

THE CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA



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Week Seven - February 20, 2022

It is easy to get stuck in a rut in any relationship, even a good one. The comfort of habits can deteriorate into rote living, like lovers sitting next to each other scrolling on their phones instead of generously giving their full presence to one another. This week's guide is designed to ~~kick~~ gently remind us of a few fresh ways to meditate (*chew on, ingest, metabolize, plan unto action*) on his word unto **abundant life in Jesus**.



Come dear ones,
to the feasting table
Full of fat and rich foods

The mind and heart's
meal we share is
sweeter than honey

What is your favorite meal or type of food? _____

Close your eyes and think about that food. *Why is it your favorite? What do you associate with this food?*

Communing with Jesus by meditating on his word is like sitting down to eat a long, relaxed meal together. This week's guide is structured in sections that can easily flow from one to another, like tasting courses in a week-long feast. There are no day demarcations. Make the progression work for you – consider it an unstructured dinner party with good friends, hosted by the King of the Ultimate Banquet. Feel free to skip a section and come back to it. Savor your time together! Here's an overview of the menu:

- **Section 1 - Manuscript Bible Study:** You'll mark up a manuscript of the letter with observations drawn from the actual words, phrases, and sentence structure (Welcome, grammar lovers! Fear not, the rest of us.) to draw out the main ideas, big picture, and meaning from the letter.
- **Section 2 - Word Study — An Everyday Object:** We will zoom in on a simple, everyday object that Jesus talks about in this letter. By focusing in, we can gain insight into the meaning of that section of the letter.
- **Section 3 - Word Study — Hyperlinking:** The authors in this series of studies have taken us to many related, "hyperlinked" scriptures outside of the particular letter of interest. You can do this too! In this section we'll use some simple tools to identify and connect related scriptures.

- **Section 4 - Pulling It All Together:** We'll zoom back out after we walk through the meditation methods above (which will hopefully help you see both the details and the central message of this short passage) and distill and capture the timeless, central truth here.
- **Sprinkled throughout:** We will be sure to interact with Jesus directly, engage in community, and respond in a variety of ways. We learn and grow best when we operate the way we were designed.

Part of our purpose is to equip you to engage in God's Word, so we will focus on hearing from God himself through the text, paying lots of close attention to the English words that are already there. I'm a homeschool mama, so now I'll provide a supplies list.

This week you'll need, in addition to your Bible:

- at least one or two "extra long" sessions of unhurried time with Jesus. Ideally, it can be when you have some energy to listen, to commune, and to give of yourself and to receive.
- some supplies for drawing (at least a pen or pencil)
- pens, markers, pencils or crayons of different colors
- the willingness to try something that might feel different or stretch beyond the way you typically interact with God

An Appetizer: First, get curious.

In the times when these letters were written, not everyone had access to them or could even read. Instead, the letters were heard. Take a moment to **hear the Word of the Lord** to the church at Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7-13. Ideally, have someone read it out loud to you, even altering the way the words are inflected between readings. You can also use a website or app like *biblegateway.com* or *Dwell* to listen to it. Get the flow and feel of the writing.

Now, listen to it again and write down questions you have. But **use the first person perspective by writing them directly to Jesus**, not some third person removed entity, but the Son of God himself. Repeat listening until you have 3 questions about the passage:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples: *Jesus, what does the word _____ mean? ; Coming King, the word/phrase _____ is repeated many times. Why did you do that? ; Emmanuel, it seems I'm not comprehending the idea about _____, will you show me more about this mystery this week?*

The whole reason we study and meditate on scripture isn't to earn something, it isn't primarily to understand the mysteries of the kingdom; instead, it is to commune with God through Christ. Scripture isn't God, **God** is God!

Jesus, we come to you directly with our questions, our baggage, but most of all we come with our attention. I praise you that you are alive, interceding for me at the right hand of the Father, and here with me right now. Show me what you meant in this letter, and exalt yourself as we feast on your word today. Amen

Section 1 - Manuscript Study: The Big Picture & Making Observations

The **next page** contains a copy of just the text of the letter. I've removed verse markings and anything else distracting. Let's start by looking at the point of view or the form of the sentences to get a feel for the "big picture" of the passage. Here is just one way to do that:

1. Read each individual line (13 of them) on the next page.
2. Notice that most of the sentences fall into one of 3 categories:
 - Who God is and what he has done (Who/What) _____ instances
 - What he will do (He will) _____ instances
 - What he tells us to do (What to do) _____ instances

Now, mark next to every line the category (*Who/What, He will, or What to do*) that the line best falls into (I've done a few lines for you in the left margin).

3. After you have marked every line, count up each type and put the totals on the lines above ("___ instances"). What do these proportions (drawn strictly from the grammar) tell you about the big focus of the passage?

See how the majority of the passage is about God and his work? It blesses me every time, that a simple marking up of the manuscript can help us to receive God's word in proportion to what it actually says instead of putting ourselves at the center of our study time.

4. Next, RESIST the urge to Google. RESIST reading a commentary or article. We are going to take time to grow our skills by making more observations within the passage. This is like learning to make a meal from scratch instead of eating fast food. When you were a baby, you needed milk. Eventually you learned to chew. Your teeth came in. You navigated textures and flavors. Maybe you learned to cook and even nourish others. Maturing in God's Word is like growing in the hands-on journey of making and eating (and sharing) your own made-from-scratch meal.

Living Word, help our minds to connect to your written word now, amen.

Revelation 3:7 – 3:13

Who

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: The words of the holy one, the true

Who

one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one

opens. “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is

able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and

He will

have not denied my name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say

that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down

before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. Because you have kept my word

about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole

world, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so

that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the

temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God,

and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God

out of heaven, and my own new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit

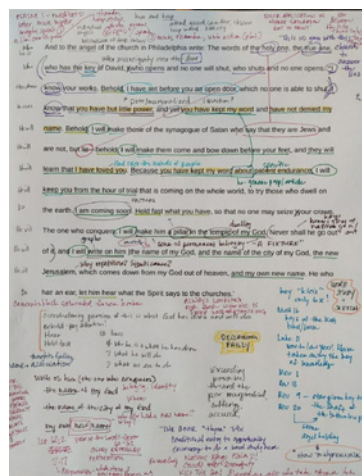
says to the churches.’

Now Share!

Take a quick photo of your manuscript and send it to a friend or someone in your discipleship group. If you don't have someone to send it to, send it to mc@marciemorrison.com to get into the habit of sharing.

Now use color (which is shown to be strongly related to both emotion and memory) to mark up these kinds of observations within the scripture on the previous page:

- Who, What, When, Where
- Repetition (e.g. “name”)
- Continuity (where an idea continues, or picks up again)
- Comparison/Similarities and Contrasts (“true” versus “lie”)
- General to Particular, or Particular to General
- Cause and Effect
- Conjunctions
- Movement of the mood of the passage



5. Now note anything that strikes you (jotting down bunny trails to follow for later). Let it get ugly. You can even doodle. We will come back to the manuscript later too. (That’s my manuscript, above.)

Section 2 - Word Study: Connecting with God through Everyday Objects

We’ve looked at proportions of sentence structures in the text and made observations about the text. In this section, we will zoom in single word in the text. Yahweh uses ordinary objects to show us himself and his ways. He calls his own word honey, a hammer, seeds, and more. Scripture contains no accidental words, no throwaway phrases, no “filler” sentences.

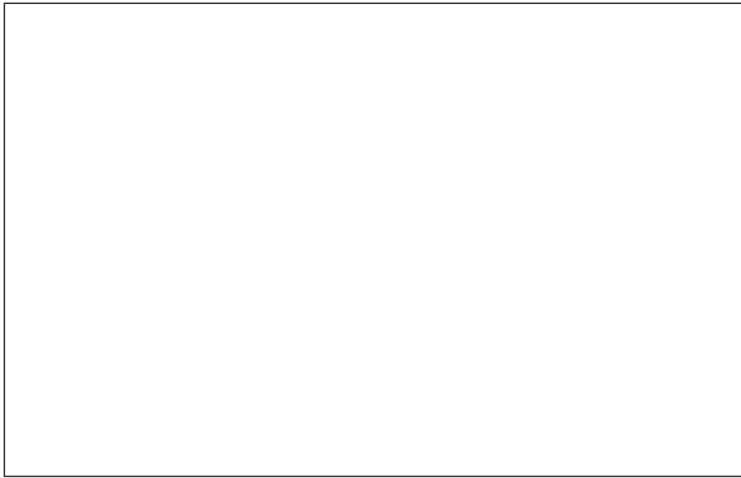
Every single word is on purpose!

So we can approach greatness as we would approach a famous painting: by slowing down and lingering, appreciating its brush strokes, color work, and thinking about what the artist may have been feeling while painting it. And the Word of God is infinitely more complex, nuanced, and beautiful to relish.

*Lord, give us attentiveness today, to everyday smallness,
to the liturgy of the ordinary. Amen*

Revelation 3:7-8 says, “The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.”

Now go and find a key. Then sit where you can see a door. Hold the key. Look at it and feel its weight. Notice its temperature, color, material. Put it down and draw your key in the box on the next page. Drawing isn’t really about drawing, it is really about seeing. The more time you can linger on the key, the better. Draw the whole thing. Take your time. Add some shading. Try to **be present** as you draw what you see. Lean into seeing the key. Don’t rush through this.



Next, add a few labels to the key – add some pointer lines or arrows, and **label the function of each part**. If you are having trouble with this, try thinking about how the key would fail function if that feature was missing.

Take a moment to think about how keys and locks work. Jot down some notes in the space below.

Note that the key in 3:7 is called the “key of David.” Now add what you know about David, whether that is a little or a lot. (You can use Acts 13 as a handy reference.) Based on this exercise, what does Jesus mean when he has the “key of David?”

Here we are on page 6, and you may be getting uncomfortable with the lack of tidy endings in this study so far. We are preconditioned for studies to end like sitcom episodes: resolution, theme song, roll credits . . . the reality is that walking with Jesus is dynamic and messy. It’s okay to not feel closure at the end of your quiet-ish time. Maybe then, we won’t be as tempted to leave Jesus behind at the kitchen table or in the armchair or study.

Now Share!

Take a photo of your key drawing and send it to me@marciemorrison.com. Later this month, I’ll make a montage of the images and send it to everyone who submitted one.

Movement Break! You are a Whole Person

In his wisdom and good pleasure, God made us whole beings: inner and outer parts. Throughout the ages, people have tried to displace and distort the importance of one part over the other. Perhaps you’ve experienced the great joy of the inter-connectedness of yourself as a whole, integrated person. Maybe you’ve never thought of movement as a way to express or process with Jesus or a fellow brother or sister.

For at least 10 minutes, move your body as you process the passage. Select a single sentence or phrase that has stood out to you, and then move with it. That might mean putting on some music and responsively moving your body with that sentence or phrase. It might mean inventing movements to go with the verse. Maybe you stretch or jump or go for a walk and process with Jesus.

You might be surprised to find that you process God’s Word differently when your body is involved. I was meeting with a friend for walking and prayer and she noted that once we started walking, her prayer became freed somehow.

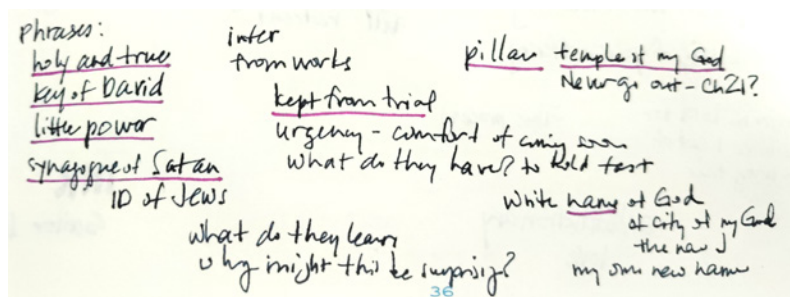
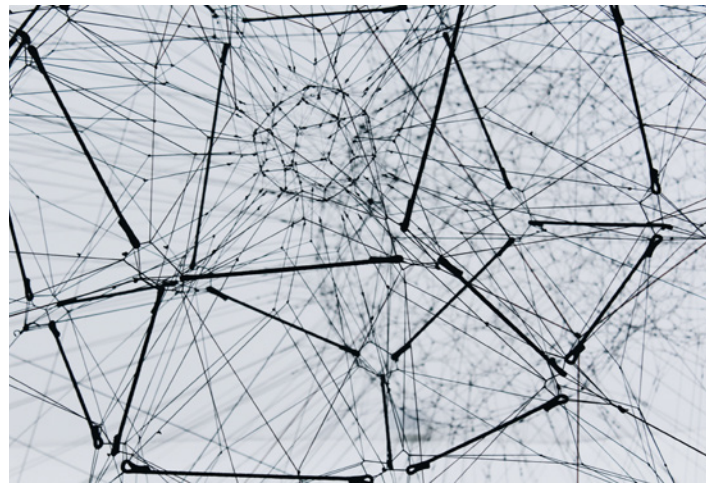
Another variation is to stand while you study if you normally sit, or sit on the floor, or kneel. Also, how you move can make different aspects of a passage or idea stand out. Changing the physical shape of your body can move your mind up to enjoy God in a new way.

In the space below, capture something about your time with the Lord as a whole person. If nothing came to you, draw a little sketch of what you did to move.

Section 3 - Word Study: Hyperlinking

One aspect of becoming a “people of the book” is that the more we explore words, phrases, and concepts, the more our minds link up different parts of scripture. It’s mid January, and this guide isn’t due for at least another month. But today my reading plan had me in Psalm 8. It begins and ends with the line:

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!



I read the letter to Philadelphia weeks ago and jotted down a bunch of major concepts and themes. Those notes included Jesus writing on the conqueror, the name of my God, the name of the city of my God, and my own new name. The majesty of his **name** from Psalm 8

connected, in my mind, to the writing of names at the end of this letter. Even in noticing and asking root-y questions like, “What is a name?” “Why do we name things?” “What is the significance of writing a name or a new name?” something happens in our minds, something lights up and puts a bookmark there. You may have experienced this before, when considering the purchase of a specific make and model of a vehicle – suddenly you see that make and model everywhere. Our minds are wired for noticing whatever we set our attention on. This is a gift to us as we store up the harmony and the nuance of God’s Word in our hearts year after year.

Wordy God, your book is big. I come with a lot of baggage good and bad, behind even solitary words. Yet thank you that, even when I can't recall all of it explicitly, every word can become richer over time.

I bless you for whole libraries are stored in the tapestry of a single word. Even so, amen.

If I were sitting down across from you, probably with a cup of strong, black coffee, I would tell you that we are going to practice hyperlinking by searching out a single phrase and understanding its use throughout scripture. I would tell you that this will take some time, so don't be in a hurry.

No knowledge of Greek or Hebrew is needed, instead you'll be exploring each word or phrase in its context, and gathering up what these scriptures say together. So,

1. Start with a concordance or a site like *biblegateway.com*. Enter your word or phrase. I've done that for you on the following pages. You'll start by reading each instance. Keep in mind that while you are using an external tool here, it is not to get the meaning of the passage from someone else. The Lord will reveal that directly (and in marvelous ways)!
2. If there is an overwhelming number of instances, it may be helpful to eliminate any "ordinary" uses of a word in context. I've already done some of this work for you by narrowing it down to the words of Jesus as he is talking about doors. But if you were doing this yourself, you can create your own (meaningful) criteria for eliminating some of the instances. In this case, since we are looking for metaphorical meanings of a "door," I can quickly eliminate ordinary uses where there is a description of someone in the door or at the door. I usually go ahead and put an X through these instances.
3. What is quite nice is that there are only 3 instances of the phrase "new name" in scripture so we will start with that. I've included the texts on the following page. Open your Bible and start reading *every instance* of the phrase *in its context*. This means going back as far as you need, whether that is a paragraph or a whole chapter, to get a good grasp on the context. *For example, Isaiah 62 occurs in the middle of a prophecy about the favor of the Lord that begins in Chapter 60. So I'll skim Chapters 60 and 61, then slow way down at the start of 62.*
4. Now that I have the context of Isaiah 62:2, I'll see that, similar to the "revealed truth of who God's people are" we have been taught about on Sundays, the nations will see the righteousness and glory of God's chosen people, and "[my people] shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give." Isaiah goes on to say that his people will be crowned and will rule. Instead of being called "Forsaken" or "Desolate," they will be called "My Delight is in Her" and "Your Land Married." (*WHOA WHOA WHOA! This is SUCH a thick passage that feels much like a sister to the letters – isn't that amazing?*) Slow down and consider the parallels to what we've learned about these letters so far and take a few notes:

5. I will sometimes try to come up with a single phrase that quickly reminds me of the context. Try that now with the Isaiah instance of “new name:”

(For this passage, mine is “**the new name gloriously and publicly reveals who God’s people truly are.**”)

6. Go to the next instance and do the same. Sometimes this takes a long time, it’s okay!

7. Sometimes themes will emerge and God will reveal how he uses specific phrases in different ways. You’ll learn them specifically by understanding the context of every instance.

Phrase “NEW NAME”

(Isaiah 62:2) The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give.

(Revelation 2:17) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’

(Revelation 3:12) The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

8. Now, go back to your manuscript. Look at what is actually going on with how the repeated theme of “name.” Drawing on what you have discovered about names, naming, and writing new names, what does the end section of the letter mean?

Pause and consider how personal a name is. It takes the attributes and noticings and history with a thing, and assigns it to that single WORD, its name. A name brings to bear its attributes and differentiators, and all that we know about a person or thing. A name is like the cover image or thumbnail on an ever-growing album of music and meaning about a thing.

In the letter to the Philadelphian Church, why does Jesus include 3 namings? How are the similar? Different?

Now Share! Tell/text someone about your experience and what you learned about names, new names, and naming. Take a moment to exchange prayer requests and pray together.

As promised, I’ve included the texts for the gospel author and Paul’s use of “door” here, in case you are really getting into this. I have NOT eliminated any “ordinary uses” of the text, so you’ll have to start with that.

(Matthew 6:6) But when you pray, go into your room and shut the **door** and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

(Matthew 25:10) And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the **door** was shut.

(Mark 1:33) And the whole city was gathered together at the **door**!

(Mark 2:2) And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the **door**. And he was preaching the word to them

(Mark 11:4) And they went away and found a colt tied at a **door** outside in the street, and they untied it.

(Luke 11:7) and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the **door** is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'?

(Luke 12:36) and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the **door** to him at once when he comes and knocks.

(Luke 13:24) "Strive to enter through the narrow **door**. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

(Luke 13:25) When once the master of the house has risen and shut the **door**, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the **door**, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.'

(John 10:1, 2, 7, 9) "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the **door** but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the **door** is the shepherd of the sheep. . . So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the

door of the sheep. . . I am the **door**. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

(John 18:16,17) but Peter stood outside at the **door**. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the **door**, and brought Peter in. The servant girl at the **door** said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

(John 20:19) On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the **doors** being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

(John 20:26) Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the **doors** were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

(Acts 5:9) Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the **door**, and they will carry you out."

(Acts 5:19) But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison **doors** and brought them out, and said,

(Acts 5:23) "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the **doors**, but when we opened them we found no one inside."

(Acts 12:6) Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the **door** were guarding the prison.

(Acts 12:13) And when he knocked at the **door** of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer.

(Acts 14:27) And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a **door** of faith to the Gentiles.

(Acts 16:26) and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the **doors** were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

(Acts 16:27) When the jailer woke and saw that the prison **doors** were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

(Acts 18:7) And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next **door** to the synagogue.

(1 Corinthians 16:9) for a wide **door** for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

(2 Corinthians 2:12) When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a **door** was opened for me in the Lord,

(Colossians 4:3) At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a **door** for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—

(James 5:9) Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the **door**!

(Revelation 3:8) “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open **door**, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

(Revelation 3:20) Behold, I stand at the **door** and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the **door**, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

(Revelation 4:1) After this I looked, and behold, a **door** standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

Based on what the New Testament says, what is the function of a door?

So what do verses 7 and 8 mean in Jesus' letter to the church at Philadelphia when he speaks about doors?

I hope this doesn't feel too obtuse to you. Something great about doing these word studies is that we learn to interpret scripture with scripture, and the Biblical context, and *not the reader's preference or experience*, is what determines the use of and meaning of the word. Can you feel that difference?

Share now! Maybe you've never *not* used a Bible Study “guide” before, or been shown *how* to “make your own meal from scratch” and feed yourself with God's Word. You are well on your way now! Would you consider teaching someone else what you've learned about studying God's Word? Learning together is a great way to make disciples.

Email your discipleship group leader, or brian@redeembible.church, or me@marciemorrison.com if you have any questions at all about anything in this guide. I will absolutely do my best to help you find the answer in scripture yourself.

Section 4 - Bring It All Together

But first, we wait on the Lord.

Usually we think of waiting on the Lord in the abstract. Jesus, when is this problem going to be solved? How long until this relationship is mended? Is my suffering almost over? But we can tangibly wait on the Lord, right now. In fact, we lose the potency of the words when we don't bring them into the moment. The renewed strength promised in Isaiah 40 is a byproduct of waiting on the Lord, not because we pursue strength through waiting on him. Do you see the difference? Like John 15's vine image, we can't focus on the fruit to make fruit in our lives. But we can abide in the Lord and see that he bears lasting fruit in us, 30, 60, 100-fold. So much of our walk with Jesus is like this, so counter to American instant-gratification culture.

You can exercise the discipline of stillness and listening alone or in community. Let's try it.

- **Step 0:** put yourself in a space where you are less likely to be distracted. This probably means moving your phone to somewhere else.
- **Step 1:** wait on the Lord. Get still. Focus on Jesus as the holy one, the true one. Close your eyes if that helps. Look out a window if that helps. If you fidget, like I do, try to still your fidgeting.
- **Step 2:** when urgent or random thoughts come, fix your mind on ways Jesus demonstrated holiness and truth. Then just wait in these thoughts.
(It may help to capture your random thoughts in the space below so you know they've been captured and don't have to let them interrupt again.)

- **Step 3:** repeat until you are uncomfortable with what feels like doing nothing. This is super important: KEEP WAITING. It will feel strange. Keep waiting and focusing your mind on Jesus, holy and true. Hopefully, you will begin to get a sense of stillness and presence you don't get very often. It might feel like you are extra alive. You might notice that the things you sense can be focused on Jesus, holy and true.
- **Step 4:** now actively listen, again, focusing on Jesus being holy and true. Don't keep asking with a chattering mind, don't use any extra tools.

The beauty and joy is that diving into God's Word and meditating on it is a lifelong endeavor. You'll someday come back to this very letter and God will reveal himself afresh to you, in that particular point in your life. Sometimes individual words or phrases shimmer in a passage. Go after those like a dog digging up the yard. The great Counselor and Teacher says that he will teach us all things and bring to remembrance what Jesus said. He will want to shine a spotlight on Jesus as you walk with him through the Word.



1. Go back to your manuscript and draw brackets around the main concepts and themes in the passage. Or put a big blobby shape around them.
2. Consider how the main concepts and messages relate to one another. Use the text as your only source of evidence for this.
3. Look back at your other notes from the week. Highlight or put an asterisk (*) near anything that the Holy Spirit emphasized.

What is the timeless, central truth that you see in this passage?

What has Jesus revealed about himself to you through the week?

Now distill the central truth of the passage into a sentence, a phrase, or a set of icons or simple images and write or draw that here:

SO WHAT? Specifically jot down how you will be a doer of God's Word this week:

Share now! For a final share, tell 2 other people what you will do in response to God's Word.

Lord, you are good and your mercy endures forever.

Thank you for your Word, thank you for walking with me and speaking to me this week.

*Draw me close and cause me, out of this overflow,
to think your very thoughts and feel your very feelings, Jesus. Amen.*