

## ***Module Three***

### ***Seeking God First***

*“Instead, make your top priority God’s kingdom and his way of life,  
and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

Matthew 6:33, NTE

How did last week go? Did any insights arise? Are you starting to believe *who you are in Christ*? Did you notice the trains of thought in your mind? Did you have any opportunities to see your own resiliency or the resiliency in another?

There will be times when you see it and other times you’ll get caught up in thought. Notice the small changes, the moments where you feel more peaceful, the times when you can have a discussion rather than a fight.

In this week’s lesson, we’ll expand on what we explored last week and find more ways to experience a peaceful foundation. Although there are peaceful practices, peace does not originate from these actions. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, see Galatians 5:2, present from an alive, thriving relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is the most extraordinary thing that in our human experience we get the ineffable honor and privilege to be in a relationship with God. The God who breathed and 100 billion galaxies came to be, who created the heavens and earth, is close enough to hear your prayers, to guide you and to love you. I don’t know about you but the relationship I have with the Lord is so beautiful that it is worth my time and energy to enjoy it fully. Let’s look at more ways to experience a richer relationship with the Lord.

## ***Worship, Prayer, and Biblical Meditation***

*While you are proclaiming peace with your lips,  
be careful to have it even more fully in your  
heart.*

St. Francis of Assisi

Ten times in the New Testament the apostle Paul says, “Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is so profound, because anything repeated more than three times means it’s vital. This scripture affirms that grace—the unmerited favor of God—and peace go hand in hand. Yet what is even more inspiring is that this scripture clearly states that both grace and peace come from our Lord Jesus Christ, not from ourselves, our circumstances, the way other people act, or anything outside of us. We get to experience both of those gifts by being in a relationship with the Lord.

His peace is always there, yet when we are facing the problem rather than our savior, we are unable to receive what is already available. Prayer, worship, and biblical meditation are the pathway to a deeper intimacy with God. Through that intimate connection, we can be filled with his peace and bring that out in our relationships. Beginning your day quiet and still in the presence of our Lord strengthens a peaceful foundation for your day because you seek first the kingdom of God. This will help you love as he loves.

Mark 12:30 gives clear direction. We are first to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and minds, our souls and our strength, then we can love our neighbors as ourselves. Being in the presence of God—letting him love us through his Word and his Holy Spirit, through worship, prayer, and biblical meditation—we can then love ourselves and those around us.

Think of it this way: your cell phone has hundreds of apps that open you up to a world of possibilities. Yet for them to work, your phone needs to be charged. When your battery starts running low, many of these apps don’t work. But when you plug into a power source and allow it to charge your phone, you have access to a multitude of power-charged opportunities. The same

is true with us. The Lord is our power source, and when we start our day plugged into him, we have access to his power that is alive through his Holy Spirit within us. Just as Matthew 6:33 says when we seek first the kingdom of God, all else is added to us. So, what does he add? A peaceful, sober mind, strength, patience, blessings, wisdom to take right action, love, compassion, and self-control. All of these are precious gifts, especially in our relationships.

I know your life is full; everyone's life is. Yet making time and space the first thing in the morning to have quiet time with the Lord will dramatically change the amount of serenity within you and allow you to bring God's love and peace into your life. Psalm 143:8 NIV says it so beautifully, "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life."

Here are few practical strategies to get started:

- Have your quiet time before your family gets up.
- Find a quiet, comfortable spot where you will not be disturbed. Let your voicemail answer your phone, place your cell phone in the other room, and give yourself permission to relax and connect with God.
- When you find a good time and place for your quiet time, try to do it as consistently as possible, such as every morning, every day after lunch, and/or before going to sleep.
- With practice and discipline, it will become part of your daily routine, just like brushing your teeth. By taking 10 to 15 minutes to be alone with the Lord, you will be so much calmer and clearer, and this can lead to greater peace in yourself and your family.
- Greeting the day with the Lord will give you a centered, balanced, and peaceful beginning to your day. Physically, emotionally, and spiritually you will be filled, making it easier to interact with others in a peaceful way.

## *Worship*

Worship is one of the most precious gifts we have as Christians—speaking out loud and singing aloud who is God. The word “worship” is used 8629 times in the Bible.

(<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionary-of-bible-themes/8629-worship-times>).

The book of Psalms is filled with powerful worship experiences; reading them out loud or singing them positions you to receive what God has already given you. There are also amazing praise and worship artists you can listen to and sing along with to develop a deeper relationship with God. Some of my favorites are Hillsong, Passion, Chris Tomlin, Michael W. Smith, and Tasha Cobbs.

Because of Jesus we can boldly approach God. Being in the presence of God and delighting in who he is gives us a powerful way to not only connect with his unending love but also help break the chains of pain that hold us back. I love the visual in Acts 16:25–26, where Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, in their jail cell, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a violent earthquake and the foundation of the prison shook. At once all the prison doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose. I have seen time and time again that when I worship, my mind quiets down and whatever held me back begins to fall away.

In an article titled, *Neurophysiological Benefits of Worship* from The Journal of Biblical Foundations of Faith and Learning, Michael Liedke D.N.P.<sup>1</sup> does an extensive presentation of the research about the brain and worship. If you're a neuroscience fan like I am I highly recommend this article. But just to chunk it down here's what they found. As you worship, the fear center of the brain—the amygdala, which causes you to fight or flight—quiets down. And if that isn't enough, worship also activates the part of the brain called the anterior cingulate cortex, which enhances connection—connection to God and connection to others. Finally, worship lights

---

1. <sup>1</sup>Liedke, Michael D.N.P. (2018) "Neurophysiological Benefits of Worship," The Journal of Biblical Foundations of Faith and Learning: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 22. Available at: <https://knowledge.e.southern.edu/jbfft/vol3/iss1/22>

up the prefrontal cortex, which activates self-control and wise decision making. How powerful is that in experiencing greater peace, having healthier relationships and being blessed.

## *Prayer*

Imagine a power that knows all, sees all, and loves all—this power is God. The most powerful tool to connect with God is prayer. Prayer is a direct line of communication to the source of all wisdom, the creator of the universe. Just as there are numerous types of computers, there are numerous types of prayer. Some are basic and get the job done, while others are filled with major upgrades and increased power.

One form of prayer I find highly effective is a prayer of petition using God's Word. These scripture-filled prayers allow me to pray in his will, for everything in the Bible is God's will. I have found that these prayers help position me to receive, by faith, what God already has prepared for my life. Matthew 21:22 explains it perfectly: "And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (ESV).

Yet God is not like Amazon or iTunes to go to whenever you need or want something. God is a good God who loves to bless you, guide you, and be in relationship with you, but he wants you to come to him *because* of your relationship, not because you want him to do something for you. Take some time to sit in his presence, to be in his Word as you script your own prayer of petition.

### **Acrostic for Scriptural Prayers of Petition: TALK**

T—tell God how much you love him. Trust him and thank him for the good that's in your life.

A—ask him for what you need and ask for guidance for how to move forward in a way that will bring glory and honor to him, to be blessed and be a blessing.

L—let go and let God—surrender into his hands any unforgiveness, the way you think it should go, worry, guilt, unbelief, sin, or shame.

K—keep your eyes on Jesus and off the problem. Keep praising him and declaring the scriptures relating to your situation (biblegateway.com is one great place to find them. I also placed my favorite scriptures on your course page) as you wait patiently for his perfect timing.

### **Template for Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, and Holy Spirit, I love you and I thank you for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus, I trust in you. Lord, my desire is to \_\_\_\_\_. Guide me. Show me my next right action to move forward in your favor, bringing glory and honor to you. I let go of anything that is blocking me and ask for forgiveness for (confess it) \_\_\_\_\_. As I let go, I open to receive, and I declare by faith \_\_\_\_\_ (insert two or three scriptures pertinent to your situation). I trust that your blessing is upon me so I can be blessed and be a blessing. Jesus, I trust in you and pray this in your holy name.*

Any time fear, worry, and/or unbelief creep into your mind and heart, you have this prayer to build your faith. When fearful, anxious, judgmental, angry thinking comes in, consider it a red flag, a warning system telling you to stop, drop, and pray.

*Stop:* stop what you're doing, stop talking, and stop acting on your thinking.

*Drop:* drop your worry, judgment, and angry thinking at the foot of the cross.

*Pray:* pray your written prayer of petition or just ask God for help. Continue to pray it until a miracle happens.

Some of my other favorite prayers are simply talking to God, as you would a friend. Asking for help, thanking them, and pouring out your heart. Here is a prayer that radically changed my life that my precious mother in love taught me:

*Jesus I trust in you, show me that you're here, show me what my next right step is to experience your \_\_\_\_\_(peace, health, love, clarity, joy).*

What if you truly understand that everything you desire the Holy Spirit has placed with you. Praying and connecting with God opens you up to receive what is already there. Galatians 5:22-23 The Passion Translation (TPT) says it so clearly, "But the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love in all its varied expressions: joy that overflows, peace that subdues, patience that endures, kindness in action, a life full of virtue, faith that prevails, gentleness of heart, and strength of spirit." Extraordinary, amazing promises, right?

Then search the scriptures for whatever need you have. For example, you come to know that in unwellness God is your healer, find the scriptures on healing. In sorrow God is your great comforter, find the scriptures on peace. In weakness God is your strength, find the scriptures on resiliency, etc. In your resource section is a list of scriptures, pick a few that speak to your heart.

### *Praying for loved ones*

One of the gifts of being in relationship with others is our ability to pray for them. Here's some that I love. You will also have your own, post them on our facebook group to inspire others.

*Lord I trust you with my family and I, bless us to be a blessing.*

Then take it a step further, for a moment, think about how different your life and relationships would be if you were like Jesus and you prayed for those who made you angry rather than giving them a piece of your mind. And what if you took that even deeper and you prayed every morning:

*Lord help me to have healthier relationships, to love as you love, to see my loved ones through your eyes of grace. Help my loved ones and I be filled with your peace, bringing glory and honor to you. In Jesus name.*

What do you think would change if you didn't try to change or fix the people you love but you prayed?

*Lord help my family and I be the people you called us to be.*

These simple prayers have transformed me and led to more loving relationships with my family. God so wants to bless you and your relationships; prayer is the vehicle to do that.

### ***Biblical Meditation***

The word *meditation* is often misconceived by Christians. So many faiths speak of meditation. You see it in the new-age community, Judaism and Buddhism. How beautiful that meditation is also biblically based. Brad Archer blogger from Orchard Evangelical Free Church<sup>2</sup> says, "Bible meditation is learning to savor every morsel of God's rich, vibrant life-giving scripture." Biblical meditation is hiding God's word in my heart and letting the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable unto the Lord (see Psalm 119:11 and 19:14).

Bible meditation is sitting still in the presence of the Lord and immersing yourself in his word, through thinking about it, breathing it, speaking it, and declaring it aloud. The Hebrew word for meditation is *hagah*, which means "to speak."

Timothy R. Jennings in his book *The God-Shaped Brain*<sup>3</sup> shares research that shows 15 minutes a day of meditating on the Word of God quiets down the fight-or-flight center of the brain and activates the anterior cingulate, which is the area that helps you experience more love,

---

2. <sup>2</sup> Archer, Brad, *What is Bible Meditation*, Unlocking the Bible. 2017.  
<https://unlockingthebible.org/2017/09/what-is-biblical-meditation/>

3. <sup>3</sup> Jennings, Timothy. (2014). *The God Shaped Brain* audiobook. Available from Audible.com [accessed 2017]

compassion, and empathy. How much better will you and your relationships be if you are filled with God's Word and God's love.

It is a profound, awe-inspiring experience to be still before God. I place my hands over my heart and breathe deeply. Job 33:4 beautifully illustrates this: "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (ESV). I ask the Holy Spirit within to fill me with his love.

Psalm 46:10 — "Be still and know that I am God"—reminds us that as we enter stillness, we have an opportunity to know God—his peace, his comfort, his love. Just think God almighty invites you into his presence to spend moments of stillness in, repeating, declaring, and feasting on his Word. To have a relationship with anyone, you must spend time with that person. And the foundation of our relationships is our relationship with God.

As you go through these modules, you will discover scriptures you like. Write them down so you can use them later as your meditations. I just speak my name out loud off the Lord to help you believe and experience them. Also, on your program page there are several audios biblically-based meditations.

Here are a few of my favorite scriptures adapted to meditate on:

- There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out all fear. (1 John 4:18)
- Peace be still. (Mark 4:39)
- Grace and peace unto you through Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2)
- God loves us with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3)
- The peace of Christ rules within me. (Colossians 3:15)
- Be still and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)
- Greater is he that is within me than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4)
- The Lord gives me the peace that passes all understanding. (Philippians 4:7)
- Be anxious for nothing. (Philippians 4:6)
- I have been given the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- I love because he first loved me. (1 John 4:19)

- God can do exceedingly, abundantly more than I have ever asked, envisioned or imagined, through his power alive within me. (Ephesians 3: 20)
- We are safe under the shadow of God's wings. (Psalm 91:4)

### ***More Ways to Experience Peace***

*I can choose peace instead of this.*

Author Unknown

Besides quiet time with the Lord, here are some other ways I stay connected throughout the day while I am living my life:

- Turn over control of your challenges to God in prayer and ask the Lord to guide you to what action, if any, you need to take.
- Breathe deeply and say Jesus I trust in you, show me that you're here.
- Thank God throughout the day.

Now let's review what we covered in this module.

### ***Let's Review***

In the last two lessons, I have shared powerful truths for reconnecting to God's peace within yourself. As you have an insight into how beautiful it is to connect, you will find ways to integrate them into your life in a way that works for you. As you do you will see your life shift from one of conflict, stress, and worry to one of peace and love. Let's review what I shared to rediscover peace within yourself.

- Determine the best time of day for you to do your quiet time with the Lord.
- Spend time with God in prayer, worship, or biblical meditation.

- If you are still having difficulty managing stress it's ok, you may want to get some extra help. Please consult a mental health practitioner, pastor, life coach, or a health care professional.

By spending time with the Lord, you can experience greater peace in your life and deepen this extraordinary relationships. May you and your loved ones discover the blessing of peace along your path.