

CONNECT

to

GOD'S

Super-Abundance

IN

YOUR

OWN

Way

By Deneen Troupe-Buitrago

About

Deneen wants you to ***Grow From Your Overflow*** by connecting you to the Super-abundance of God through a **Personalized Faith Plan (PFP)** that transforms your personal and professional life.

As a ***Christian-Faith Development Strategist*** she designs your **Personalized Faith Plan (PFP)** to help you understand yourself better and release you to allow the Holy Spirit to work in your life. Getting past what you think is the 'way' you should Worship, Pray, do Bible Study, and Service is the first step to reaching your heart language, your 'soul style'; giving you meaning and opening yourself to cooperating with God for your spiritual maturation.

Deneen's commitment to being a ***Titus Woman*** has allowed her to use her Teaching Expertise in a variety of other areas as well. As a ***Workshop Facilitator & Speaker*** she encourages women to love God and educates them so they can grow in their faith. As the ***GFYO Christian Women's Network Group Director***, she brings Christian Businesswomen together to network, connect and grow both personally and professionally.

Titus 2: 7- 8 says: "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned..."



Deneen Troupe-Buitrago, M. Ed

Introduction

Are you at a point on your spiritual journey that you want to develop a stronger relationship with Jesus yet you are not quite sure what to do to get to that next level? You are doing all the right things: Prayer, Bible Study, Worship, and such yet you feel stuck and want to go deeper. You find that the excitement for God's Word, spending time with Him, and prayer have become routine and is often neglected. The reality is that there is no fast answer or magic pill to get unstuck and tap into the Super-abundance of God. Relationships take commitment, energy, and time to develop and your relationship with God is no different.



What if there was a recipe though? What if you could cultivate your relationship with Christ in a manner developed specifically for you and how you best operate? You may know that the way to grow and deepen your connection to God is to spend time with Him. But what if the generic way you were taught as a child or through your local church just doesn't work for you? Where do you turn AND do you feel it is 'Biblical' to come to God any other way?



There is a way to thrive in your faith-walk when you know how to connect to Him in a way that is meaningful and fulfilling to you. Have you heard of the technical term, Spiritual Disciplines? I know, no one likes that word, so let me call them Practices. Today, in our society, we are used to that word.

Remember, to practice something means just that, practice. It does not mean mastery. It is a continuous process that you get better at doing and become stronger along the way. So, the relationship deepens, grows, and becomes more intimate because you are connecting to the Vine (Jesus) through the Practices.



George Barna wrote a book based on the Barna Group's research called, Maximum Faith. In it he describes ten stops in the Christian Faith. It is not until stop number four that a person confesses their sin and becomes a believer. Sadly, many people only move on to stop five, Commitment to Faith Activities, for the rest of their faith journey. They are happy just 'doing church'. Most who do go on to level six, Spiritual Discontent, either fall back to level five or go all the way back to level two; Aware of and Indifferent to Sin. This level six is a crisis moment in the believer's life and it could be exactly where you are and why you have picked up this book.

Only an extreme few (and I know you are one of them) move into the next levels that require: brokenness, surrender, submission, and radical dependence on God. It sounds a little scary, right? But, only by exploring these other levels can you experience profound intimacy and love for God and ultimately profound compassion and love for humanity. The rewards are HUGE. Cultivating these last stops on your faith journey is the key to true connection with God.



What does this mean for you? I see it this way: the problem is that many, or all, of us are taught one method to exercise our spiritual muscle. We are told to pray a certain way, participate in a particular Bible Study, Worship with music, and be plugged into Church sponsored activities in order to do Service.

Some of us, well, most of us, are experiencing spiritual dehydration. Are you thirsty for more of Jesus? Jesus said, “. . . whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst. . . .” (John 4:14 NASB). So why are you still searching for a way to be satisfied in Him? Why are you not able to drink from the fountain that is a, “. . . well of water springing up to eternal life.” (John 4:15 NASB).



The short answer is that you were not taught the right way. Let's face it, churches have to look at the big picture. They are like schools, doing what will work best for the masses. AND, it may work for most. It may even have worked for you, at least for a little while. But what happens when the Spiritual Discontent comes in and you reach out only to be told, 'Pray more and read your Bible'? Ugh! This is the point where many get lost because the guidance is not specific enough. Even Pastors, Sunday School Teachers and such do not have the tools to give you an answer that is designed just for you.



In order to satisfy your growth in Christ you need to know how you are designed specifically by God to relate to Him. AND, right now you do know that what you are doing is not working and no one seems to be able to give you answers that make sense to you. You definitely need something new and it needs to be personalized.

PPP

So, what are the Spiritual Disciplines (okay, from this point on I will call them Practices). If you look them up on the internet you will find a number of different variations. Some scholars categorize them as internal and external while others choose to focus on as little as six and others as many as twelve. I have been looking at them and have decided on eight for your personal growth with Christ. Are you ready?



Here are the Practices, in no particular order: Prayer & Meditation; Bible Reading, Study, & Memorization; Worship; Service & Hospitality; Fasting; Journaling; Sabbath; and Creative Solitude & Silence. I have combined and categorized Practices to make it easier to see how your personalized plan will fit into your REAL Spiritual growth.

Chapter 1

The Practice of Prayer & Meditation

This is a familiar practice. You know that Prayer & Meditation is the way to communicate with and get closer to God. And, the Bible tells us that even when we don't know what to pray. . . "the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. . . " (Romans 8:26 NASB). So, are you stressing because your 'prayer life' is not living up to an expectation placed on you by someone else? God's desire is to have an intimate relationship with you. Prayer is one component of that AND there are many components to Prayer. You need to develop your way of connecting.

How do you see prayer? Is it a grocery list? Is it all the things you need to get from Him? I have been involved in prayer groups where we are only interceding for all the prayer requests that have been shared. We never stop to take the time to thank God, praise Him, or even listen to Him. If this has been your experience, then you have only seen one aspect to prayer. In this pleading for others you leave out the personal connection to God that He desires for you. While intercession is an important aspect to prayer, it is only a part of true prayer.

Are you familiar with the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6)? That prayer is a model for us. It is a good place to start but those words are NOT the only words that should be repeated: Praying and Meditating do not mean simply saying the same words over and over again. As a person who needs variety (and you may be that way too) I could never keep using the same words or even the same formula and continue growing in my prayer life. This example of prayer does give structure but it also lends itself to ideas that grow your prayer life. Do you want a richer, more fulfilling prayer life? Then you must have more open and honest conversations with God.

You may be asking, 'Okay, so what does that mean for me?' 'How do I tap into the prayer methods and activities that are right for me?' Think about it this way. . . we are instructed to, "love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" in Deuteronomy 6:5 then Jesus adds the word Mind, in both Mark 12 and Luke 10.

So, let's approach each practice being reminded of these four characteristics; then we can begin to touch on your differences and your preferences to approach God in a way that is meaningful to you.

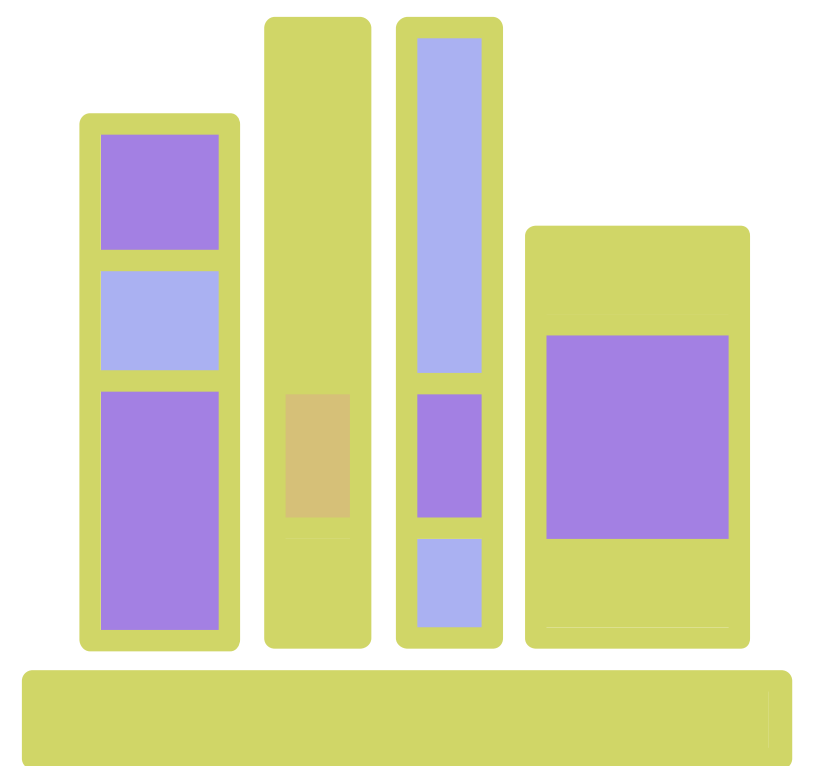


If we begin with the heart then we see Prayer through your emotions. How do you feel about God? Prayer through your soul is about your decisions, your morality, and your values.

It is the fabric of who you are. How are you cooperating with God for Him to change you? Prayer through your mind is just that, your intellect and knowledge. What does God say in His Word that He will do for you? Prayer through your strength involves your actual body. This can be the most difficult part of prayer, the physical time and energy to pray. When and How do you find time?

Chapter 2

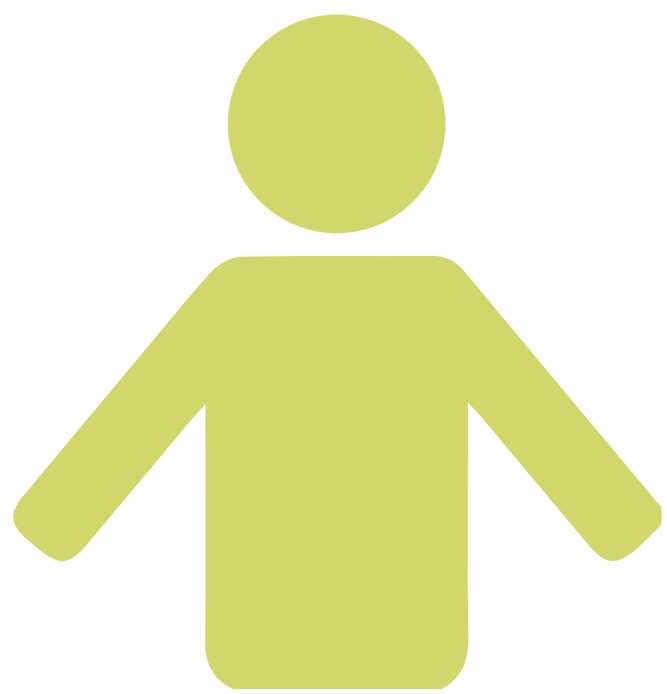
The Practice of Bible Reading, Study & Memorization



When was the last time you were in a group Bible Study?

Did it give you any deep insight into God's character and really allow you to know Him better? Many times we approach our Bible reading and study with our 'mind' lenses on and use it as an intellectual exercise. We get all the facts, the historical data, and understand who the characters are in the story but we never go passed the obvious. By doing this you are missing out on so much. The entire reason for Bible reading and study is to know WHY God wants you to know about the event and how the story shows His faithfulness to His people and to you specifically.

Since we are looking at how to personalize your faith journey and make it more intimate then you need to move beyond the intellectual exercise of Bible study. I know it is comfortable to get all the facts. And, it is important to know who is who in the Bible. BUT, God wants more for you. He wants you to use your other senses to experience Him in a new way through your Bible reading and study.



Use your heart to look at the characters in the stories and how they are feeling. By discovering their motivations and passions you get new insights to what God is saying to your own heart. Your soul (that is your core) is shaped by the stories. You become a reflection of Christ as you learn who God is and what He has to say to His people and more importantly to you. And, with your strength you can reflect your Bible reading and study by your actions. Psalm 119:15 (NLT) tells us, “I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways.” It is not enough to read the Bible and then not do what it says. Correct action comes from being transformed.



So, where do you go from here? How can you use your Bible reading and study to grow your relationship with Him? First, hide God's Word in your heart that you might not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11). This is the memorization component of this practice. There are many ways to memorize and when you know which technique works best for you it becomes easier to grasp it and keep it in your mind and in your heart. Are you ready to use your mind, strength, soul and heart to know Him better? Are you ready to discover how you can create a personalized plan that will speak to you and gets your faith-life growing faster?



Chapter 3

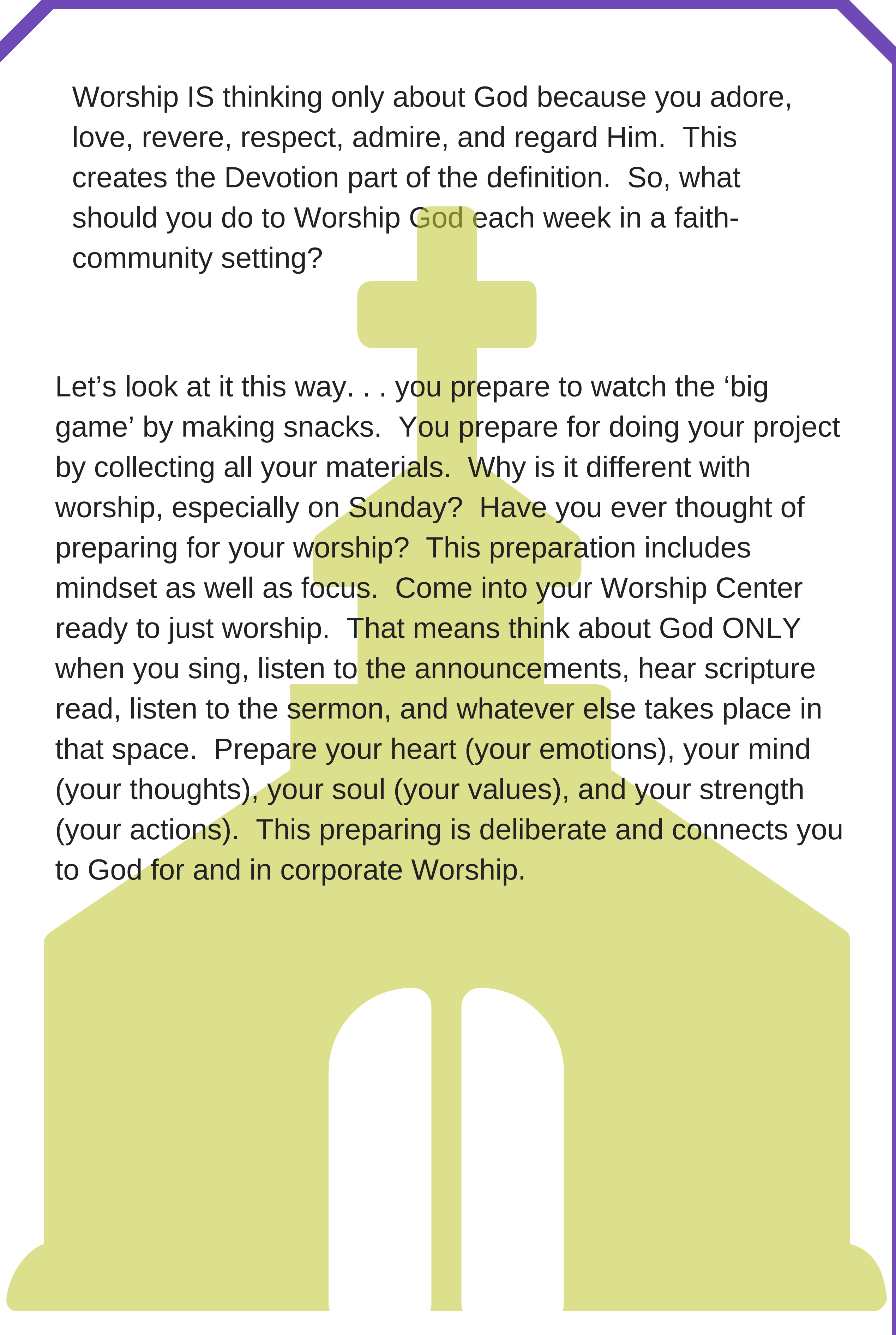
The Practice of Worship

Let's start with the definition of worship. It is 'giving worth' to a person or object. There are many ways to worship but the church many times only uses music to express it. Really, worship is a one way activity. It is about us, well you, thinking only about God. It is about giving God respect, glory, and focusing only on Him. This can be done through music but that is only one component of the entire experience. What are you missing out on if you only use music as a form of worship? A lot.

Romans 12:1(NLT) says, “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.”

Did you see it? To worship is an everyday, all the time, deal. It begins with our bodies, our strength. It is not a cerebral exercise, it is a physical one. And, it is not just when we walk into a church service. It is our service to Him through our life.

This may be a new way for you to think about worship. Have you ever looked around a church service and seen people not singing? Do you sing? Music, while moving for some, does not resonate with others to move them into an attitude of worship. That is not how they are wired. God created each of us uniquely (you included) and we need to embrace that and use the strengths He gave us to worship Him.



Worship IS thinking only about God because you adore, love, revere, respect, admire, and regard Him. This creates the Devotion part of the definition. So, what should you do to Worship God each week in a faith-community setting?

Let's look at it this way. . . you prepare to watch the 'big game' by making snacks. You prepare for doing your project by collecting all your materials. Why is it different with worship, especially on Sunday? Have you ever thought of preparing for your worship? This preparation includes mindset as well as focus. Come into your Worship Center ready to just worship. That means think about God ONLY when you sing, listen to the announcements, hear scripture read, listen to the sermon, and whatever else takes place in that space. Prepare your heart (your emotions), your mind (your thoughts), your soul (your values), and your strength (your actions). This preparing is deliberate and connects you to God for and in corporate Worship.

Chapter 4

The Practice of Service & Hospitality

There is FREEDOM in having this relationship with Jesus. By filling up on Him first then you can't help but have Jesus stick out all over the place in your life. In fact, Paul reminds us in Galatians 5:1(NLT), "So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law." I know for many of us the church has been our guide for how to do this Christian Life. And, to be honest, many have it wrong or at least twisted. We are warned about this in Scripture and we need to be knowledgeable of Him and His Word and not any other additional teaching.

Your personal intimacy with Christ is what this Faith-walk is really about. Knowing Him is the start. Once that is established only then are you ready for serving. Only a person filled up with His super-abundance can truly serve the way He desires. Where are you now? What job do you hold? Do you work with more unbelievers or believers? Robert Fraser, author of the book Marketplace Christianity, says that in his experience, "Christians are much more professional with unbelievers in the mix." Do you find your atmosphere better because of this? How can you turn around yourself to see unbelievers in a different light, in the light God wants you to see them?



This book, Marketplace Christianity, really opened me up to see where I was limiting God. I thought we had to get people to church so they could hear the preaching. Now I realize, God wants each of us to show Him through our attitudes, actions, and even our words. There is a Business Model in the book too! It has five principles that give complete Freedom in Christ to do what He has called each of us to do.

We are the 'seeds' planted in the Marketplace. We need 'Sunshine' and water to grow. That comes first. Then we need to understand the truths in God's Word (the water) so we can know that we are on the right path, doing the right thing and aligning with His plan.



How can you approach this from the heart, soul, mind, and strength perspectives? Service is as simple as Hospitality.

This means something as straightforward as giving your undivided attention to a co-worker going through a struggle (your heart); working without complaining about the boss or others (your soul); using your expertise and talents to be the linchpin in your organization (your mind); and showing up for work with a great attitude that is contagious (your strength).

It is simple and speaks volumes to those around you.

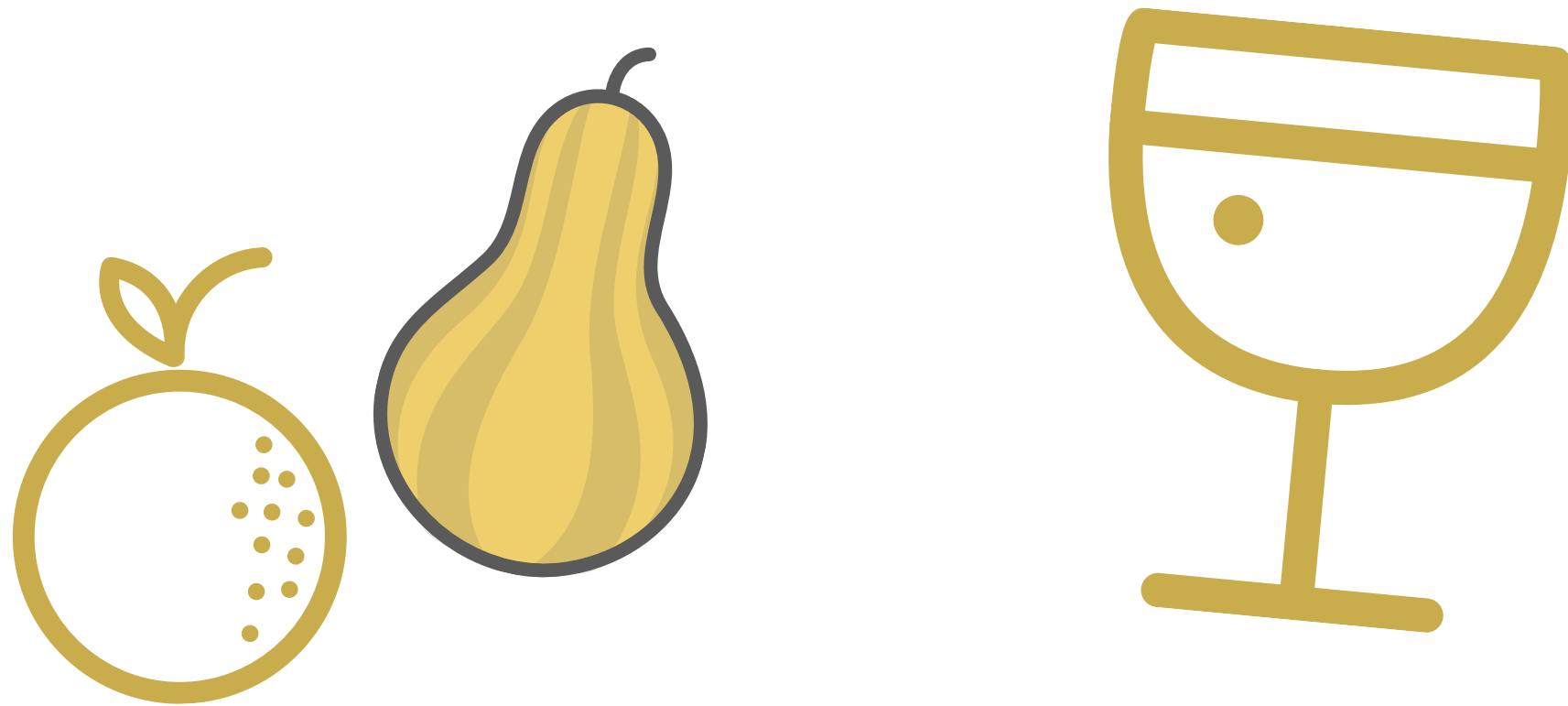
Chapter 5

The Practice of Fasting

Here is a word that doesn't come up anymore. When you think of fasting, you might imagine monks and pious 'religious' people praying feverishly as they forgo food.

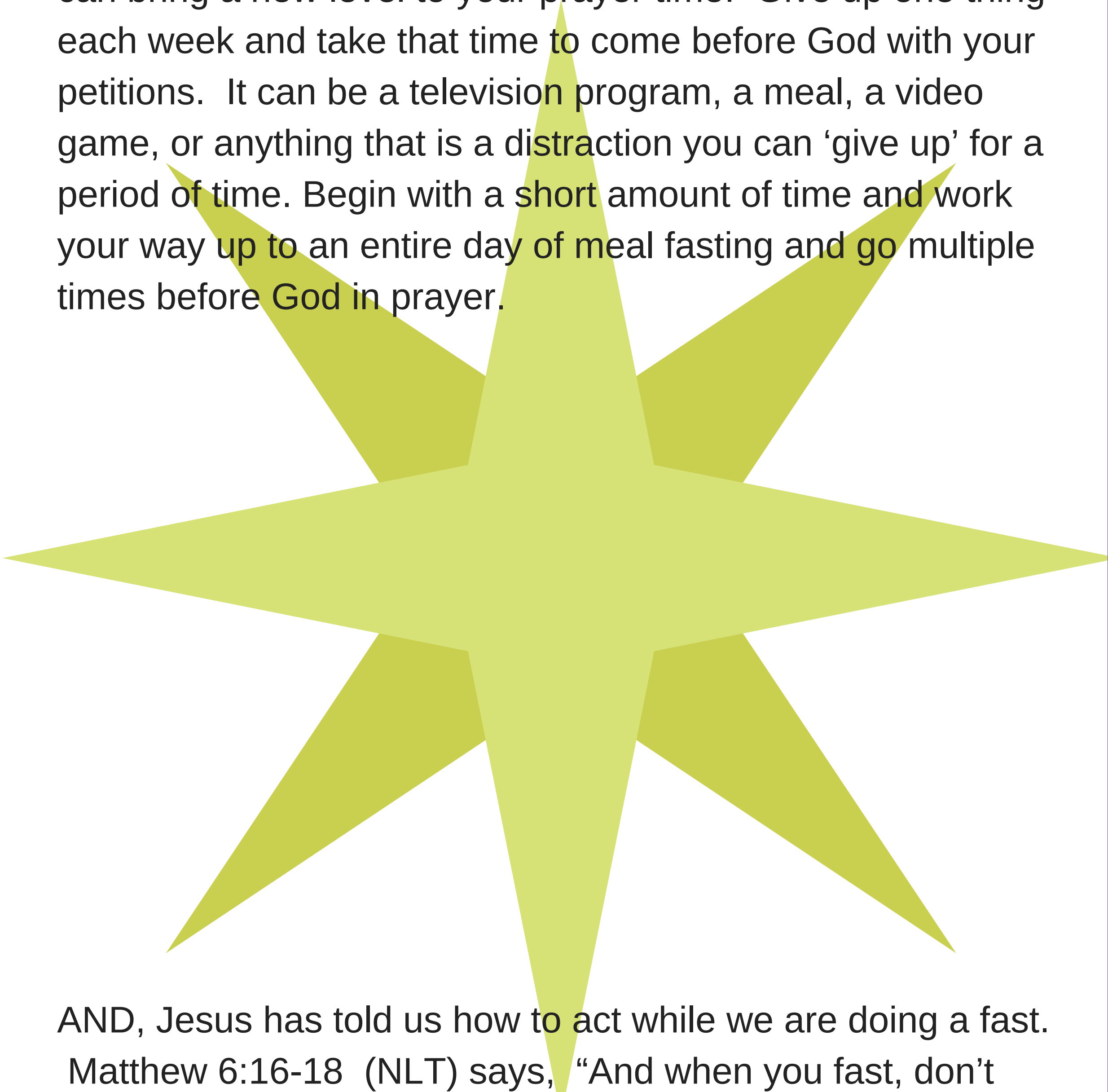
However, that is not what the practice of fasting is only about. AND, it is the practice most neglected.

Fasting is a form of humble prayer before God that brings you into a stronger relationship with Christ because you must surrender to Him through the fast by putting Him before the material things in your life.



There are many kinds of fasts. There are even different types of fasts from food and drink. The point of a fast is to give up something and use that time to focus on prayer and Bible reading. This is extra time to spend with God. Knowing how you are wired will help you determine how best to do a fast.

When should you do this practice? In the books of Esther and Acts we see that the fasting happens before something big is about to happen. In Esther she asks for prayer and fasting when she is about to go into the King and ask him to spare her people. In Acts, it is the church who fasts just before they send Barnabas and Paul out on their missionary journey.



These are 'big' things to pray about, but fasting once a week can bring a new level to your prayer time. Give up one thing each week and take that time to come before God with your petitions. It can be a television program, a meal, a video game, or anything that is a distraction you can 'give up' for a period of time. Begin with a short amount of time and work your way up to an entire day of meal fasting and go multiple times before God in prayer.

AND, Jesus has told us how to act while we are doing a fast. Matthew 6:16-18 (NLT) says, "And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."

Are you up for the challenge of this practice? How will it look for your heart, soul, mind, and strength? It will take strength (that is for sure). You may feel physical discomfort. It will take your mind to not be distracted and to really concentrate on an extended prayer time. Your feelings will go back and forth as you practice this exercise. Journal about the experience and after a few weeks look back at what God has revealed and done in your life. As for your soul, this practice will fill you with Him so you will be refreshed and more attuned than ever to Him.



Chapter 6

The Practice of Journaling

There are definite benefits to journaling. I have read many reports that have list after list of those benefits. They include boosting your memory, achieving your goals, increasing your emotional intelligence and stretching your IQ among others. What does God want from you? He wants to heal your heart; He wants to give you His peace. Journaling is therapeutic because there is a direct correlation between your hand and your brain. The act of writing it down or drawing it out slows the brain down so that it can capture the information. God uses journaling as a tool for you to grow closer to Him.

1 Peter 1:13 (NLT) is a call to Holy Living when it says, “So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.” By actively journaling you are putting your brain and body into a state of preparedness. You are practicing self-control and you are allowing God to speak to your heart. This time of journaling gives you insight and the peace that you crave.



Before you say, “I can’t journal. I don’t know how to journal. It will take too long . . .” Let me assure you that journaling is a method for study, prayer, and communicating with God that DOES work for everyone. You only need to find the WAY to journal that is right for you. God has made no cookie-cutter people so I would not expect you to journal any other way than the way He intended for you to journal.

There are many ways to explore and respond to God’s Word. While the traditional method of recording thoughts is one way to look at a portion of scripture; writing the actual verses down and marking the words that have meaning or a specific theme is another valid way to uncover important truths. And yet another way is to write down impressions God gives you as you interact with His Word.

The ways are endless. You can find your favorite method OR you can change it up if one way becomes too routine. Use a Journal to write down, draw, and/or doodle so your mind focuses on what you want to share with Him and He can impress on you what He wants to share with you. Make it a sweet time of communication and peace.

Do you see how journaling fits into the heart, soul, mind, and strength part of loving God? As I have already said, God uses this practice to heal your heart through active communication with Him. It is a time to look at those feelings and frustrations so you can engage with them through God's view. The soul is satisfied in this process. By journaling you can work out beliefs, goals, and know where God wants to take you. You align with His values and know where you stand. The mind employs a new level of understanding through journaling. There is an actual release of endorphins that changes your mood and boosts your memory. And the very act of disciplining yourself to do the journaling is your strength.

Does it make sense how this tool can bring you to a new level of development in your relationship with Christ? You **MUST** find a way to journal that works for you. Let me help.

Chapter 7

The Practice of Sabbath

The definition of Sabbath is to cease or stop. In English we use the word Sabbatical to mean taking a break, to cease, from our work for an extended period of time. But, God has directed us to take a Sabbath each week. Why? So we can rest; so you can rest.

This is a gift for you. Do you trust God enough to accept His gift? He taught us this principal by modeling the behavior for us. God did not need to rest on the seventh day. He did want to lead by example therefore He rested on the seventh day. Jesus said in Mark 2:27 (NLT) "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath." It really is one of God's gifts to you. Accept it.

AND, do you think it always needs to be Sunday? I grew up in a house where certain things were restricted on Sundays. Did you grow up with traditional views? Or, is treating Sunday differently a new thing for you? Personally, I have chosen a 24 hour period to Sabbath (yes, I use it as a verb). I put aside my 'work' to do something different. I actually save specific things for this time like reading and a nap!

Creating your personalized faith plan will help you discover your Sabbath activities. Remember, it is all about fellowship with God during this day. It doesn't mean you can only read the Bible and listen to Gospel music but it is about taking a rest and reflecting on Him. That can mean watching a movie, having coffee with a friend, sharing a meal with family, reading, taking a walk, enjoying nature and/or sleeping (my favorite). It is a time to be grateful to God for this gift of rest and relaxation.

There are many benefits to taking this time and setting it apart. Your heart will fill up with Him so it is protected for your busy week ahead. Your emotions have a respite. Your soul lines up with Him and you demonstrate His value in your life as you take your rest. Your mind is refreshed by worshipping Him, thinking on Him, and breaking out of the 9 to 5 mentality. AND, your strength is restored. Here is the promise, "But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint" Isaiah 40:31(NLT). Cultivate this practice and the other six days will be more fruitful.



Chapter 8

The Practice of Creative Silence & Solitude

There is one thing I LOVE, getting away every once in a while for an extended period of time, ALONE. I usually go once a quarter to a 'Quiet Retreat'. It is just a day, a six hour period. When I first began I brought many things with me to occupy my time. I had my yoga mat, journal, Bible, a book, my goals list, well. . . just about everything. Now when I go I just have the essentials, my journal and my Bible.

This practice is the one I look forward to the most. I crave silence so I can really 'hear' God. Is your day filled with voices, demands, and technology? Sometimes I can get up early enough to have some quiet, but for me, sleep is a beautiful thing. You may feel the same way.



I called this section creative silence and solitude because it can be what you need it to be. Whether you walk in the woods, do exercise, read a book, write down thoughts, or just sit there, just BE in the silence. Allow God to impress on you the thoughts He has for you that day. Don't rush it. Many times when I have had this experience, it is not until hour five that true revelation comes. And then. . . what excitement!



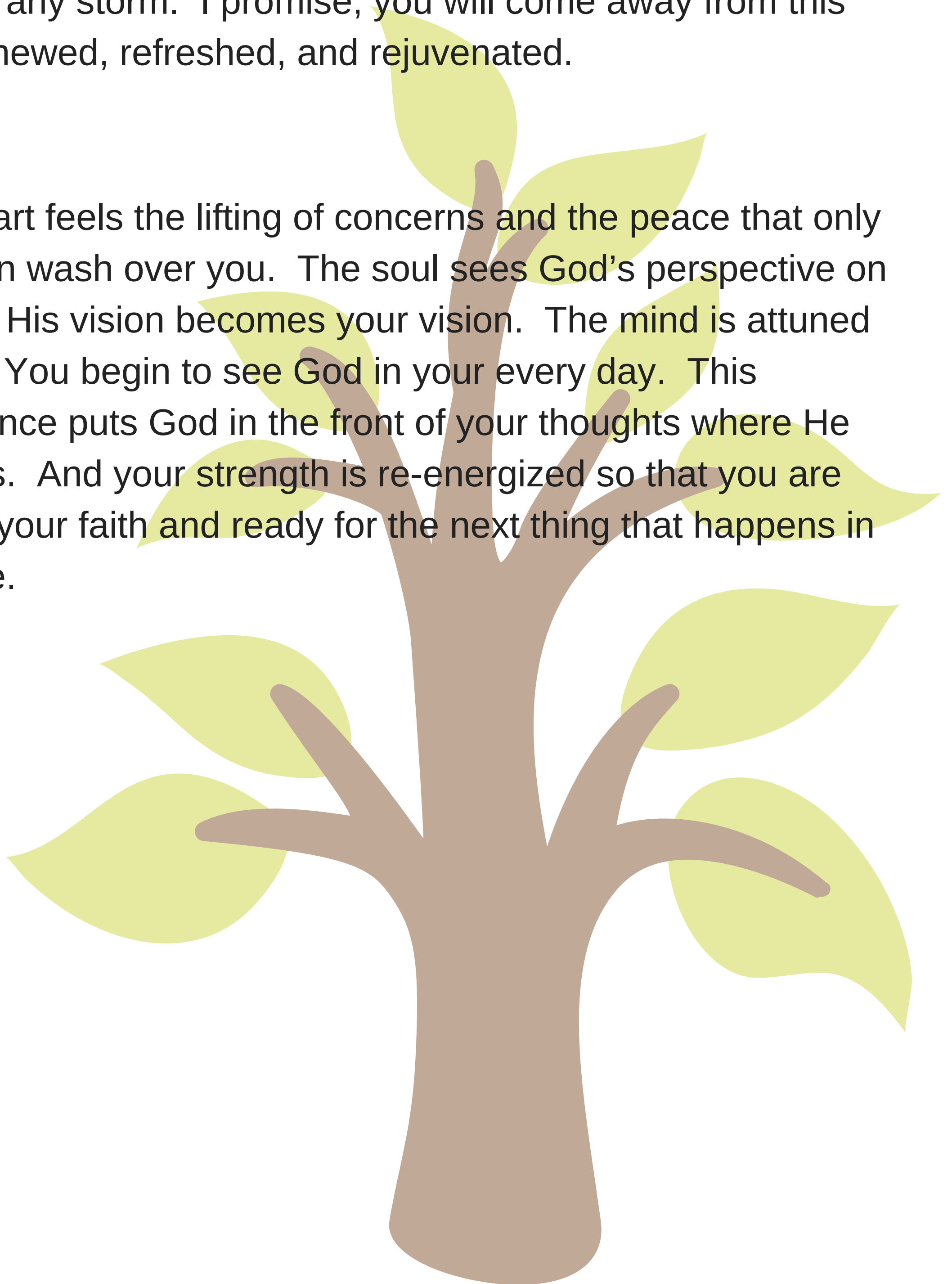
Repeatedly we see in scripture that Jesus went alone to pray. Yes, His disciples were with Him on many occasions but he would even leave them for a needed time of silence and solitude with the Father. Matthew 14:23 (NLT) is one such occasion, "After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone." If Jesus needed this time away, and He didn't have the types of distractions that we have today, you can see how you need some time away.

In this busy world we live in we are missing out on what God has for us by not practicing silence & solitude. There IS so much more to this Christian life, to your faith-walk, than you are experiencing now. AND, God wants you to experience it.

Having a personalized plan directs you to your perfect approach. He wants to fellowship with you on this level.

Your roots in Him need to go down deep so you can stand against any storm. I promise, you will come away from this time renewed, refreshed, and rejuvenated.

The heart feels the lifting of concerns and the peace that only God can wash over you. The soul sees God's perspective on things. His vision becomes your vision. The mind is attuned to Him. You begin to see God in your every day. This experience puts God in the front of your thoughts where He belongs. And your strength is re-energized so that you are bold in your faith and ready for the next thing that happens in your life.



Conclusion

How can these practices truly benefit you? They are all a part of what God asks of His followers, His disciples. You are just that, a disciple, a person devoted to God and devoted to learning more about Him. How can you practice these disciplines (there I have said it) in a way that connects your heart to God's heart? The answer is a Personalized Faith Plan (PFP). The PFP will assess you in many areas: your personality, your learning styles, your multiple intelligences, and even your spiritual style so that you have a profile of how God has wired you to connect with Him. Then, you will be given activities in the Practices that are designed specifically for you. During your first four weeks of Cultivation Activities you will also have the support of me, your Mentor and Strategist, to guide you through the process.



Are you ready to begin this deeper, more fulfilling and growing relationship with Christ? Are you ready to leave the routine of your faith-walk and step into His Super-abundance and thrive? Then now is the time to act and get your Personalized Faith Plan.

PFP

www.DeneenTB.com