hopefully you will be able to someday. But for most folks, a good concentrated and distraction-free 20 minutes will be a great start.

Scot Pollok
Lead Pastor, Faith Bible Church

ESSENTIAL TOOLS

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

There are six essential tools for this study.

BIBLE

A good physical Bible is absolutely essential to this study. By physical, I mean paper-page-turning and not electronic. The translation is up to you, but for the purposes of this study choose one that is a translation (New American Standard, NIV or ESV) and not a paraphrase (The Message).

PENCIL AND HIGHLIGHTER

A sharp pencil (because you will probably want to erase at some point) is a helpful tool for navigating your Bible study. I like mechanical graphing pencils. A highlighter is also a good tool to have on hand. I use a good quality colored pencil because it can be erased also.

JOURNAL OR NOTEBOOK

While the margin of my Bible is the first place I go to write something brief (whether it be a word or phrase or reference verse), there will be many times that God reveals something that demands more space. You will want to have a small journal or notebook on hand (I like one the same size as my Bible).

A SCHEDULED TIME

Sitting with God in His Word in our day and age demands thought, preparation and discipline. This means you need to schedule it. Look at your calendar and figure it out. I recommend that you choose the time of day when you are at your very best. I believe you can do most of this study in about 20 minutes, but try to set aside 30-60 minutes each day for maximum impact.

A DESIGNATED SPACE

This study cannot be done in a car or on a walk. You will need to designate a space to meet with God. Ideally, you will need a table, counter or desk-like space to sit, and place your Bible and journal. You will need to write. You will also need to think and pray. You will want to put your phone away and unplug from all other devices. Silence is best. Space is important.

A COMMUNITY GROUP AND MEETING SCHEDULE

This study will be most influential with access to a community of fellow believers. Discussing what you have learned, being able to ask honest questions and hearing the experiences and feedback of others will greatly encourage your discipline and rhythm with God.

STUDY BREAKDOWN

ESTABLISHING DISCIPLINE AND RHYTHM

This study is divided into sections that will help you understand its movement and help develop a personal flow to time alone with Jesus.

WEEK INTRODUCTION

Each week begins with a short introduction. It will set up the theme or practice of that week and will be an essential part of your growth and training. Each introduction includes a MEMORY VERSE that you will work to commit to memory. Do not skip or rush this section.

SIT WITH ME: SIX DAILY READINGS

This is the heart of the study. These SIX daily entries will help you develop regular rhythm in God's Word. It is also a reminder that God is constantly asking you to sit with Him, and this study will encourage you to sit with Jesus every day. We chose to include six days a week in this study but you can easily expand that to seven if you wish.

Each daily "sit with me" reading should begin and end with prayer. Try to linger in this time. The goal is unhurried time with God, where you have minimal outside pressures or distractions.

Note: Things happen that are out of your control. But within your control, the rhythms of your schedule and responsibilities, work hard toward developing regular rhythm with Jesus. If you struggle or fail to do so, feel no guilt, just jump back in. Never let yesterday's failure steal the joy of today's opportunities with God.

INSIGHTS

These brief side notes reveal specific tools and instruments to help you study God's Word for a lifetime.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

These closing questions will help you discuss the study within a larger group. This section will also help those who facilitate small group discussion, whether it be a family study or a small group within the church.

GOD'S GOAL

WEEK ONE

WEEK ONE

GOD'S GOAL

While in my undergraduate studies, and simply because I already worked for the university, I was asked to serve at the opening of the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library on the campus of Texas A&M University. All living U.S. Presidents were in attendance. My job was to stand in one spot and look official. For several hours I confirmed passes and allowance into the prime VIP section. To my astonishment, one guest was the Terminator, then governor of California. I am positive I did not check his pass. I turned, gasped, stepped back and immediately let him in. I am also positive I was reduced to a mouth-breather for a few seconds. Once I got over the awe and intimidation of that moment, I remember thinking to myself, "Huh, I thought he would be taller."

When it comes to reading the Bible, many see it as a giant, intimidating and daunting. Yes, intimidation is still a problem for adults too. I have personally talked with dozens of people who do not enjoy regular time in God's Word because of intimidation and fear. "I just don't understand it," they will say. "I haven't been to seminary." On the other hand, perhaps the hardest one, "I never seem to get out of God's Word what you get out of it on Sunday mornings, so I must be doing something wrong." In the end, most people just avoid it so long that they effectively give up.

I believe it will help you immensely to see God's heart behind the gift of His Scriptures and why He gave them to us.

This study will focus on dismantling the lie of intimidation and fear when it comes to God's Word. God longs to reveal Himself to you and the more you sit with Him, the more He speaks. The more you sit with Jesus, thinking and reading and studying God's Word, the easier it becomes to hear God's voice.

Consider this truth: understanding God's Word is primarily the concern of God's Holy Spirit. Think about that for a second. The Spirit communicates truth and opens up God's Word for the believer. God's Word was written to and for the common woman and man. Remember, most of the original audiences of biblical letters and books were illiterate and uneducated. Seminary is not required. Depth of understanding comes from the Spirit of God revealing it to your heart. It is a product of time and discipline to engage.

So how do you break in? How do you regain some ground and reestablish your priorities with God's priorities? Your first step must be to align your goal in reading God's Word with God's goal.

The ultimate purpose of the Bible is transformation, not simply education. Let me say it another way: ***God's Word does not seek to primarily inform. It reveals God's character, values and mission so that you are forever changed in every way.*** This includes your mind, but does not end there. God wants your heart, your language, your actions, your relationships, your everything. God reveals Himself in the Scriptures to change us, to set us free, to bring light and hope, grace and redemption.

God does not play hard to get. God is not hiding Himself. He gladly reveals Himself and His will in His Word. Everyone who wants to know God has access to Him in the Scriptures. He is inviting you, "Sit with Me."

Look at the specific goals mentioned in **2 Timothy 3:16-17**: *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* This text includes information (teaching) but goes far beyond mere education. God does not seem as occupied with authoritarian intimidation as we ascribe to Him. This text seems to say that the Scripture is given to us as a great gift. And the result of consistent time in God's Word is the kind of life that can handle just about anything.

If God's expressed goal in His Word were to educate you into a biblical and theological genius-level-Bible-answer-professional, then overcoming the intimidation of this goal would be very difficult. However, as we have seen, this is not God's goal. Even though God may develop great wisdom in you over time, God's explicit goal is to transform your heart and life. It is all about becoming more like Jesus. Again, this is what discipleship is all about.

His goal is for you to be more free, to be more joyful, to be more protected from sin and evil, to be more holy, to be a more powerful player in His mission to the world. God invites you to sit with Him because He longs to reveal Himself to you. God is a Father who speaks. You engage God's Word to see Him more clearly, to know Him more intimately, so that you may be like Him more completely. It is all about revelation that leads to life change. Jesus-centered transformation, spiritual growth and maturity are the final goal of every Bible study, and no Bible study is complete until it reaches this point in real lives.

WEEK ONE GOD'S GOAL

MEMORY VERSE

“For it is not an idle word for you;
indeed it is your life.”

- Deuteronomy 32:47

Commit this scripture to memory. This is a powerful way to constantly engage God's Word and write it on your heart.

Consider writing it on a post-it or note-card and putting it in a prominent place like your bathroom mirror or car dashboard. Work on it each day. This simple practice reminds you to dwell on God's Word constantly.



Sitting with Jesus in God's Word is a give and take. He gives to you and takes from you. You give to Him and receive from Him.

This back and forth should be like a growing relationship. This is why prayer is absolutely critical to this study and to Bible study in general.

Prayer is the beginning and end of all Bible study. God wants to speak to you. Listen to Him.

God also invites you to speak to Him. Pray and ask questions with honesty and vulnerability.

Please use your journal to write prayer notes, requests, answers and to record the beautiful things God reveals.

INSIGHTS

NAVIGATING YOUR BIBLE

Understanding how to navigate your Bible is important. We refer to Scripture passages by referencing the name of the book and then the chapter and verse, such as John 3:16. The name “John” refers to the Gospel of John, the fourth book of the New Testament. The number 3 refers to the chapter and the number after the colon (16) refers to the verse. These reference numbers may be found within the text but were added much later by scholars for easy reference.

Some Bibles, such as “reference” or “study” Bibles, include additional notes and notations. For example, **John 6:14** looks like this in the New American Standard Bible: *“Therefore when the people saw the ¹sign which He had performed, they said, ‘This is truly the ^aProphet who is come into the world.’”*

Carefully notice the “1” before the word “sign” and the “a” before the word “Prophet.” These tiny marks refer to notes in the margin or at the bottom of the page. Find verse 14 in the margin or at the bottom of the page and “sign” will be explained and “Prophet” will have topical cross-references to other Bible passages.

These references help us understand both the original language of the verse and explore other verses that refer to the same concept. Under ¹, we see the word “sign” also means “attesting miracle.” This is an alternate translation of the Greek word. Under ^a, we see the background to the title “the Prophet” finds further explanation in **Matthew 11:3**, **Matthew 21:11**, and **John 1:21**. (Abbreviations of books are listed in the first few pages of your Bible.) Looking up these other verses will add depth and insight to **John 6:14**.

Most Bibles also have helpful resources in the front and back, including a table of contents, maps, and a concordance, which is an alphabetical list of keywords and terms found in the biblical text. “Study” Bibles have notes and further insights on every page. For beginning students or the highly curious, I recommend a “Study” Bible. Spend some time investigating these sections of your Bible and become familiar with how to use them for maximum impact. They are tools for you to use.

WEEK ONE / DAY ONE

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your Word."

Find the book of Psalms in your Bible and read **Psalm 1**. Read it once slowly. Then read it slowly three more times.

Feel free to write in your Bible. Highlight or circle important words or phrases and write notes, thoughts, and questions in the margin.

What does this Psalm tell you about God?

What does it reveal about God's Word, "the law of the Lord"?

What does it say about you?

Close by converting **Psalm 1** into a personal prayer and praying through it for yourself.

WEEK ONE / DAY TWO

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

"Make me walk in the path of Your word, for that is where my happiness is found."

Find and read **John 5:24** three times slowly. This is Jesus speaking to a rough crowd.

What does Jesus say in **John 5** about eternal life?

Find and read **Ephesians 2:8-9** three times slowly. This is Paul writing about salvation.

What does Paul say in Ephesians 2 about being saved? How is a person saved from their sins?

Today consider your own heart.

Where are you with God right now?

Where would you like to be with God?

Think about these things and translate them into a conversation with God in prayer.

Close your time in prayer.

WEEK ONE / DAY THREE

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

*"The unfolding of Your word gives light.
Let your Word be a lamp to my feet, a
light to my path."*

Read **John 14:16-17**. Slow down and try to understand Jesus' words here. He is speaking to his best friends about what will happen after He dies and leaves the earth.

Next read **John 14:25-27**.

What seems to be Jesus' main concern in these passages?

How does Jesus encourage His disciples?

How will they receive help, truth, and peace after He is gone?

How could this apply to you?

Close your time in prayer.

WEEK ONE / DAY FOUR

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

*"Your Word, O God, revives me.
It comforts me in all of my troubles."*

Read **John 16:5-15**. This is Jesus talking to His followers before His death. Although this message was specifically for them, its truth has great impact and relevance for you.

Think about the role of the Holy Spirit in this text. What does Jesus say about the Spirit?

What will the Spirit do in the life of the disciples?

What do you want him to do in your life as you engage God in the Scriptures?

Close your time in prayer.

WEEK ONE / DAY FIVE

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

"You are my hiding place and shield, O God. I wait for Your word. Sustain me according to Your word, that I may live."

Read **Ephesians 1:17-21** through several times. Work to understand every word and idea. This is a prayer by the Apostle Paul for some believers that he knew very well.

What does the prayer say about how you get to know God?

What does it say about God's role in this growing relationship?

Identify three things you want for your relationship and intimacy with Jesus and close your time by asking God for these in prayer.

WEEK ONE / DAY SIX

Begin in prayer to God and include this prayer from **Psalm 119**.

"Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let sin have any dominion over me."

Read **Romans 12:1-2** slowly twice. Work to understand each word and idea.

Read **Ephesians 5:1-2** slowly three times.

What do these two texts have in common?

What are they encouraging or commanding you to do?

Close your time in prayer.

BE FREE

If at any point you fall behind in your daily readings, do not give way to guilt, despair or resignation. Never let yesterday's failure keep you from the beauty God wants to reveal today. His mercies are ever new. His grace is abundant. Just skip ahead and jump right back in. God wants to speak to you right now.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

Share with your group how you engaged the reading and study this week. Did you sit with Jesus regularly?

How did this study help you explore God's Word more deeply and inspire you to sit with Jesus more consistently?

What is your story of faith in Jesus?
Are you a believer? How did you come to faith?

Is it really critical to read the Bible to walk closely with Jesus?

Are you regularly and independently reading the Bible now?
Why or why not?

What insights might you gain from a deeper understanding of God's Word? List as many insights as you can.

What has been your goal in Bible reading up to this point?
What is God's goal for your time in His Word?

How have you allowed guilt to affect your time in God's Word?

In what ways have you been afraid of reading God's Word?

What was your favorite part of Psalm 1?

How does the image of the tree in Psalm 1 encourage or convict you?

What is the role of the Holy Spirit of God as you engage God in the Scriptures?

What are the major obstacles to your spending more unhurried time in God's Word?

What insights did you gain from the other readings this week?

WEEK ONE
GOD'S GOAL



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