

Essential

Frederica Mathewes-Green is an accomplished writer and speaker. She doesn't start a day before praying. For Frederica, prayer is essential work before the work of the day begins. As she prays, she thinks and prays through the day. She has found that disciplines such as prayer and Scripture reading are primary means by which God provides the strength for her day. "Spiritual disciplines equip us to be healed people who can then go out and change our culture no matter where we are, how small or large our context," she says. "We can be the presence of Christ – the fragrance of Christ – in every place, and begin to change our world."

As FBC comes to the conclusion of our Fall Series, we consider the essential role of abiding in Christ. "Apart from me you can do nothing." When Jesus explained this reality to his disciples, he was doing us a great favor. Instead of banging our heads against the wall trying to live like Jesus and failing, he has given us the means to live the abundant life God has always had for us. The spiritual disciplines are a vital aspect of a life of abiding in Christ and serving him in the world.

Monday – Bound by Love

"I bind my heart in thrall to God, the Lord of all." Lauchlan Maclean Watt, 19th-20th c. Scottish pastor

1. Please read Colossians 3:12-14. How does God want us to act? What is our motivation for doing so?
2. It is one thing to be loved but it is another thing to know deep within one's heart that one is loved. How do we live in such a way that we grow in our understanding of God's intense love for us.
3. In Galatians 5:22-26, who are we to keep in step with in order to live the way God has called us to live? What does that look like in everyday practical ways?

Making it Personal: What steps can you take today to live in a way that is bound by God's love?

Tuesday – Giving God's Word a Dwelling Place

"Virtue never dwells alone, it always has neighbors." Chinese proverb

1. Please read Colossians 3:15-17. What does Paul urge you to do? Are some of these easier or harder for you? Why?
2. Compare verse 16 with Jesus' experience in Matthew 4:1-4. Why is God's Word so integral to our faith? How can living on a steady diet of God's word lead to being able to live for God in all you do?

Digging Deeper (optional): Read Deuteronomy 8:1-20. What did Moses say the Israelites would experience if they remembered God's word? What if they forgot God? How does that apply to you now?

Wednesday – Devoted to Prayer

"The need for solitude and quietness was never greater than it is today." A.W. Tozer, 20th c. American pastor

1. Please read Colossians 4:2-4. Who does Paul ask prayer for? Why?
2. In Colossians 4:5-6, Paul's focus changes slightly. How do those verses flow naturally from verses 2-4?
3. What practical advice does Peter give in 1 Peter 3:15-16 for the opportunities Paul mentioned?

Putting it into Practice: If you were asked why you are a Christian what would you say? How could you say it in a way that takes the needs/perspective of an unbeliever into consideration? Let's put it another way. If you were an unbeliever, how would you want someone to answer that question for you?

Thursday – Properly Motivated

"Motive, n. - An emotion, desire ... or similar impulse that acts as an incitement to action." (From the Latin root "motus," meaning "moved.") American Heritage Dictionary 4th ed. (© 2009)

1. Please read Matthew 6:1-8 & 16-18. What acts of righteousness are there in addition to fasting, prayer and giving to the poor? What spiritual disciplines do you engage in that would fit this general category?
2. How does Jesus' teaching here appear to contradict his earlier instruction in Matthew 5:13-16? Now look at Matthew 6 again and identify the actual dangers Jesus warned about.

Text Insight: These two passages are from a single sermon Jesus gave early in his ministry, the Sermon on the Mount. His listeners would have heard both these sets of instructions as one single message.

3. Read 1 Peter 4:10-11. What does this say about the help we need and the motives we should embrace?

Making it Personal: How can you carry out the instructions in Matthew 5 and 6 in a way that is consistent with each other, and which honors God and not yourself?

Friday – Abide in Jesus

"The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil, and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine; and at the right time, and in the right way, is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus." Hudson Taylor, 19th-20th c. British missionary

1. Please read John 15:1-4. What relationship does Jesus describe between God the Father, God the Son and you? How does this make you feel about your part in belonging to God? Why?
2. Please read John 15:5-8. What is the ultimate purpose of belonging to Jesus, according to verse 8?
3. Please read John 15:9-17. What have we received from Jesus (vv. 9-11)? How does Jesus describe our relationship with him now (vv. 13-15)? Who initiated and preserves that relationship (v. 16)?

Making it Personal: What can you do to abide in Jesus, remaining in him and living to honor him?

For the Weekend: Re-read Colossians 3:15-17, and describe in practical terms what it means for you to abide in Jesus.