Precept® Bible Studies

Rhythms of Devotion

An Inductive Study on Spiritual Disciplines

Precept®

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WEEK 1

Rhythms of Stillness

"Be still, and know that I am God."
– Psalm 46:10

Lesson One: Introduction

Much like a catchy song, everyone lives to the beat of their own rhythm. Our habits, routines, work schedules, and social engagements all create a melody that shapes each day. Some of our songs have quick tempos, filled with busyness. Others move like a slow ballad. The rhythm of your life is uniquely yours—composed by what you practice and prioritize.

If you make physical exercise a regular practice, you will grow strong. If you consistently read, your mind becomes sharper. If you faithfully tend to your friendships, you are less likely to experience loneliness. The same idea applies to our *spiritual* walks. The disciplines we cultivate in our spiritual lives shape our souls. The right habits help us grow in faith, deepen our relationship with God, and align our lives with His will. We call these *rhythms of devotion.*

In this study, we will explore these rhythms of devotion and how to incorporate them into the cadence of our daily routines. When we do, our lives become hymns of worship to the Lord.

Paul captures this idea in Romans 12:1–2:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1–2

Over the next few weeks, we will discover rhythms of stillness, connection with God, spiritual formation, connection with others, and mission. These spiritual disciplines transform our minds to be more Christlike. They help us live each day in step with the Spirit—partnering with Him in our sanctification and attuning our ears to the divine melody already playing around us.



Welcome to Precept!

Scan the QR code to view a welcome video from one of our Precept team members.

The Method

We believe that relationship with God comes through knowing His Word. Studying the Bible allows us to know God deeply and live differently, being transformed into the image of Jesus.

We approach Bible study with a hands-on method. The Bible is thousands of years old, and it becomes easy to skim over strange stories or familiar verses without true understanding. To help you explore Scripture for yourself, we rely on the Precept Bible Study Method:

Observe: What does the text say?

Interpret: What does the text mean?

Apply: How should the meaning affect my life?

Taken together, these three components help you slow down, discover meaning, and find connections to your daily life.

The Method

Scan the QR code to learn more about our Bible Study method.

precept.org/essentials

The Method



OBSERVE: What Does the Text Say?

The purpose of observation is to understand what the text says. As you seek to observe Scripture carefully and accurately, the following tools will help.

Begin with Prayer

The Bible study process begins with prayer. Although prayer is often a missing or overlooked element, we cannot overemphasize its importance. No matter how good our method or tools are, true understanding and life change only come through God.

Answer the 5Ws and an H

You will answer straightforward questions like *who, what, when, where, why,* and *how* using a particular passage of text. These questions are the building blocks for detailed observation. Answering these questions will allow you to read *on purpose* for the goal of understanding. This exercise will help you note the details of what you are reading so you won't miss anything. No special knowledge or insight is required.

Mark Key Words and Phrases

A key word is one that is essential to the text. Key words and phrases are repeated to convey the author's point or purpose for writing. To mark a key word or phrase, you will visually distinguish it with a symbol, color, or combination of the two. Once marked, you will see at a glance where and how often the word or phrase appears. This step may also

include making notes on comparisons, contrasts, or terms of conclusion. Marking may seem arbitrary in the moment, but it will help you pick up on themes and important points the author wants you to catch.

Make Lists

Making lists is to record all the details about something or someone in one place. Then you can review and reflect on everything you discover about a topic. This is most helpful when a lot of information is scattered across several verses or chapters (for example, the miracles of Jesus or the story of creation).

Identify Chapter Themes

The theme of a chapter will center on the main person, event, teaching, or subject of that section of Scripture. Themes are often revealed by reviewing the key words and lists you developed.

INTERPRET: What Does the Text Mean?

While observation leads to an accurate understanding of what the Word of God says, interpretation goes a step further to help you understand what it means. Thorough and careful observation flows into accurate interpretation. As you seek to interpret the Bible accurately, the following tools will be helpful.

Context

Scripture is a beautiful tapestry. When we observe a text, we focus on a small piece of the larger tapestry. We must also pay attention to the weave binding the material together. The context weaves throughout the entire biblical tapestry and binds it together. To discover the context, we will pay attention to the historical and cultural context, the surrounding verses, the theme and structure of the entire book, other passages across the Bible on the same topic, and the overall story of redemption in Scripture. It is important that we never take Scripture out of its context to make it say what we want it to say. Keeping context in mind enables us to discover what the author is saying rather than adding to their meaning.

Cross-References

Cross-references identify commonalities throughout different parts of Scripture. They allow us to trace the thread of common themes, words, events, or people. Studying cross-references helps us to seek the full counsel of the Word of God.

Word Studies

Our English Bibles vary from one translation to another. Different versions may use varying English words or phrases to translate a single Greek or Hebrew word. The tool of word studies helps us to accurately explore the meaning of a text by looking at the original Greek or Hebrew word behind the English word we are studying.

Sometimes interpretation is straightforward with an obvious answer. Other times, it's more nuanced. The Bible requires lifelong study, and the more you explore and meditate on Scripture, the more your understanding will grow day by day.

APPLY: How Should the Meaning Affect My Life?

Once you have seen what a text says and understood what it means, you can begin to consider how it affects your daily life. There are two primary ways we can apply the Scripture we read.

The first is a change of belief. Sometimes what you read will apply to matters of the heart or mind (and often, both). In this case, application takes us from simply knowing random facts to truly believing and living in light of that belief. Secondly, application leads to a change of behavior. Sometimes a text applies directly to something you can do or change externally in your life.

We will guide you through application with questions like:

What would change in your life if _____ were true?
What would be different in your life if you lived like God was _____?
How is your perspective on [current issue] affected by what you just read?
What steps can you take this week to _____?

Without application, Bible study is little more than an interesting academic exercise. This is where it is most important to involve others. Christians need other Christians, and you will find that your experience is richer and more enjoyable if you involve community in what you are learning.

A group discussion guide follows each week of study. We invite you to study alongside a group to help you reason through the Scriptures as you share ideas, discoveries, and prayers.

And most importantly, it is essential that we involve the Spirit. Through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, true belief and real-life change begin to take place.

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Before we begin Bible study, let's reflect on your current life rhythms.

1. Turn to the *My Rhythms Chart* on page 262. For each column, think about what practices—whether spiritual or mundane—make up your current rhythms and routines. For example, perhaps you walk the dog every day or attend a church service once a week. Maybe you have a date night, volunteer each month, or plant a garden each spring. Everyone's chart will be different.
2. Fill in the chart as best you can—as general or as detailed as you like. You can change or add to it later.
3. When you are finished, return to this page to answer the reflection questions that follow.

These questions are just for you, and we are not looking for a "correct" answer. Be honest and authentic in your responses. Take your time and pray through each question. Write your reflections in the space provided or in your own journal.

1 // Would you describe your life's rhythm as upbeat and busy, slow and steady, or unpredictable? Why do you say this?