

# Antioch Discipleship School

*2025-2026*

## ORIENTATION PACKET

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**Attunement: the process of achieving harmony, being in tune, or becoming aware and responsive to something**

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:20-21

## BOOK LIST

——— *First Semester* ———

**Ruthless Elimination of Hurry-** John Mark Comer

**Hearing God-** Dallas Willard

**Celebration of Discipline-** Richard Foster

**Practicing His Presence-** Brother Lawrence & Frank Laubach

——— *Second Semester* ———

**Humility-** Andrew Murray

**Keep You Love On-** Danny Silk

**The Heavenly Man-** Brother Yun

**Love Thy Body-** Nancy Pearcey

## SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

——— *First Semester* ———

**Gen. 3:15 (1st Gospel)**

**Gen. 22:15-18 (God's Covenant with Abraham)**

Due: Oct. 6

**Ex. 34:6-7 (Character of God)**

**Num. 6:24-26 (Priestly Blessing)**

Due: Nov. 10

**Deut. 6:4-6 (The Shema)**

**Ps. 23 (The Good Shepherd)**

Due: Dec. 8

*Scriptures #1 thru #6 due Dec. 15th at Midterms*

——— *Second Semester* ———

**Mt. 6:9-13 (The Lord's Prayer)**

**Mt. 11:28-30 (The Easy Yoke)**

Due: Jan. 5

**Jn. 3:16-17 (Eternal Life)**

**Jn. 15:5-8 (Abiding Life)**

Due: Feb. 9

**Mt. 28:18-20 (The Great Commission)**

**Rom. 8:14-17 (Adopted)**

Due: Mar. 2

**Gal. 5:22-25 (Fruits of Holy Spirit)**

**Col. 3:1-4, 12-14 (Life In Christ)**

Due: Mar. 23

**Rev. 21:3-4 (Promise for the Future)**

Due: Apr. 20

*All Scriptures #1 through #15 due May 4th at Finals*

## **Course Overview**

The Antioch Discipleship School (ADS) is a place to experience God and others while being equipped with skills for life-long spiritual formation. It's a discipleship program that will give you a solid Biblical foundation in a genuine community.

Our aim is to foster personal growth and spiritual depth through a variety of approaches. These include lecture-style teachings, worship stretches, experiential workshop sessions, and life-on-life Touchpoint groups. We also emphasize the practice of classical spiritual disciplines and engage in outreach activities.

We are eagerly anticipating how this intentional focus on immersing ourselves in God's profound truths will continually shape your character, leading it towards Christlikeness. Furthermore, this journey will contribute to the development of a comprehensive Biblical worldview, which in turn equips you to authentically live out the Gospel in all aspects of life.

In line with our conviction that the local church is uniquely empowered to equip the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:12), our discipleship school serves as a vital component within the broader context of disciple-making within the body of Christ. It's worth noting that your personal response to Jesus acts as the catalyst for the realization of His kingdom in Fort Collins, aligned with His divine will – "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

## **Core Competencies**

ADS is structured for outcome-based learning, where our goal is the comprehensive transformation of our lives into loving obedience to Jesus Christ through the process of learning and application.

The course is centered on four key areas: **Biblical Foundation, Spiritual Formation, Healthy Community, and Experience.**

## **School Staff**

### **ADS Directors**

Josh Duft  
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### **Spiritual Formation Pastor**

Lydia Martin  
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### **Student/Staff**

Brad Tarleton  
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(330) 442-1854

### **ADS Expectations**

The school's policies and requirements are here to guide you in making the most of your ADS experience.

### **Bible Reading**

We encourage you to select a Bible reading plan that encompasses daily readings from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalms. The YouVersion Bible App and Bible Gateway provide a variety of excellent options. Should you prefer, we are available to help you in locating and printing a plan. Please be ready to share your chosen plan with your Touchpoint leader on Monday, September 22nd.

### **Weekly Devotionals**

Reading classic Christian devotionals is a potent spiritual practice that can deepen your relationship with Jesus and bring about significant personal transformation. These timeless works offer a rich source of wisdom for wholehearted discipleship to Jesus. By diving into these writings, you go beyond the confines of today's culture and access God's eternal wisdom.

Each week, there's a mandatory devotional reading accompanied by reflective journaling questions. These readings are carefully chosen to align with the week's teachings and the development of your personal spiritual disciplines. This deliberate practice greatly enriches your spiritual growth journey.

### **Scripture Memorization**

Each month, there is a requirement to memorize a specific scripture passage, chosen to align with the themes of the monthly lessons and devotionals.

### **Books (see list)**

Please note: the cost of books isn't included in your tuition. However, "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" by John Mark Comer is available for check-out.

### **Personal**

Daily, intentional moments spent connecting with God, including your daily Bible reading, are essential expectations from students. Alongside this, a dedicated commitment to a discipleship relationship (either in a group or one-on-one), regular attendance at a Life Group, and active participation in Sunday services are all required components of your journey with us.

### **Serving**

Students are required to engage in regular service either on Sunday mornings or throughout the week.

Opportunities for service...

Sundays: Greeting Team, Kids Ministry, Worship Team, Coffee Bar, Hospitality

Weekdays: Kids Lifegroup Leader, Food Pantry, FFH, Leading a Lifegroup

### **Fasting**

We require full participation in both school-wide and church-wide fasting events.

### **Missional Living**

Our goal is to cultivate lives committed to sharing the love and truth of Jesus with those who are distant from Him. We're invested in incorporating the spiritual discipline of hospitality as a foundational aspect of our mission-driven lifestyle. Additionally, as a class, we will take one international outreach trip in the late winter or early spring.

### **Arrival Time**

ADS starts every week at your designated Touchpoint location promptly at 5:30pm. Please ensure punctuality, as your presence plays a crucial role in fostering our genuine community and showing respect to one another. Each week, you'll use the app to check in for the class.

### **Technology**

Feel free to use computers for note-taking, if that's your preferred method. However, we kindly request that you limit computer and cell phone use to class-related activities only.

### **Bringing a Guest**

We gladly welcome guests to the school. Please consult with the Staff in advance to confirm it is an appropriate evening for a visitor. Please note that this only pertains to class time and NOT to Touchpoints. Because of the confidential nature of Touchpoints, guests are not permitted.

### **Absences**

Community forms a cornerstone of our course, making your presence and attendance pivotal in this aspect. As per ADS policy, students are permitted two absences. Yet, recognizing that life can present unexpected challenges, if your absences exceed this limit due to exceptional circumstances, we request that you have a conversation directly with the School leader.

Please remember that ALL absences, regardless of the reason, must be communicated in advance to both your designated Touchpoint leader and the School leader. It's important to note that classes will be recorded and that any missed sessions will need to be made up.

### **Lifestyle Choices**

To foster a secure and consecrated environment for both you and the entire class, we urge you to be mindful of your everyday choices. We all encounter moments when we lean towards unhealthy habits. Throughout this year, as we strive to strengthen our bond with God, we'll inevitably confront tension and areas of pain. This discomfort might amplify the temptation to resort to patterns that offer temporary relief.

In this journey, let's make a commitment to be transparent about these inclinations, fostering an environment of honesty and growth.

### **If it's not going well...**

Should you encounter challenges in meeting the outlined expectations, we encourage you to confide in the appropriate ADS Staff members. All ADS Staff are here and dedicated to engage in open conversations about any situations you may be facing. Our goal is to support you in making needed adjustments and choices that will build your intimacy with God and your fellow classmates.

Ultimately, our approach to running the school is rooted in building relationships, rather than transactions. With this ethos in mind, open and timely communication is both what we extend and what we kindly ask for in return. Your honest conversations and willingness to engage are truly valued.

### **Download Our App**

(Android)



(Apple)



**"A" WEEK (Lecture)**

**5:30-6:45-** Touchpoint

**6:45-7:00-** Accountability in Touchpoint & transition to class

**7:00-7:15-** Lectio Divina

**7:15-8:30-** Lecture

**8:30-8:40-** Break

**8:40-9:30-** Lecture

**9:30-** Class Dismissal

**"B" WEEK (Worship & Workshop)**

**5:30-6:45-** Touchpoint

**6:45-7:00-** Accountability in Touchpoint & transition to class

**7:00-7:15-** Lectio Divina

**7:15-8:15-** Worship

**8:15-8:25-** Break

**8:25-9:30-** Practice/Application/Processing

**9:30-** Class Dismissal



# Antioch Discipleship School

## Fort Collins

## 2025-2026

### SCHOOL CALENDAR

Date	Topic	Devotional	Book	Memory Verse	Notes	Speaker
Sep 4-6	RETREAT	↓	↓	↓	Empathic Listening & Team Building	STAFF
Sep 8	Orientation & Touchpoint	<i>Language of Prayer</i> by Joyce Huggett	<b>Hearing God</b> by Dallas Willard	Gen. 3:15 & 22:15-18		STAFF
Sep 15	Belief Tree & Survival Cycle	<i>A Listening Ear</i> by Paul Tournier	↓	↓		LUKE MARTIN
Sep 22	Worship Stretch & Application	<i>Imitation of Christ</i> by Thomas à Kempis	↓	↓	(Silent Day: Waiting on God) - WOTY	
Sep 29	Authority Of Scripture	<i>Creation in Christ</i> by George MacDonald	↓	↓		JOSH DUFT
Oct 6	Worship Stretch & Application	<i>Ring of Truth</i> by J.B. Phillips	<b>Celebration of Discipline</b> by Richard Foster	Ex. 34:6-7 Num. 6:24-26	(Scripture Day) - DUE: Hearing God // Gen. 3:15 & 22:15-18	
Oct 13	Father Heart of God	<i>Orthodoxy</i> by G.K. Chesterton	↓	↓		JEFF PRATT
Oct 20	Metanarrative	<i>Teach Us to Pray</i> by André Louf	↓	↓		CHRIS MIRABITO
Oct 27	Wholehearted	<i>Prayer</i> by Andrew Murray	↓	↓		KEITH WHEELER
Nov 3	CHRIST Stages	<i>Purifying the Soul</i> by John of the Cross	↓	↓		BRAD TARLETON
Nov 10	Worship Stretch & Bible	<i>Method of Prayer</i> by Madame Guyon	<b>Practicing His Presence</b> by Brother Lawrence	Deut. 6:4-6 Ps. 23	(Thankfulness Day) - Genesis 1 DUE: Celebration of Discipline // Ex. 34:6-7 & Num. 6:24-26	CHRIS MIRABITO
Nov 17	Holy Spirit & Spiritual Gifts	<i>Little Flowers</i> by Francis of Assisi	↓	↓		CHRIS MIRABITO
Nov 24	NO CLASS	<i>A Closer Walk</i> by Catherine Marshall	↓	↓		
Dec 1	VIM Plans	<i>Sermon on the Mt.</i> by Augustine of Hippo	↓	↓		LYDIA MARTIN
Dec 8	Worship Stretch & Bible	<i>Running the Race</i> by Gregory of Nyssa	(NONE)	Mt. 6:9-13 & 11:28-30	(The Lord's Supper Celebration) - Genesis 22 DUE: Practicing His Presence // Deut. 6:4-6 & Ps. 23	CHRIS MIRABITO
Dec 15	Midterm	<i>Mere Christianity</i> by C.S. Lewis	(NONE)	↓	DUE: Bible Memory Verses 1-6	
Dec 22	NO CLASS	<i>A Christmas Carol</i> by Christina Rossetti	(NONE)	↓		
Dec 29	NO CLASS	<i>Letters to Agnes</i> by Clare of Assisi	(NONE)	↓		
Jan 5	Relinquishing Your Rights	<i>The Pursuit of God</i> by A.W. Tozer	<b>Humility</b> by Andrew Murray	Jn. 3:16-17 & 15:5-8	DUE: Mt. 6:9-13 & 11:28-30	
Jan 12	Worship Stretch & Bible	<i>Loving Yourself for God's Sake</i> by Adolfo Quezada	↓	↓	(Sacrifice & Genesis 22) - Leviticus 16	CHRIS MIRABITO
Jan 19	Inner Healing & Forgiveness	<i>Walk with Freedom</i> by MLK Jr.	↓	↓		BLAIR MIRABITO
Jan 26	Worship Stretch & Bible	<i>A Thousand Tongues</i> by Charles Wesley	↓	↓	(The Cross) - David vs. Saul	CHRIS MIRABITO
Feb 2	Prophecy	<i>A Testament of Devotion</i> by Thomas R. Kelly	↓	↓		MICEALA KING
Feb 9	OUTREACH	<i>3 Mile an Hour God</i> by Kosuke Koyama	<b>Keep Your Love On</b> by Danny Silk	Mt. 28:18-20 Rom. 8:14-17	DUE: Humility // Jn. 3:16-17 & 15:5-8	DUFTS
Feb 16	OUTREACH	<i>Life Together</i> by Dietrich Bonhoeffer	↓	↓		DUFTS
Feb 23	Outreach Debrief	<i>4 Degrees of Love</i> by Bernard of Clairvaux	↓	↓		
Mar 2	Relationships & Boundaries	<i>The Healing Light</i> by Agnes Sanford	<b>The Heavenly Man</b> by Brother Yun	Gal. 5:22-25 Col. 3:1-4, 12-14	DUE: KYLO // Mt. 28:18-20 & Rom. 8:14-17	BLAIR MIRABITO
Mar 9	Worship Stretch & Bible	<i>Prayers</i> by Søren Kierkegaard	↓	↓	(Physical Response Day) - John 1	CHRIS MIRABITO
Mar 16	Sexuality	<i>Grace Abounding</i> by John Bunyan	↓	↓		MICK MURRAY
Mar 23	Worship Stretch & Bible	<i>Sermons</i> by John Henry Newman	<b>Love Thy Body</b> by Nancy Pearcey	Rev. 21:3-4	(The Battle Board) - The Epistles DUE: The Heavenly Man // Gal. 5:22-25 & Col. 3:1-4, 12-14	CHRIS MIRABITO
Mar 30	Spiritual Warfare	<i>Spiritual Exercises</i> by Ignatius Loyola	↓	↓		BLAIR MIRABITO
Apr 6	Worship Stretch & Bible	<i>Journal</i> by George Fox	↓	↓	(Prophetic Day) - Revelation	CHRIS MIRABITO
Apr 13	Evangelism & Missions	<i>Evangelism</i> by Watchman Nee	↓	↓		JOSH DUFT
Apr 20	Worship Stretch & Application	<i>Sermon 34</i> by Meister Eckhart	(NONE)	↓	(Faith Worship) - DUE: Love Thy Body // Rev. 21:3-4	
Apr 27	Rule of Life	<i>The Spirit of the Disciplines</i> by Dallas Willard	(NONE)	↓		NATALIE SMITH
May 4	Final		(NONE)		DUE: All Bible Memory Verses 1-15	
May 11	GRADUATION					

**Lydia Martin****720-933-2515**

Danielle McSwain

Moriah Fisher

Lisa Lampert

Lydia Tarleton

Rebecca Jun

**Brad Tarleton****330-442-1854**

Mike McSwain

Ryan Fisher

Noah Beaven

Chris Young

Josh Duft

Touchpoint is a confidential space for ADS students to foster growth with their peers in awareness of God for the sake of ourselves and others, under the direction of an ADS Staff member. It is integral to Spiritual Formation, providing the necessary space for us to develop our attunement and connection to God's continually active presence in our lives. This space cultivates an expanding awareness of both God and ourselves, propelling us toward an intentional life filled with Christ-centered purpose. This growth empowers us to love others fully and engage in the mission of Christ's global church.

Specifically, Touchpoint is a Spirit-led process where a student has the opportunity to bring reflections, concerns, questions, or challenges they may be experiencing in class or everyday life to the rest of the group for processing and discernment. Students are encouraged to complete "Reflection Questions" before coming to Touchpoint to aid them in preparation for what they will share. The Touchpoint process follows a simple yet effective format:

### **Group Format:**

1. Dinner Time: 20 minutes to eat, authentically share and empathically listen with one another. This is an opportunity for all members (not presenting students) to briefly share their own responses from the "Reflection Questions" form.
2. Silence to Prepare Our Hearts: This time will consist of two minutes of silent reflection and prayer to prepare the participants for the session. This includes time for the presenting students to ponder what and how they will share. (2 minutes)
3. Presentation: The presenting student will be given up to five minutes to share any reflections, concerns, questions, or challenges they may be experiencing in class or everyday life. They are expected to use their responses on the "Reflection Questions" form to unpack their experience to the group. (5 minutes)
4. Clarifying Questions: After a student has shared, participants in the group can utilize this time to ask clarifying or empathic listening questions of the sharer. This process helps the presenting student articulate their thoughts and feelings related to their shared experience. The group participants do not give feedback, share their own stories, or give advice during this time. (2 minutes)

5. Silent Reflection: The entire group will return to a posture of reflective silence for two minutes and ponder what was shared. Attention is paid to the promptings of the Spirit and the presence of God in the presentation. (2 minutes)
6. Presenting Student's Response: After returning from the silence, the sharer is given an opportunity to add any impressions or additional information that was not shared during the original presentation. (2 minutes)
7. Group Response: The group participants or "listeners" will spend up to 10 minutes reflecting back what they tentatively felt the Holy Spirit impress upon them during the silence or while the person was speaking. This might be an image, a scripture, a word of encouragement, an affirmation of God's work through the student, themes noticed, or whatever comes to mind that would give clarity to what the presenting student may have experienced. This is a time to reflect back to the sharer something empathetic and encouraging. (10 minutes)
8. Close in Prayer: One participant of the group will pray a blessing over the one who shared. (2 minutes)
9. Repeat: Items 3. through 8. will be repeated with another presenting student during the group time. A total of two students per week will share in a Touchpoint.
10. Final Comments: The ADS Staff member's role is to keep the group moving forward in this process and gently keep the focus on the sharer. They will also participate in the discernment process and provide additional insights or suggestions, at the end of each time of sharing, for the presenting student to consider.

**Instructions:**

Take some time to prayerfully reflect on the questions below as you consider your week. As you reflect on your week, write out a short response to each question. You will not be turning your reflection questions in. This reflection process is intended for your own personal growth within ADS. It is expected that you complete these questions before you arrive at your Touchpoint each week.

**Questions:**

1. What emotions came up for you in class as you listened to the teaching (Week A) or participated in the application/processing time (Week B)?
  - Did you find that these feelings prompted or triggered something in your own life?
  - Did these feelings help you better connect with God's presence or make it more difficult?
2. After class time, what thoughts came to your mind throughout the week?
3. Did you notice any resistance within yourself towards your thoughts or emotions this week? If so, in what ways?
4. In what ways did you observe the Holy Spirit assisting you this week?
5. How is your attunement to God's presence growing?
6. How do you notice yourself changing?

During the ADS Touchpoint process, there will be a time to ask the scheduled sharer clarifying questions (*see step 4 in ADS TOUCHPOINT PROCESS document*). This process helps the presenting student articulate their thoughts and feelings related to their shared experience. The following questions are possible suggestions for group participants to ask the sharer throughout this clarifying time.

### **Possible Clarifying Questions:**

- How is your view of God changing because of this experience?
- What person in your own life experiences acts or has acted the way you perceive God to be acting in your life right now?
- How would you like God to help you in this?
- What do you think the Spirit of Jesus might be whispering to your spirit in this situation?
- How are you being changed by this relationship or set of circumstances?
- How would you most like God to touch your soul or inner being at this time in your life?
- What do you want Jesus to do for you?
- Is there any question you would like us to ask you?
- How do you sense we could be helpful to you right now?
- Do you sense any invitation from God in this?
- What would you like God's invitation to be?
- How do you hope your relationship with God will change as a result of this issue or experience?
- Can you say more about \_\_\_\_\_ (feeling)?
- How does your body respond to \_\_\_\_\_ (feeling)?
- As you think about the issue you are processing, what feelings rise up in you?
- When in your life before have you had the feeling you are describing now?
- I hear \_\_\_\_\_ (feeling) in your voice, is that what you are feeling?

### **Please Do Not Ask:**

- Questions that start with "why"
- Questions with a "yes" or "no" answer

**Confidentiality:**

- The content shared in the group is private and sometimes vulnerable.
- We offer safety and care to each individual sharing by committing to keep what is shared private.

**Listening - Attentive and Attuned:**

- Give respect and value to each individual by listening attentively.
- Give eye contact.
- Questions to think about while listening...
  - What significant things do you hear the student sharing?
  - What joys, hurts, hopes, and discouragements did the sharer experience?
- Empathic Listening - "Communicating accurate understanding of another's feelings, thoughts and/or experiences."
  - Imagine yourself in the sharer's circumstances, thoughts, and emotions.
  - Allow your heart to be impacted by the student's story - give yourself permission to feel the weight of what they share.

**Reflection:** Sit in silence for a moment before you respond to the person who shared.

1. Sit with the weight of things the person shared...
2. What emotions and circumstances do you hear from the person who shared?
3. What does the Holy Spirit bring to mind as you reflect on what the person shared?
4. Are there images, scriptures, words that come to mind that would encourage the sharer?
5. What is something empathetic and encouraging you can reflect back to the sharer?

**Responding and Encouraging:**

- Be intentional to focus on the sharer.
- Share what the Holy Spirit impressed upon you during silence or while the person was sharing.
- Jesus was often moved with compassion... imagine His response to the sharer.

- Sometimes hearing another person's story reminds us of things in our own life. When we relate to another person's story or experience, we can become tempted to share our story. It's important to avoid the temptation to share our own experiences or stories during another's time, because it devalues the sharer and can turn the group's attention away from the sharer and towards ourselves.
- Do not be prescriptive with your encouragements.
- Give compassion, not advice.
- Don't try to fix the person sharing. When we are uncomfortable with another person's grief, tears, struggle, etc., we may try to relieve our own discomfort by trying to fix or give advice.
- Sometimes the greatest gift of compassion we can give another person is our presence and empathy.
- Share what you see God doing in the student's life. How is it encouraging or uplifting?
- In what way is God growing/sanctifying the sharer?
- What characteristics, virtues, or fruits of the Spirit is God cultivating through the experiences the person shares? (Paul would often encourage churches at the beginning of his letters.)
- How may God want to use these things the person shares for His kingdom? Affirm God's work and presence in the sharer's circumstances and life.



# ADVERSE ADVISORS

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## THE INTERROGATOR

This person bombards you with questions, fixating on the facts and details of the situation rather than the emotional or relational context. Their primary goal is to satisfy their own curiosity, often leaving the deeper feelings unacknowledged. They value information and tangible evidence over emotional nuance, focusing solely on gathering facts rather than understanding the full picture.

## THE GENERAL

The General takes charge immediately, issuing orders and giving directives as if they are responsible for fixing the problem. They focus on controlling the situation and driving towards an outcome, often assuming they know best without fully considering your needs or feelings. Their approach can feel commanding, leaving little room for you to process or express your emotions.

## THE ACCUSER

Quick to point fingers, The Accuser assigns blame and often uses guilt to convey their message. They focus on what you did wrong and emphasize personal fault, reinforcing feelings of shame or inadequacy. Rather than offering constructive support, their outlook is condemning, and they label you as the source of the problem, fostering a negative and judgmental environment.

## THE LABELER

This person quickly jumps to conclusions, simplifying complex problems by categorizing them with labels. They believe that by attaching a label, the issue is automatically solved. The Labeler tends to offer surface-level solutions and is quick to apply trendy or fashionable terms, reducing the depth and complexity of your experience to a one-size-fits-all fix.

## **MEAL TRAIN QUEEN**

The Meal Train Queen tries to alleviate emotional pain by offering food or comfort-based gestures, hoping to make difficult problems disappear through acts of kindness. They express love and care, often using it as a substitute for addressing deeper emotions. Their focus is on avoiding unpleasant feelings or conversations, using hospitality as a distraction from underlying struggles. While their generosity is abundant and their intentions are good, their approach can ultimately dismiss real pain rather than acknowledge and engage with it.

## **THE HISTORIAN (or STORYTELLER)**

This person frequently shifts the focus to their own experiences, telling long-winded stories about similar events from their past. They often become trapped in nostalgia or their own memories, losing sight of the present moment and your current situation. Instead of staying engaged with your story, they use your experience as a springboard to relive their own, which can feel dismissive or self-centered.

## **BUMPER STICKER BLASTER**

The Bumper Sticker Blaster relies on overused clichés, offering trite, surface-level solutions to complex problems. Their advice often comes in the form of platitudes, proverbs, or one-liners that oversimplify the situation, leaning heavily into toxic positivity. Rather than acknowledging the depth of pain or struggle, they focus on quick, feel-good fixes, leaving little room for honest emotional expression or meaningful support. This approach can minimize real challenges and leave you feeling unheard.

**Joyce Huggett**  
**(1937-2017)**

Joyce Huges was an internationally known writer, speaker, and broadcaster who was based in Cyprus for many years before returning to Britain. Her books on the spiritual life include *The Joy of Listening to God*, *Listening to Others*, and *Learning the Language of Prayer*.

For many years she had worked as a teacher for the deaf. She was shaped in this vocation by her early childhood friendships with children (living in a residence near her home) who could not communicate freely because of a profound hearing loss. This life experience had made Huggett acutely conscious of the vital importance of communication and language.

When she moved to Cyprus and began to learn Greek, she was again confronted with the vital importance of language and communication.

In the following selections, notice how Huggett continually applies these motifs of listening, learning, and language to her teaching on prayer. Her instructions on prayer start unabashedly at the beginning, with Jesus' teachings on prayer and our simplest ways of putting those into practice.

## LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF PRAYER

### *Meditation*

“Meditation” is another word... people often use about prayer. But Christian meditation must not be confused with yoga, Eastern meditation or transcendental meditation. For, unlike these disciplines, Christian meditation has nothing to do with emptying our minds. Christian meditation engages every part of us — our mind, our emotions, our imagination, our creativity and, supremely, our will.

As Archbishop Anthony Bloom puts it, “Meditation is a piece of straight thinking under God’s guidance.” Yet it is not the same as an academic study of the Scriptures. This becomes clear when we listen to the Psalmist describing his practice of meditation.

*On my bed I think of you,  
I meditate on you all night long... (Ps. 63:6; JB [Jerusalem Bible])*

The word for “meditate” which is used here means to “mutter” or to “murmur persistently,” repeating the same words over and over again. In Psalm 119, the Psalmist uses a different word when he refers to meditation.

*I mean to meditate on your precepts  
And to concentrate on your paths. (Ps. 119:15; JB)*

*Though princes put me on trial,  
your servant will meditate on your statutes. (Ps. 119:23; JB)*

*I stretch out my hands to your beloved commandments,  
I meditate on your statutes. (Ps. 119:48; JB)*

The word he uses in these verses means “to muse,” to ponder,” “to reflect,” “to consider.” In other words, Christian meditation involves, not emptiness, but fullness. It means being attentive to God. The purpose of this attentiveness, this reflecting and this pondering is, among other things, to see ourselves in the light of God’s revealed word — just as Jesus weighed each of Satan’s subtle temptations against the teaching of the Old Testament.

We meditate to give God's words the opportunity to penetrate, not just our minds, but our emotions — the places where we hurt — and our will — the place where we make choices and decisions. We meditate to encounter the Living Word, Jesus himself. We meditate so that every part of our being, our thoughts and our affections and our ambitions, are turned to face and honor and glorify him. Yet another reason for learning to meditate is so that we may become conversant with the will of God...

### *How to Meditate*

We have seen that the English word "meditation" may be variously translated by words like muttering and murmuring, reflecting and recollecting, musing and pondering. With these hidden meanings in mind, it becomes apparent that Jesus meditated on the Scriptures. He knew the Old Testament so well that he easily made the connection between biblical truth and what was happening to him at various stages of his life. In Luke 4, three times Satan tries to deflect him from doing God's work in God's way; three times he combats Satan's suggestions by quoting Scripture:

*The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours."*

*Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"*  
(Luke 3:5 – 8; NIV)

Here Jesus is revealing that Deuteronomy 6:13 has become so much a part of his thinking and behaving that it automatically springs to mind and affects his attitude when faced with Satan's subtle ploys.

Scripture can similarly become a part of our make-up if we meditate on it. And the best way to prepare to meditate is to respond to the invitation God gives us through the Psalmist: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10).

In the stillness we can shed some of the pressures which would prevent us receiving God's Word into the innermost core of our being. We can focus away from the mundane and the everyday and onto God. Such stillness is to Bible reading what preparing the soil is to good farming. Essential for fruitfulness.

When we have become still, if we read a passage of Scripture which we have previously studied or some verses which refer to something which is troubling us, we may well find that a verse or a phrase or a sentence or a pen picture will draw us to itself. If it does, there is no need to read on. Instead, we should stop to reflect and to treasure the words, to turn them over and over in our minds, repeating them until the truth which they contain trickles from our head into our hearts.

All our faculties can be enlisted to help us meditate. The mind enables us to understand what the words mean as we read them in context. The memory helps us recall what we have learned and experienced of God's character and faithfulness in the past. The imagination is a God-given gift which the prophets used to picture the insights God entrusted them with and which Jesus used to describe his kingdom. (So he likens his Father to a faithful shepherd, a Middle Eastern house-wife and a loving, Middle Eastern father, Luke 15.) And the emotions enable us to identify with the characters in the passage we are reading.

#### *Contemplation: The Prayer of Loving Attention*

"Meditation" and "contemplation" are often used interchangeably. This is understandable because certain similarities suggest that the two forms of prayer are synonymous. Like meditation, contemplation involves putting ourselves into the hands of God so that he can change and transform our attitudes, perceptions and behavior. Like meditation, contemplation involves listening intently to the Word of God. And like meditation, contemplation requires stillness in order that we may open ourselves to God and his penetrating, powerful Word.

But meditation and contemplation are also marked by certain differences so they should not be confused with each other. Thomas Merton summed it up when he said: "Contemplation is nothing else but the perfection of love." Or, as others have defined it, contemplation is the prayer of loving regard, the prayer of loving attentiveness, the art of paying rapt and loving attention to God and his world. *Contemplation is about growing in love. If we take the work of contemplation seriously, we cannot escape the theme of love – of God's inexhaustible love for us, for people everywhere, for the whole creation... Contemplation is to know and love God perfectly in the depths of your being.* (Quotation from Jim Borst's book *Coming to God* [Guildford, UK: Eagle, 1992].)

Contemplation goes further and deeper than meditation. While the person meditating mutters and muses on God's word, the contemplative pays silent attention to Jesus, the

living Word – the one who is central to their prayer. Indeed, contemplation goes one step further. Contemplation goes beyond words and symbols and concepts to the reality words and concepts describe.

### *How to Contemplate*

Contrary to much current thinking, contemplation has nothing to do with making our minds blank or having honey-sweet thoughts. As we have observed, its chief aim is to encounter Christ so that our love for him is rekindled.

If this is to happen, we need to set aside uninterrupted time for contemplative prayer. Such prayer begins, to borrow the imagery of John Donne, by "tuning the instrument at the gate" that is, by preparing our hearts to pray even before we enter our place of prayer. We can do this while we tidy our room or drive home from work because it is an attitude of mind and heart rather than an activity.

When we enter our prayer place, we need to give ourselves time to relax in God's presence. One of the best ways of doing this is to recognize some of the reasons why we are tense: worry, pressure of things to be done, the quarrel we just had with our spouse or a colleague. It will be impossible to contemplate until these pressures have been handed over to God. When we transfer them to him, we find ourselves gloriously free with an uncluttered expanse of time in which to be met afresh by him. Perhaps that is one reason why Peter invites us to "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Having transferred our burdens and having allowed the tensions to slide from us as snow slides from the roof-tops in the thaw, the next phase of prayer involves becoming aware of the presence of God. Jesus has promised that he will never leave us or forsake us. We take time to tune into his presence...

In the quietness, aware of his presence, we open our hearts to receive his love. The prayer is usually wordless and fed by a deep desire for him. This leads us on to a place where instead of seeking God, we are found by him. We discover that, long before we came to our place of prayer, he was seeking us. So he responds to our longing. We bask in the warmth of his love. We feel his gaze on us. He fills us afresh with his Spirit. We receive a new perspective on life – his perspective. We draw so close to his heart that we sense his concern for the world, and from our contemplation flows intercession as we catch his compassion for a hurting world.

## BIBLE SELECTION

Psalms 119:9-16, 23-24, 33-34, 57-58 (NRSV)

9 How can young people keep their way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

10 With my whole heart I seek you;  
do not let me stray from your commandments.

11 I treasure your word in my heart,  
so that I may not sin against you.

12 Blessed are you, O Lord;  
teach me your statutes.

13 With my lips I declare  
all the ordinances of your mouth.

14 I delight in the way of your decrees  
as much as in all riches.

15 I will meditate on your precepts,  
and fix my eyes on your ways.

16 I will delight in your statutes;  
I will not forget your word.

23 Even though princes sit plotting against me,  
your servant will meditate on your statutes.

24 Your decrees are my delight,  
they are my counselors.

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,  
and I will observe it to the end.

34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law  
and observe it with my whole heart.

57 The Lord is my portion;  
I promise to keep your words.

58 I implore your favor with all my heart;  
be gracious to me according to your promise.



## JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Rephrase or express in your own language how Huggett defines meditation and contemplation. What differences can you identify between these two prayer methods?
2. Choose a scriptural passage that recounts one of Jesus' healing stories. You may want to look at Mark's gospel for such stories of healing. While you contemplate the story, bring awareness to all your faculties as Huggett suggests. As you read the words in context, what does your mind understand from them? Any memories that remind you of how you've experienced God's character and faithfulness before? Are there images surfacing? What emotions are stirring as you connect with the characters in the passage you are reading?
3. Optional Stretch Exercise: Consider writing in your journal as an extension of your meditation or prayer practice? Start by selecting a subject or text, immersing yourself in a prayerful meditation. Then, record the core of your meditation in written form. Another way to go about this is simply to write a meditation on a chosen theme, without initially starting with prayer. This process can unveil your inner thoughts as you write, making it a powerful spiritual discipline.

## REFLECTIONS FROM RICHARD J. FOSTER

*I like what Joyce Huggett writes about meditation and contemplation. She so unpretentiously takes all of the nebulousness out of those words. When we have listened to her down-to-earth counsel for a while we find ourselves saying, "Yes, of course, I can do that." This is all to the good for too often we have shelved these ways of prayer into the category of the supersaint – perhaps they are for a St. Teresa or a St. Francis but certainly not for me. This is the very attitude that Joyce Huggett teases out of us. These ways of prayer are for us; for you and me in all our ordinariness.*

*Did you notice how the writing never allows us to keep meditation and contemplation in the realm of the theoretical? Each time we are called into practice. The reason for this is fundamental. These simply are not the kinds of things that we can understand in a detached, abstract way. The only way we know, truly know, meditation and contemplation is by experience. There is no other way. So, my dear friend, "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8).*

Excerpts taken from *Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines* (Richard Foster and Emilie Griffin, Editors. Harpercollins, 2000.)