**Session 5**

**Scriptural**

One of the biggest problems today is many Christians are drawing from an empty well. Burnout is a problem seen across many aspects of the Christian life from discipleship to pastoral ministry. The culprit may be the result of something simple: spiritual malnourishment. During those drought-inducing seasons, it is all the more crucial to drive the pump of faith deep into the Word of God and allow it to dwell richly in our lives.

The last element of the MARCS is the **most important**. Every D-group must be Scriptural. Being able to dig deeply into the Word is a privilege that has not been afforded to many Christians throughout history. A mantra of life has been: **"Get into the Word until the Word gets into you.”** I do not say it to be cliché or blithe; rather, I’d like to demonstrate how I came to this conclusion from Scripture.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote: “*And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”* (Colossians 3:15-17).

1. **A Heart Ruled by His Peace**

Paul wrote something similar to the above passage when he encouraged the church at Philippi; “*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 4:7).

The passage in Colossians instructs us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. The New English Bible rendered this word *“rule”* as *"arbiter."* Though we do not use this word often in our speech, it portrays a vivid word picture that Paul is attempting to explain. He’s borrowing an image from the Olympic arena by saying, *“Let the peace of God be the referee in your heart.”* Have you yielded to the lordship of Christ? Frankly put, **when Christ rules your heart, peace reigns in your life.**

In the midst of potential danger all around, I was reminded of this truth: **God’s will never leads you to a place where His grace will not sustain you**. It’s safer for you to go somewhere if God tells you to go than to stay behind in perceived safety. Our lives may be in danger or we may be facing peril because of His name, but our souls are safe and secure inside the providential hand of God.

This kind of peace only comes from one source. It cannot be obtained through acquiring material possessions, electing a favorite political candidate, achieving a particular socio-economic status, acquiring a desired job, or finding the perfect spouse. Perfect peace can only come from the One who gives perfect peace. Jesus said in John 14:27, “*Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you.”*

**According to Romans 5:1, all believers in Christ Jesus have this peace with God, but not all believers experience the peace of God.** We experience His peace by living according to His principles, engaging in prayer, and practicing His presence. Rest for restless hearts comes by accepting the peace that Christ freely offers.

1. **A Mind Filed with His Word**

Paul continues in Colossians 3:16, “*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God*.”

When Paul mentions “the Word of Christ,” he envisions to the words Jesus spoke, the Scriptures. He was the Word who became flesh, dwelling among us, as the first chapter of John highlights. Interestingly, Paul uses that same word here as well.

To *dwell* means to live in or to reside in. It carries the idea of making something your home. **Paul expects believers to allow the Word of God to take up residence in their lives.** It should permeate every facet of a believer’s existence. It should control every thought and govern each action. Paul says virtually the same thing in Ephesians 5:18: “*Be filled with the Spirit*.” *"Let The word of Christ dwell"* and *"be filled with the Spirit"* are synonymous.

Paul then follows up with a pattern for how this should play out in the church: “*Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God*.”

Notice he does not delegate this task only to the clergy, pastors, elders, or worship leaders. He expects everyone in the body of Christ to teach, admonish, and sing psalms and hymns to one another. It is the fulcrum on which the entirety of the Christian life turns. It is the catalyst for revival. It was the basis of a reformation that occurred in Nehemiah 8 when Ezra read the Word of God publicly to the people after returning from exile. The people stood that day for six hours and listened, weeping, as they absorbed the Word of God into their hearts.

The Protestant Reformation was birthed with the words “Sola Scriptura,” which means, “Scripture alone.” The Reformation started when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the door of the Church of Wittenberg—95 ways the church had deviated from the teaching of the Word of God. **Simply put, revival happens when the people of God return to the Word of God.**

Walter Kaiser lamented about the sermons being delivered by many preachers today, saying “*It is no secret that Christ’s Church is not at all in good health in many places of the world. She has been languishing because she has been fed, as the current line has it, ‘junk food’; all kinds of artificial preservatives and all sorts of unnatural substitutes have been served up to her. As a result, theological and Biblical malnutrition has afflicted the very generation that has taken such giant steps to make sure its physical health is not damaged by using foods or products that are harmful to their physical bodies.”*

Sadly, he is correct. Our modern problem is twofold: junk food is being delivered from pulpits, and apathetic Bible readers are occupying the pews. Combined, these two factors present a significant problem that must be addressed. The solution to both of these issues is a simple one: be rooted, whether you are preaching, teaching, reading, acting, thinking, or anything else, in the Word.

1. **A Life Lived for His Glory**

In Colossians 3:17, Paul continues, “*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

When you build your life on the bedrock of Scripture, every word and deed should be pleasing to the Lord. Every single comment that passes through your lips, and every thought that enters your mind should be pleasing to the Lord. Every action includes the places you go, activities you engage in, jobs you take, items you purchase, hobbies you participate in, and websites you frequent. Even the way you treat your spouse when you are frustrated, and how you react to disappointing news should garner a Christ-honoring response.

The New Living Translation renders Colossians 3:17 this way: “*And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus.”* There is simply no way to accomplish this in our own strength. Not one person is strong willed enough to fulfill this high standard. For this reason, it is absolutely imperative we soak our lives in the nourishment and instruction of Scripture. **What is on your mind comes out of your mouth**. This is why a daily diet of Scripture is a necessity.

What if every word that you said, every deed you enacted, and every thought that entered your mind was logged on a website for the world to see? On this website, your name is attached to every single thing you think and do. This would be horrifying for most, but let's take it one step further. What if all these actions and attitudes were attributed not to you, but to Jesus Christ? Every senseless act you or I carry out gets logged on the account of Jesus. Would this change your behavior? Would that cause you to pause before you act?

Each person who claims allegiance to Christ is joined to Him. Whether we like it or not, our actions are attached to His name. *Every time you look at pornography, Jesus’ name is attached to it. Every time you take advantage of someone, Jesus’ name is attached to it. Every time you steal, Jesus’ name is attached to it. Every time you abuse your spouse, Jesus’ name is attached to it. Every time you sin, Jesus’ name is attached to it.*

For believers, there is no separation between the secular and the sacred. We cannot simply compartmentalize our lives between the church and the world. Our lives are always on display for everyone to see. These truths have specific applications to every believer’s life, but most certainly to the life of a D-group. The D-group has the privilege of holding each member accountable to remain deeply rooted in the Word.

**Three Ways a D-group Remains Faithful to Scripture**

You wouldn't believe how many disciple-making processes use every resource but the Bible. While extra-biblical books support growth in a D-group, the textbook for every group is the Word of God. It is the bedrock for everything we do.

**First, a D-group can remain faithful to Scripture by praying with expectancy to hear from God.** This may seem simple, but a principle that will absolutely change the way you read the Bible is to pray before you begin. How often do we sit down and ask for enlightenment from God before we dive into His word? 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”*

We must begin to pray for God to give us spiritual wisdom and insight in order to understand the Word of God. Pray before you read this life-changing book and watch as your growth in the Christian life deepens exponentially.

**Secondly, a D-group can remain faithful to Scripture is to read and journal the Scriptures daily.** I remember during my time in seminary when classmates would tell me they didn’t have a regular time of reading the Bible because they were so busy studying theological class textbooks. Hear this: the last thing you want to do is read someone else’s thoughts about Scripture in place of reading it for yourself.

Unfortunately, many frequently hear from God this way. Rather than getting alone with Him and His Word, we crowd our time with the thoughts and interpretations of others. Do not get me wrong, there is a time and a place for reading books other people have written about Scripture. You are reading one now. However, it is no substitute for hearing directly from God Himself in the Bible.

If the only time you hear God’s Word is from a pastor on Sunday morning or a devotional book after rising each day, you are depriving yourself. There is nothing better than waking up early, grabbing a cup of coffee, and cracking open the Word to feast on fresh manna for your soul. The F-260 plan may be a good place to start for you.

**Finally, a D-group can stay faithful to Scripture by memorizing verses weekly.** In a culture filled with iPads, computers, notebooks, and Moleskins, the discipline of Scripture memory is a lost art. We can't remember seven-digit phone numbers anymore, much less Bible verses! Most believers offer the same excuse: “I can’t memorize Scripture because my memory is horrible.”

Robby Gallaty tells the following story that emphasizes the impact that memorizing Scripture can have: “It took me more than six months to memorize Romans 1, 2, and 8. Then, on Easter Sunday, a little over a year after being saved, my family gathered together for Easter. My family, every one of them was Catholic at the time, thought my relationship with Christ was another fad that would eventually fade, like my stints collecting baseball cards, playing guitar, working as a DJ, performing card tricks, or training for the UFC. As time passed that day, my personal apologetics began falling on deaf ears, so I resorted to something different: reciting the Word of God.

After the meal was eaten, I stood up before my entire family and simply said, “I have something that I want to share with you guys. ‘Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God…’” I reciting all three chapters from the book of Romans before them. Years later, they would all admit that one experience impacted them more than any sermon I had preached to them. At that moment, I was but a servant of God delivering the Word of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, and leaving the results to God. Eventually, my dad, mom, and sister would surrender their lives to Jesus Christ and follow through with baptism. No part of this story is something that I can take credit for. The Word did all the work.”

Scripture memory increases the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit in your life.

If there is one thing that believers should be known for, it is being people of the Book. In a D-group, the Bible is the textbook. People who live by the Book will be governed by it, and will see as they align their lives to what It says, their relationship with God will grow exponentially.

**How to HEAR from God**

In order to digest more of the Word, I have developed a simple method. It’s called H.E.A.R. journaling. The H.E.A.R. journaling method promotes reading the Bible with a life-transforming purpose. No longer will your focus be on checking off the boxes of a reading plan, your purpose will instead be to read in order to respond to God’s Word.

The acronym H.E.A.R. stands for Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. Each of these four steps contributes to creating an atmosphere to hear God speak. After settling on a reading plan and establishing a time for studying God’s Word, you will be ready to H.E.A.R. from God.

It may seem trite, but it is absolutely imperative that we seek God’s guidance in order to understand His word (q Cor. 2:12-14). Every time we open our Bibles, we should pray the simple prayer that David prayed: “*Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wonderful things from Your instruction* (Word)” (Ps. 119:18).

After praying for the Holy spirit’s guidance, open your notebook or journal, and at the top left corner, write the letter “H”. This exercise will remind you to read with a purpose. In the course of your reading, one or two verses will usually stand out and speak to you. After reading the passage of Scripture, Highlight each verse that speaks to you by copying it under the letter “H.” Write out the following:

• The name of the book

• The passage of Scripture

• The chapter and verse numbers that especially speak to you

• A title to describe the passage

This practice will make it easier to find the passage when you want to revisit it in the future.

After you have highlighted the passage, write the letter “E” under the previous entry. At this stage you will Explain what the text means. By asking some simple questions, with the help of God’s Spirit, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse. Here are a few questions to get you started:

• Why was the passage written?

• To whom was it originally written?

• How does it fit with the verses before and after it?

• Why did the holy Spirit include this passage in the book?

• What is He intending to communicate through this text?

At this point, you are beginning the process of discovering the specific and personal word that God has for you from His Word. What is important is that you are engaging the text and wrestling with its meaning.

After writing a short summary of what you think the text means, write the letter “A” below the letter “E.” Under the “A,” write the word Apply. This application is the heart of the process. Everything you have done so far culminates under this heading. As you have done before, answer a series of questions to uncover the significance of these verses to you personally, questions like:

• How can this help me?

• What does this mean today?

• What would the application of this verse look like in my life?

• What does this mean to me?

• What is God saying to me?

These questions bridge the gap between the ancient world and your world today. They provide a way for God to speak to you from the specific passage or verse. Answer these questions under the “A.” Challenge yourself to write between two and five sentences about how the text applies to your life.

Finally, below the first three entries, write the letter “R” for Respond. Your response to the passage may take on many forms. You may write a call to action. You may describe how you will be different because of what God has said to you through His Word. You may indicate what you are going to do because of what you have learned. You may respond by writing out a prayer to God. For example, you may ask God to help you to be more loving, or to give you a desire to be more generous in your giving. Keep in mind that this is your response to what you have just read.

Notice that all of the words in the H.E.A.R. formula are action words: Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond. God does not want us to sit back and wait for Him to drop some truth into our laps. Instead of waiting passively, God desires that we actively pursue Him. Jesus said, “*Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you*” (Matt. 7:7).

**Now What?**

Understanding the MARCS of a disciple is only the beginning. Where are you on your discipleship journey? Are you a disciple? Are you making disciples? This is, after all the life Jesus called every believer to live and His plan to reach the world with the Gospel.