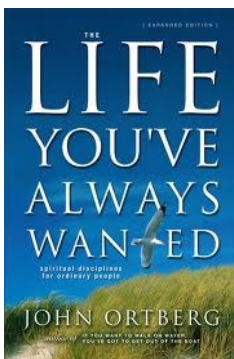


These studies are based on 'Celebration of Discipline' by Richard Foster (Hodder and Stoughton 2005) For more in depth treatment of these essentials, buy a copy and use it for personal development and growth.



You might also want to read John Ortberg's book, 'The Life You've Always Wanted', (Zondervan 2002) as he explores the challenges of these disciplines in an honest and realistic way for ordinary people.

These books can be ordered via the LHFC Bookstall on Sundays or bookstall@lhfc.org.uk

We pray that you will continue to explore these essential aspects of the Christian life and continue in training so that you will put God first and finish the race that you have started.

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LOCKS HEATH FREE CHURCH

**Essentials.
Revisited**

God First

**Matthew 6:33
Exodus 20:3**

IT'S WHO WE ARE

LOCKS HEATH FREE CHURCH - 2012

Small Group & Personal Study Guide

Contents	Sermon link date	Page
Introduction		3
Prayer	15 January	4 - 5
Meditation	22 January	6 - 7
Fasting	29 January	8 - 9
Simplicity	5 February	10 - 11
Study	12 February	12 - 13
Service	26 February	14 - 15
Solitude	4 March	16 - 17
Confession	11 March	18 - 19
Worship	18 March	20 - 21
Submission	25 March	22 - 23
Celebration	1 April	24 - 25
<i><u>ADDITIONAL STUDY:</u></i>		
Guidance		26 - 27
Further information		28

RUN

As you continue to reach out to people who are not-yet Christians, become sensitive to the Holy Spirit and accept his guidance about who you should speak to this week and what you should say. As a group, get a sense from God as to how you can become more effective together as you seek to share Jesus with the people you are praying for.

EAT

God guides in many different ways, he will guide us individually, but he also leads a gathered people together into the future he has planned for them. The community of Israel saw God guide them with cloud and fire, they had no doubt where God wanted them to go. As you read this week, is God saying anything to the group, to the church, as we seek God's guidance together?

Day 1 - Hebrews 11

Day 2 - Genesis 24:1-21

Day 3 - Isaiah 1:18-20

Day 4 - Acts 10:1-35

Day 5 - Acts 16:6-10

Day 6 - Acts 21:1-16

Day 7 - Romans 8:12-30

WORK OUT

As you get to know Jesus more and more you will begin to recognize his voice among all the voices you hear every day. You will need to train yourself to listen but also have the confidence to share what you hear him saying. Find someone you trust and share with them what God is saying and give them permission to test out what you tell them. Watch and listen!

NOTES:

Guidance

'God does guide the individual richly and profoundly, but he also guides groups of people and can instruct the individual through the group experience. God led the children of Israel out of bondage as a people. Everyone saw the cloud and fiery pillar.' (Richard Foster)

REST

Get into two's or three's and allow each person to share something in their life where they feel certain God has guided them. How did they know it was God? What has been the result of being obedient to him? Turn the conversation into prayers of thanks for one another and the way God has guided.

WARM UP

Tell the group about your dream holiday. Why have you made that choice? What's stopping you from taking it?

BUILD UP

READ Joshua 3:1-17

1. What do you feel about the supernatural guidance of God? Would you have followed across the river? Why or why not?
2. What do you think is the responsibility of the people when a leader senses God's guidance?

READ John 10:1-10

1. How do you learn to recognize God's voice? How has he spoken to you?
2. Have there been times in your life when you listened to the wrong voice? What happened?

READ Acts 15:1-11, 22-29

1. Sometimes it appears that guidance is a 'best guess' for the community of believers. How could we begin to make decisions based on what seems 'good to the Holy Spirit'?

INTRODUCTION

If you plan to win a Gold Medal at the London Olympics this year, what will you need to do to fulfil your dream? You will need to sort out your priorities and do the things that will help you get on the highest step of the podium. Just as an athlete has many competing demands on their plan to be first so the follower of Jesus has to be serious about putting God first. That doesn't mean everything else isn't important, it just means that we need to get things in the right order.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus said, *'...seek first his (the Father's) Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'* It is a matter of priorities.

Paul often likened following Jesus to running a race and coming first, he writes: *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air."* (1 Corinthians 9:24-26) It is a call for followers of Jesus to get first things first, a call to train and be disciplined so that God is first.

Not many people could run a marathon given one days notice, but imagine one years notice! Still not convinced. Well with good training, perseverance and by organising your life and time table around the goal of running the race it may just be possible. You see, there is a world of difference between **trying** to run a marathon and **training** to run a marathon. Training is a whole lifestyle change, it includes watching what you eat, ensuring there is rest built in and working out in a gym. You will need to put first things first.

As we get into a New Year, what better time to sort out the priorities, to put God first, to take time building new patterns into your life so that you do keep God first. After all, then *'all these (other) things, will be given to you as well!'*

Each study will start with a **Rest** period, designed to get us focusing on God. Then we'll move on to the **Warm up**, getting slowly into the training by getting to know our fellow racers. Then we'll **Build up** our muscles by looking at the Bible and what it has to say about the subject. Then we'll get out for a **Run**, putting into practice what we have learnt and encouraging others to join us. Then we'll sit down and **Eat** all the right things so that our bodies are renewed and we can add colour to others. Then, finally we'll finish with the a gentle **Work Out** where we'll focus on what the Holy Spirit wants to do in us and how we can serve others in God's name.

We hope that you will enjoy the challenge.

NOTE FOR SMALL GROUP USE:

The aim of the studies is not to do everything, but to get the most from them. Do the REST, WARM UP and BUILD UP in the time together and check out how the RUN element is going each week. Encourage the EAT and WORK OUT for personal use and get feedback each week to see how it is going, any questions, etc. Have different people prepare and lead the sections for when you meet up.

Prayer

‘Prayer catapults us on to the frontier of the spiritual life’ (Richard Foster)

REST

Take some time to be still and silent in God’s presence. God is pleased when we simply spend time with him, we don’t need to say anything. After a few minutes, write down what you want to say to Him and share that prayer with the group.

WARM UP

Imagine that you could have a relaxed meal with anyone in history, (no biblical characters) who would it be with? Tell the rest of the group; who, why and what you would want to talk to them about.

BUILD UP

Read [Luke 11:1-13](#)

1. What questions do you have about prayer? List them down and at the end of the session see if they have been answered, if not, have someone answer them.
2. Who taught you how to pray?
3. What can you learn from the prayer Jesus taught his disciples?
4. What pattern for prayer could you begin to create based on this Jesus prayer?
5. What would you want to be different about your life of prayer? How could the rest of the group help you with this?

RUN

Richard Foster outlines an idea developed by Frank Laubach for ‘flash prayers’. He suggests learning to live so that, *‘to see anybody will be to pray! To hear anybody, as these children talking, that boy crying, may be to pray!’* Train this week by

society, people recently bereaved, struggling with debt, feeling alone.

EAT

Plenty of time to celebrate this week! Let God’s word affect you deeply as you join in the great song of celebration that the angels are singing now and for eternity.

Day 1 - Exodus 15:1-2, 20-21

Day 2 - 2 Samuel 6:12-22

Day 3 - Psalm 103

Day 4 - Psalm 150

Day 5 - Luke 19:28-40

Day 6 - Acts 3:1-16

Day 7 - Revelation 19:1-8

WORK OUT

Augustine of Hippo wrote, *‘The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot!’* Jesus offered his joy to his followers. God has given us laughter! This week try to smile at those you meet, have a note of celebration in your voice, declare thanks to God for the things you have, acknowledge Him as the giver of all you have. Why not tell a few jokes and help others to celebrate as well! Frank Laubach says, *‘I know what it means to be “God-intoxicated”.’* Worth a try?

NOTES:

Celebration

'Celebration is at the heart of the way of Christ. He entered the world on a high note of jubilation. He left the world bequeathing joy to the disciples.' (Richard Foster)

REST

Read Nehemiah 8:10 and get the group to write down together a list of 'reasons to be cheerful'. Turn this into a time of thankfulness and celebration as you tell one another about what God has done that you are thankful for.

WARM UP

Tell the group about the moment in your life that you would want to capture on a DVD to keep forever. What marked out that moment as the one you have chosen?

BUILD UP

Paul's letter to the Philippians is the letter of joy. Take time to read the whole letter and note down every time Paul mentions joy.

1. What is the reason for Paul's joy?
2. How can he remain joyful in prison? Have you experienced joy in the middle of difficulty?
3. What will it look like to 'pray with joy'?
4. How can you express your faith in Jesus with joy so that others will see something of Jesus in you?
5. How could you bring joy to another Christian?
6. How can you learn to enjoy God?

RUN

As a group or as a family, arrange a celebration that you could invite others to. Put into practice this note of celebration and joy and extend the invitation to people who don't know anything about the joy of God in their lives. As a group, think about how you could bring joy to people who have no reason to be joyful, e.g. people who are struggling on the margins of

praying God's blessing upon everyone you see.

People on the train, bus or plane, in the office, at the school gate, serving you in the shops. Ask God that they might have a deeper awareness of his presence in their lives. Imagine what a difference your prayers could make on those you meet every day.

EAT

Time for you to be nourished during this week so that your life is enriched and strengthened. Why not use a notebook to record any questions, thoughts, reflections etc. on the words you read each day.

Day 1 - Matthew 6:5-15

Day 2 - Psalm 103

Day 3 - Psalm 51

Day 4 - Psalm 150

Day 5 - Matthew 26:36-46

Day 6 - James 5:13-18

Day 7 - Mark 9:14-29

WORK OUT

Let's put it into practice! Have each person in the group share a prayer request. Agree with one another to pray each day for the other people in the group. At the start of the next study share with one another how those prayers have been answered.

NOTES:

Meditation

‘In contemporary society our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in ‘muchness’ and ‘manyness’ he will rest satisfied.’ (Richard Foster)

REST

Psalm 46:10 says, *‘Be still and know that I am God.’* Why not do exactly what it says? Try to concentrate on the words, allow them to fill your whole being and begin to listen for what God might want to say to you through them. Allow 7 minutes, then share with the group anything that you learnt through this.

WARM UP

When you hear the word, ‘meditation’, what do you think of? What experience do you have of it? What might be the difference between Eastern religion’s view of it and Biblical meditation?

BUILD UP

Read [Psalm 1](#)

1. What is the purpose of meditation?
2. What are the benefits of meditation?
3. In your quiet moments, what does your mind settle on most often? How can you train yourself to stay focussed on God?
4. What do you need to do in order to meditate day and night on God and what is important to Him?
5. What difference could there be in your life if you meditated on God’s word rather than other things?

RUN

Meditation can take many forms for the Christian. Meditating on Scripture, meditating on creation, meditating by recalling what has happened during the day. Why not try meditating on events that have happened this week. Choose a news story from this

RUN

Jesus never abused his position but put a towel around his waist and served others. How could you take the role of a servant this week to your family, your colleagues, your neighbours? Plan one act of kindness this week and serve those who usually serve you, following Jesus example as he washed feet.

EAT

Use the readings this week to get a deeper understanding of this discipline. Keep in your mind the words of Jesus who invites us to follow his example. This is counter-cultural living that has the potential to transform peoples’ lives and show them the love of God in action. Perhaps there will be no need for words!

Day 1 - Mark 8:34

Day 2 - John 12:23-26

Day 3 - Genesis 22:1-19

Day 4 - Galatians 2:20

Day 5 - Matthew 5:38-48

Day 6 - 1 Peter 3:1-9

Day 7 - Romans 13:1-14

WORK OUT

Are you someone who always wants your own way, who always wants to win? What will it mean this week for you to deny your need for this and instead practice this discipline with those nearest you?

NOTES:

Submission

'Submission...is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way (and) the obsession to demand that things go the way we want them to go. (It is) the freedom to give in to each other' (Richard Foster)

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Jesus)

REST

Have a bowl of water and a towel on a table and ask someone to read John 13:1-17.

WARM UP

Tell the group about someone who has had a significant impact on your life, perhaps a teacher, leader, parent etc. What made them special to you?

BUILD UP

Read Philippians 2:1-11

1. Think of five occasions when Jesus practised the discipline of submission? What was the cost, what was the result?
2. What do you think Paul's purpose was in writing these words to the church at Philippi?
3. What one thing would you need to change for your attitude to be that of Jesus?

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:9

1. Find at least five reasons why Paul charges the household to submit to one another?
2. How easy is submission in your household?
3. What makes submission difficult?

week, read it, then allow God time to speak to you about what you have read. Too often we skim over what is happening around us so deliberately choose to take some time with this story. Have a Bible with you so that God can show you what he wants to say about it and how you can respond to the events. Give yourself time to listen.

EAT

Try and spend longer with the readings this week. Give time to meditate on the passages and note down what God is saying. Try and memorise one verse or phrase from the passage and carry it with you all day, repeating it, chewing it over to get as much as you can from it.

Day 1 - Exodus 24:15-18

Day 2 - Exodus 33:11

Day 3 - Exodus 20:18-21

Day 4 - Psalm 1:1-3

Day 5 - 1 Kings 19:9-18

Day 6 - Acts 10:9-20

Day 7 - 2 Corinthians 12:1-4

WORK OUT

Have somebody in the group retell the story of the feeding of the 5000 (John 6:1-13) in their own words. After telling the story, allow 5 minutes silence. During that time have the other members of the group imagine themselves there and relive it. What do they see, hear, feel, smell, taste? What emotions are they feeling? Who are they in the story? What does Jesus say to them? What have they got to offer Jesus? How will they live differently having experienced the last five minutes?

NOTES:

Fasting

'In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the Golden Arches and an assortment of Pizza Temples, fasting seems out of place, out of step with the times.' (Richard Foster)

REST

Sit and reflect on what has happened in your day. What have you spent time doing? What or who has demanded your time? Has there been anything that has dominated your thinking? What has God taught you today? Spend time giving him back your day? Use it to pray about everything that has happened.

WARM UP

You are stranded on a desert Island. You have the Bible and complete works of Shakespeare and in addition you may have one piece of music and one luxury item.

1. What would the music be and why?
2. What would be the luxury item and why?
3. Name one thing that you can't live without. Why?

BUILD UP

Read [Matthew 4:1-4](#) and [Deuteronomy 8:1-3](#).

1. Why did Jesus fast at this time?
2. What do these passages tell us about the purpose of fasting?

Read [Matthew 6:16-18](#) and [Isaiah 58:1-12](#)

1. What are the dangers of fasting?
2. What do you think are the benefits of fasting?
3. How could this discipline be practiced so as to avoid the dangers whilst bringing about change in the individual and the community?

RUN

Are there any issues that you feel passionate about? Globally,

RUN

Moses and Isaiah offered themselves to God after they had encountered him in worship. The disciples were filled with the Spirit after they worshipped. As you worship this week, hear God's voice which sends you out in the power of His Spirit to do battle against the enemy. Overcome evil with good, speak the truth in love, share the good news of Jesus with others. Let worship be the springboard for action as you become sensitive to God and what he wants you to do for Him.

EAT

Worship simply means to give God worth, his proper place in the whole of your life. As you read this week, centre your whole life on Jesus, the focus of your worship, and allow your encounters with him to set the course and pattern for your day. Worship him the whole day in everything you do.

Day 1 - John 4:19-24

Day 2 - 1 Corinthians 11:17-26

Day 3 - Ephesians 5:15-20, Colossians 3:15-17

Day 4 - Isaiah 6:1-8

Day 5 - Psalm 96

Day 6 - Psalm 148

Day 7 - Revelation 5:6-14

WORK OUT

Put time in your diary to worship God, moments when you will just stop and give him the worship that he deserves. Plan time as a small group to extend your time of worship on occasions so that Jesus is at the centre of your meeting together. Make sure that you don't neglect meeting for worship at the church (Hebrews 10:19-25) and prepare yourself by praying that the presence of God will fill the room, expect God to move!

NOTES:

Worship

'To worship is to experience REALITY, to touch LIFE. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of the gathered community' (Richard Foster)

REST

Jesus is the object of our worship so spend time talking about Jesus and what he has done. Find the verses in John's gospel where Jesus says, 'I AM' and use these images to uncover some new insight into who he is. You could use something visual to focus on for each 'I AM'. Just let the presence of Jesus Christ fill the place where you are meeting.

WARM UP

Tell the group who your 'idol' was when you were 13 years old. It could be a singer, film star, sportsperson, politician, teacher etc. What was it that made you admire them and look up to them? Do you still feel the same way about them now? What has changed?

BUILD UP

READ Deuteronomy 6:4-9

1. What does this passage have to teach you about worship?
2. Jesus affirmed the statement in verse 5 (Mark 12:30) saying it was the most important commandment, how could you put this 'command' into practice?

READ Exodus 3:1-6, Exodus 33:7-11, Isaiah 6:1-8 & Acts 2:1-4

1. What attitude did Moses, Isaiah and the disciples have towards God and worship? What did they expect? What were the results of their expectancy?
2. Worship opens up a way for God to act. How have you seen God act when you have worshipped Him?

READ Romans 12:1-2

1. Worship is a lifestyle, lived in response to what God has done for you. How will your worship change how you live?

EXPRESSING - EMBRACING - EXTENDING

nationally, locally, personally? What could you do to extend God's grace into those situations?

Fasting gives us time to focus on God, so why not decide to set time and resources aside to really engage in one of the issues? If fasting from food is a discipline that you feel God is asking you to explore, do plenty of research before starting and be wise about how you will do it.

EAT

Continue to use your notebook to record what God is saying to you through his word. Allow the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to the truth and to respond to what He is saying. Think about why these fasts took place.

Day 1 - Luke 4:1-13

Day 2 - Isaiah 58:1-14

Day 3 - Daniel 10:1-14

Day 4 - Nehemiah 1:4-11

Day 5 - Esther 4:12-17

Day 6 - Acts 13:1-3

Day 7 - Acts 14:19-23

WORK OUT

The world shouts at us, '*More, more, more!*' The Bible encourages us to consider, '*Enough, enough, enough!*' What does God require of you? If there is something you feel you need to fast from, tell the group and have them hold you accountable for putting it into practice. Or as a group decide to fast on a particular day and prepare for it.

NOTES:

ENGAGING - ENRICHING - EMPOWERING

Simplicity

'Simplicity is freedom. Simplicity brings joy and balance. The Christian Discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle.' (Richard Foster)

REST

At the start of the evening invite everyone in the group to place on a table in the middle their wallets, purses, credit cards, loyalty cards, car keys, house keys, mobile phones, diaries, planners etc. Un-clutter yourself so that you can concentrate on God. After a few moments, read Matthew 6:19-21. Give God thanks for the people or things that matter most to you.

WARM UP

Of all the gadgets which you have in your house, which one could you live without? Go round the group and make a list of items people have in their house which they no longer use.

BUILD UP

Without looking up anything in the Bible make a list of what you think are the key teachings of the Bible about money and possessions. When you have the list, in 2's or 3's, look up the following references and share with the group what you learn from them.

Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Ecclesiastes 2:1-11; Luke 6:30; Luke 12:13-21; Luke 16:13-15; Acts 4:32-35; 1 Timothy 6:3-10; Hebrews 13:5

Do you need to add to your list or delete from it? How do these words challenge your own view of living a life of simplicity?

RUN

Living a simpler life will mean that resources are released to help others. What could you do without in order to support a worthwhile charitable cause? Stop a subscription, do without a newspaper one day a week for a year, de-clutter wardrobes and

RUN

What difference would saying sorry and offering to forgive other people make to your life and the lives of those around you? This week, be quick to say sorry, be quick to offer forgiveness when someone has wronged you. Perhaps this week you will need to take time to have a conversation or write a letter to someone who you have not forgiven or someone you need to confess to. It might be very painful, but it will release you and the other person and allow God to minister his grace in new ways.

EAT

As you study these passages this week, allow the truth of God's word to sink deeply into your spirit so that this discipline becomes a natural part of your ordinary day.

Day 1 - Isaiah 59:1-9

Day 2 - Jeremiah 31:31-34

Day 3 - 1 John 1:5-10, 2:1-2

Day 4 - 1 Timothy 2:1-6

Day 5 - Luke 15:11-24

Day 6 - Matthew 16:17-19

Day 7 - James 5:13-20

WORK OUT

Confession is about honesty. Live each moment this week with honesty in every aspect of your life. If you struggle with this, ask someone to pray for you this week so that you can resist the temptation to compromise the truth of God's word. If you mess up, confess it to someone you trust and try, as far as you are able, to put it right. Live in the power and freedom of the Holy Spirit.

NOTES:

Confession

‘At the heart of God is the desire to give and to forgive.’ (Richard Foster)

‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.’ (John)

‘Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.’ (James)

REST

Read Psalm 32 together. Is there anything that seems to be particularly appropriate for you at the moment. If there is, ask the group to pray for you. If not, take verse 11 and spend time ‘being glad’. If you have any music available, why not sing and just be glad in God’s presence.

WARM UP

If you could be anyone else, who would you be and why?

BUILD UP

Read Psalm 51

1. Look at how David deals with his own failings. What does he know about himself and about God?
2. What are the consequences of sin?
3. What can we do to deal with what we do wrong?

Read Matthew 18:15-17

1. What is your reaction to this passage? What are the challenges and the benefits to this approach?

Read James 5:16

1. What would be needed for you to confess your sins to another person?
2. What fears do you have about this discipline?
3. How could your group put into practice this Essential?

cupboards and take the excess to a charity shop, join a Library instead of buying new books, enjoy the free use of God’s creation, cut up a credit card, stop looking for approval. Get someone you know well to help you and hold you accountable.

EAT

This is really practical stuff so don’t skim over these passages but read them slowly and ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you must do about what you read. Living a life of simplicity means going against the flow, so make sure that you are ready to make the change. Write down what you are going to do and show it to someone else.

Day 1 - Matthew 6:19-24

Day 2 - Matthew 6:25-34

Day 3 - Genesis 15

Day 4 - Leviticus 25:8-22

Day 5 - Matthew 5:33-37

Day 6 - Amos 5:11-15; Luke 4:16-21

Day 7 - Luke 12:13-21, 32-34

WORK OUT

How does the Bible impact your life and the day to day decisions you make? (What house you buy, what car you drive, what holidays you take, buying fairly traded products, what you give away) Decide this week to make one change in your life that will lead to living a simpler lifestyle. What do you need to do to live with the Kingdom of God as your primary concern?

NOTES:

Study

‘Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.’ (Paul to the Philippians)

REST

As a group, write down as many different aspects of God’s character as you can manage in 3 minutes. Let each group member take one of the words you have come up with and, if they want to, explain what that word means to them and how they have experienced that particular expression of God recently.

WARM UP

Tell the group about an interest or hobby that you have and what it is that motivates you to keep interested in it. What do you do to improve your knowledge or skill in the interest you have?

BUILD UP

Read Psalm 119:9-16

1. If we are going to live by God’s word, we will need to know it. Have you had a time when you have been guided directly by your knowledge, or someone else’s knowledge, of the Bible?
2. What do you think is the difference between reading the Bible and studying the Bible?
3. What have you read in the Bible that you want to know more about? Is there someone in your group who can help you or point you to a book that might help you study that passage?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17

1. The Bible is primarily a book for inner transformation. How can you study God’s word so that it takes root in your life and affect your decisions and actions?

checkout, read a book. As you learn to slow down, you will begin to enjoy more moments of solitude and people will see in you a peace that will lead to a conversation about why you are doing this. As you train yourself to pause, God will speak to you and through you.

EAT

Make sure that you have a time of silence before and after you read each passage. Note down what you hear God saying during those times and allow the verses to penetrate deep into your soul as you are alone with the Creator this week. Jesus often sent people away while he spent time alone!

Day 1 - John 4:1-8

Day 2 - Luke 5:12-16

Day 3 - Psalm 8

Day 4 - Matthew 6:5-8

Day 5 - Matthew 26:36-46

Day 6 - Matthew 27:32-50

Day 7 - Luke 6:12-19

WORK OUT

Looking back at your 24 hours from the REST section this week, try to identify some moments when you can begin to slow down and experience solitude. The very beginning of your day as you wake up, the coffee before you start work, the traffic jam etc. Turn off the radio and be ‘alone’. Perhaps you could develop a ‘quiet place’ in your home. Put in your diary blocks of time for solitude, even a half-day or day to just be silent and alone, listening to God in the space you have provided. How do you feel this would benefit your life?

NOTES:

Solitude

'Solitude is more a state of mind and heart than it is a place. Without silence there is no solitude.' (Richard Foster)

'Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life.' (Henri Nouwen)

REST

On a piece of paper split up into half hour slots for the last 24 hours, write down what you have done during that period noting particularly how much time you have spent alone and how much time in silence. Tell the group what you have done and what you feel about the use of your time.

WARM UP

If you could have a day to yourself completely alone, where would you go and what would you do? Why have you made those choices?

BUILD UP

Read [Mark 1:35-39](#) & [Luke 5:15-16](#)

1. How does Jesus develop the practice of solitude and slowing?
2. What are the three elements of Jesus' solitude?
3. How could you practice these in your busy life?
4. How could you build in times of listening as a normal part of your day?

Read [Ecclesiastes 5:1-7](#)

1. What do you think the '*sacrifice of fools*' is?
2. How will you learn to '*stand in awe of God*'?

RUN

Getting caught up in the frantic pace of life is all too easy so this week try to take your time. Drive at the speed limit, pause to let people join the queue in front of you, chew your food more times before swallowing, join the longest queue at the

2. How can studying help you think about good things? What will you do to get God's word into your heart and mind?

RUN

Think about how your study of the Bible could help you communicate God's good news to the people you meet everyday. What are people talking about when you meet them in the office, at the school gate, in the queues? What does God have to say about those things? Prepare yourself for those moments and the questions people have. Think about how you could bring the Bible to life to people who don't read it, they might be surprised that God has things to say about their lives.

EAT

As you read this week, note down anything that you want to go a bit deeper with and make time to study it. There may be things that you don't understand that you need to find out. Ask your group to help you.

Day 1 - Proverbs 1:1-9; Proverbs 23:12, 23

Day 2 - Hebrews 4:12-13

Day 3 - Colossians 3:1-17

Day 4 - Luke 10:38-42

Day 5 - James 1:19-25

Day 6 - Acts 17:16-34

Day 7 - Matthew 6:25-29

WORK OUT

If this is an area that interests you why not get a book about the Bible and discipline yourself to read it. Or '**Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods**' (£7.99 from Cornerstone, Gosport) which looks at different ways to study. '*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...*' (Colossians 3:16)

NOTES:

Service

'Whenever there is trouble over who is the greatest, there is trouble over who is the least. That is the crux of the matter for us, isn't it? Most of us know we will never be the greatest; just don't let us be the least. (Richard Foster)

REST

The ultimate sign of service is the cross. Have a cross and a lit candle on a table where everyone can see it. Have someone read Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. Let the group concentrate on the cross and then encourage people to speak about what they sense God saying to them about the sacrifice of Jesus, the suffering servant.

WARM UP

What is the kindest thing someone has done for you this week?

BUILD UP

READ Matthew 20:20-28

1. What were the emotions of those involved in this incident? Who do you most associate with?
2. What difference would Jesus' words make to your workplace, your family, your relationships?
3. How are verses 26 & 27 worked out in your every day life?

READ Matthew 25:31-46

1. What is God expecting from those who believe in him?
2. What do you feel about the way he is going to judge and the criteria for judgment?
3. What challenges you about this passage for your 'acts of kindness' towards others?

READ Titus 3:1-8

1. Our standing with God is not as a result of what we do, but because of what he has done, but what does Paul encourage us to do that will serve others?

RUN

Resolve this week to carry out some random acts of kindness to people you meet. Titus 3:2 is a verse worth remembering and putting into practice so that others will see something of Jesus in you and through you. Do simple things well and notice how people respond to you differently. Be courteous as you drive, as you shop, to your boss, to your employees and find ways to serve them.

EAT

Service is an overflow of the heart, so make sure you get filled up before you go out so that when you bump into someone, only good things will flow out of you. Spend time in God's presence and allow the Holy Spirit to continue to shape you and help you grow the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.

Day 1 - Galatians 5:16-26

Day 2 - Galatians 6:1-10

Day 3 - John 13:1-17

Day 4 - Colossians 3:23-25

Day 5 - Romans 12:9-18

Day 6 - 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

Day 7 - Luke 10:25-37

WORK OUT

As a group, discuss and decide how you can serve others in the community. You will need to do some research and have some information, but plan to serve as a group either as a one off or as an on-going commitment so that together you can demonstrate the love of Jesus and reflect his servant nature.

NOTES: