

THE S.O.A.P. BIBLE STUDY METHOD

One simple but effective model for studying the Bible is called S.O.A.P. The acrostic S.O.A.P. stands for Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. As you prepare for this week's Life Group, we encourage you to begin practicing this method on the passage. Here is a brief breakdown of the steps below.

- **Scripture-** Read the Scripture passage above slowly and ask the Lord to give you insight into His Word for yourself and for your group.
- **Observation-** Begin walking through the passage by making observations about the text. What are some things that stand out to you as you read it? What questions come to your mind as you read the passage? What words or phrases seem like they are important to understanding the meaning of the passage? Are there any words that are repeated more than once? What does this passage say about God? Are there any lists in the passage? Is this passage telling us how to do something or is it something happening to you?
- **Application-** Write down a few ways that this passage applies to us as Christians. How has God spoken to your heart through your time in His word? Are there any principles discovered in the observation section that can be applied for your group? Take a few moments and write down a few things that God wants you to focus on for this week's discussion.
- **Prayer-** Pray over the things that God has shown you. Ask God to first work in your heart through what you've learned. Pray for your group and for your upcoming meeting. Ask God to lead your group and give you wisdom as you discuss this week's content.

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC

Sometimes life feels too burdensome because we have too much going on. How do we relieve the tension? Listen in as we are challenged by three spiritual practices that require letting go of something for the sake of grabbing hold of God's rest.

For more insights relating to this week's sermon, see <https://newbreak.church/blog/> . We post a new blog every Sunday which coincides with the sermon passage or theme from that day.

ICEBREAKER

1) When were you most motivated to train for something? What was it and why were you so motivated?

2) Do you have positive feelings or negative feelings towards our discussion on Spiritual Disciplines? Why?

DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE SERMON

Read: Matthew 11:28–30

As you read through these verses keep these questions in mind:

- What value does this chapter add to what we understand about God?
- What are some of the things that stand out to you when you read the passage?

—DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

In our sermon this week, we busted these “myths” of Spiritual Disciplines:

- Myth #1 - They are only for the super spiritual followers of Jesus.
 - Truth - They're for everyday followers of Jesus.
- Myth #2 - Spiritual practices are all unpleasant.
 - Truth- They're a pathway to peace, joy and maturity.
- Myth #3 - Spiritual practices are a barometer for how spiritual I am.

- Truth- We engage in spiritual disciplines because they can lead us into God’s life not because they prove how spiritual we are. The real issue is what kind of people we’re becoming NOT the exercises of spiritual disciplines we are engaging in.
- Myth #4 - Spiritual practices are a way to earn favor with God.
 - Truth- Spiritual disciplines help us to change and grow. They are a “means of grace.”

Which of these myths do you struggle with? How has your perspective on spiritual disciplines changed the longer you have been a Christian? How do you avoid becoming legalistic with the practice of your disciplines?

Point 1 – Practice Sabbath to let go of life’s ongoing hurry.

Read: Matthew 11:28–30

In this famous passage, Jesus offers believers to take his “yoke” and thereby find “rest.” Jesus offers us Sabbath rest by offering us Himself. The kind of rest He is referring to in this passage is the same root word used for Sabbath rest in the Old Testament.

His invitation is to those who are weary and burdened (verse 28). The Greek makes it clear that the “weary” are so by their own vain efforts. The “burdened” are those who have been victims to the burdens of the broken world. Either way, Jesus invites the spiritually exhausted to lay aside the yoke they are under (because we are all yoked to something!) and take on His yoke, which is one that will provide rest for our souls.

Verses 29 and 30 mention the yoke (Greek: *zugos*), which usually was an agricultural metaphor but also (pertinently here) in the context of a Rabbi to a student. As a student yoked to a Rabbi, so those who respond to the call of Jesus will “learn from” Him (Matt 11:29). The conjunction “because” in verse 29 probably refers to the reason of learning from Jesus, *because* He is “gentle and lowly in heart.” Perhaps the pairing of words is meant to imitate the metaphor of a yoke, binding two beings together. So, the “weary and burdened” find “rest” by taking up the yoke of the “gentle and lowly” Rabbi. The initiation of faith requires the participant’s active taking of the yoke and learning from Jesus. From there, once yoked, the disciple’s life is no longer isolated but cooperating as their whole existence has transitioned into companionship.

The analogy of the yoke is not meant to exempt the disciple from labor. On the contrary, the disciple who is yoked to Jesus takes on His mantle. Inherently, the yoke of Jesus comes with fresh responsibilities, but also newfound privileges. For the disciple yoked to Jesus, labor comes out a place of rest as opposed to toiling toward the goal of rest without any attainment of it.

As Augustine famously said: “For You have formed us for Yourself and our souls are restless until they find rest in You.” – Augustine of Hippo

While Jesus certainly gives us rest when we meet Him in the day-to-day rhythms, the ancient practice of Sabbath is equally biblical and beneficial. Read our [blog post on Sabbath by clicking here](#) and see how Sabbath is so much more than just a “day off work.”

(DISCUSS):

- Do you have a day where you practice Sabbath? If so, how has this been valuable? If not, is it something you are willing to try? What day of the week will be your Sabbath?
- What is the difference between practicing “Sabbath” and taking a day off work? How does this distinction help guide us?
- How does Jesus give rest? How can you cultivate rhythms of rest with Jesus in your weekly life?

—Additional Insight—

Ruthlessly eliminating hurry from our lives does not mean we will never be busy. Jesus often had much to do, but he never did it in a way that severed the life-giving connection between him and his Father. Jesus was often busy, but never hurried. “Busy” is an outward condition (a condition of the body where there are many things to do). “Hurry” is an inward condition (a condition of the soul). It means to be so preoccupied that I’m unable to be fully present with God, with myself and with other people. Busy-ness migrates to hurry when we let it squeeze God out of our lives.

It all comes down to finding a **pace** of life that is both sustainable and fruitful. We have to factor in a certain level of productivity. Read our blog post on [pace by clicking here](#) for more on this.

Is my pace sustainable? What do I need to change in my life to avoid the “hurry” lifestyle?

Point 2 – Practice solitude to let go of life’s constant noise.

Read: Matthew 14:13, 23

Silence and solitude are the practice of making intentional time to be quiet and alone with ourselves and God. Jesus made a regular practice of this.

Notice that, even for Jesus, solitude didn’t just happen. Though Jesus was truly God, He also was truly human, and so in His humanity He recognized his need for solitude. He models for us what it means to get alone with God, let go of all the noise, and find rest with the Father. Think about it this way, if even Jesus (being God) needs alone time with God (the Father) than how much more do we?

Richard Foster (the author of the classic, *Celebration of Discipline*) says: “What we must clearly understand and underscore is that our real task [in solitude] is to create a space in our lives where

God can reach us. Once that space has been created, we wait quietly, expectantly. From this point on, the work belongs to God.”

(DISCUSS):

- Isolation is unhealthy, yet solitude is healthy. What is the difference between isolation and solitude?
- Does Jesus’s example of solitude inspire you to practice this spiritual discipline? If so, how can you begin to practice this discipline?

“We may not be able to quiet the world; but we can quiet our soul.”

- Have you ever experienced a “quiet” soul moment? What was it like? Why was it refreshing? What things can be done to help facilitate times where we quiet our soul?

—Additional Insight—

Maybe you have tried practicing solitude and silence, but just couldn’t get rid of all the things plaguing your mind with worry. That is normal! When you are trying to have some time of solitude, it may help to begin your time with what is sometimes called a “grounding prayer.” The point of this kind of prayer is to gently place yourself in the moment without needing to tend to the thousands of things that grapple for your attention.

Here is a sample prayer of how this might look:

Lord, You know my heart. There are things I am excited about and things I am worried about. On top of this, I feel the impulse of distractions, perhaps even spiritual misdirections! With all of this, I acknowledge that my worries are real and need resolve, but I trust You. I can hand those worries to You because You care and are far more resourceful than I am. I lay down my worries and distractions before You. This time together is sacred. You are fully engaged in this moment and I am trying my best to be. Give me the desire to desire this precious time. Meet me here, though I come imperfectly. Help keep my focus on You, and let me experience the joy of Your presence. You are here, and in this moment, I am here with You. Amen.

(Homework Activity Idea): In your own words, write your own “grounding prayer” that you can use to settle yourself into times of solitude. No one knows how to speak to your soul like you do, so try to write it not to be impressive, but to practically speak to your own needs.

Point 3 – Practice fasting to let go of distractions

Read: Acts 13:2–3 & Isaiah 58:6–7

Fasting is most beneficial as a situational practice. There is nothing in the New Testament commanding Christians to fast a certain number of times. There are no imperatives for the frequency of fasting. The assumption is that Christians will fast, that is why Jesus gives instruction with the presumption “*when* you fast...” (Matthew 6:16). However, what we can learn from Scripture is that fasting is usually led by the Spirit for a situational time with a goal in mind. The other disciplines are meant to be experienced regularly (weekly even), but fasting is more occasional and usually divinely inspired with a purpose to call for the fast.

Examples: Reasons to fast (from a biblical perspective):

- Realigning ourselves to God as an act of repentance (Joel 1:13–14)
- Seeking God’s intervention in a particular situation (Esther 4:15–16)
- Seeking clarity and guidance from God (Acts 13:1–3)

(DISCUSS):

- Have you ever fasted? If so, what was your experience like?
- Reading the passages listed above (Joel 1:13–14; Esther 4:15–16; Acts 13:1–3) what can we learn about fasting?

—Summary—

The practices we have discussed are practices of “letting go,” they are not about doing more but actually about less. The process of incorporating these spiritual disciplines requires simplifying our lifestyles so that we have margin for them. Through these practices we are more reflective, aware of ourselves, and (most importantly) aware of God’s presence.

Sabbath is a weekly practice where we take a day to not be a slave to our productivity.

Solitude is a regular practice where we designate an allotted time (weekly or daily) to simply be with ourselves and with God.

Fasting is an occasional practice that is usually initiated by a deep need for personal or corporate revival, or for the sake of personal or corporate guidance.

Which practice comes most naturally to you and why? Which one do you feel encouraged to try?

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

- 1) How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

- 2) What is one thing you are walking away with from this discussion?
- 3) BONUS: For those of with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?