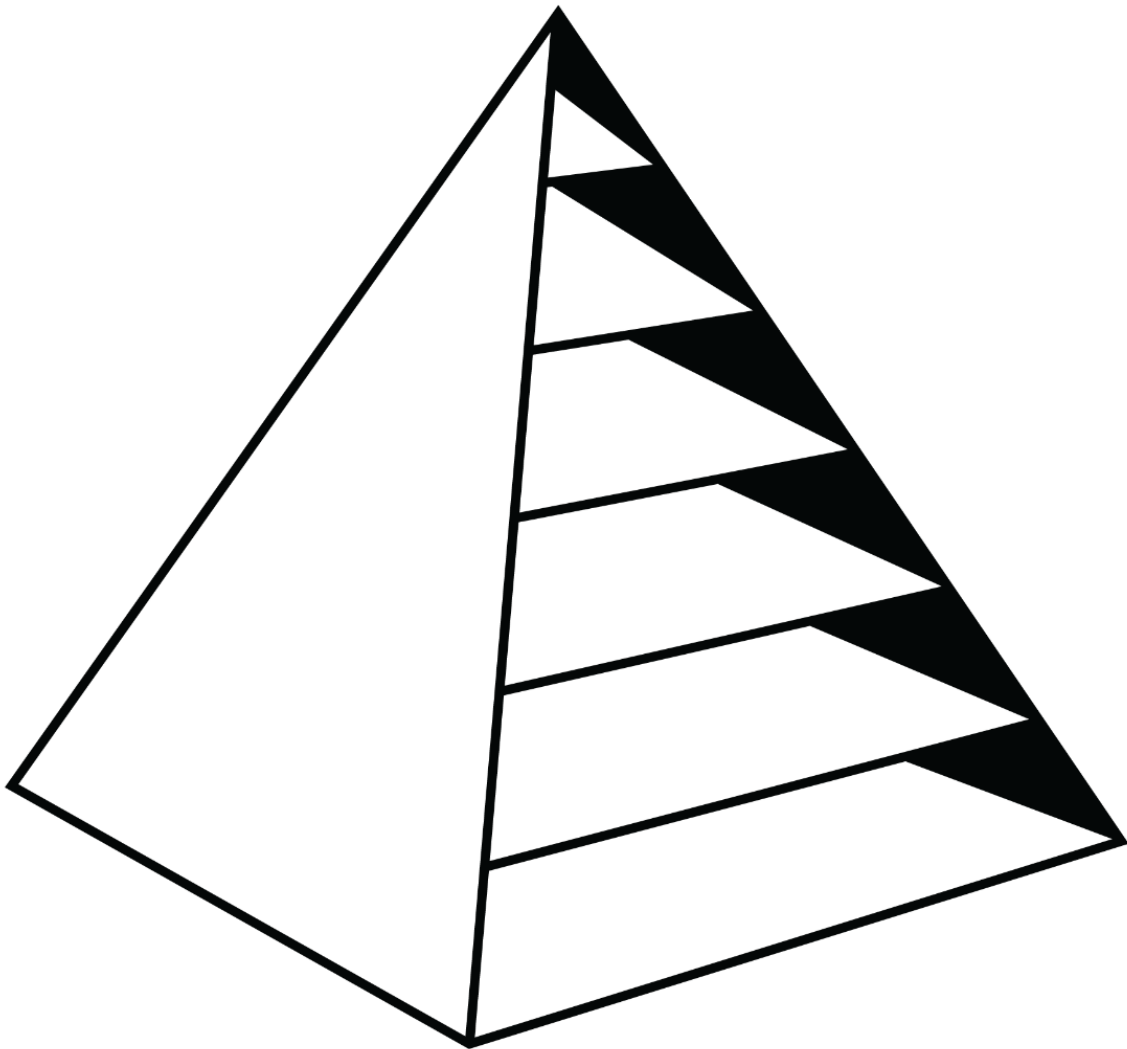


Wisdom

III. 07

To pursue God's wisdom by reorienting our "diet" of information, media, and entertainment.



The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.
Psalm 111:10

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.
James 1:5

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

James 3:13–17



Practice Introduction

We live in an age of information overload. Every day we are bombarded by text messages, emails, social media, TikTok, news, games, shows, movies, YouTube, podcasts, blogs – and all of them are pinging our phones with push notifications. We have access at our fingertips to find the answer to any question that pops into our minds. We have more data, but less clarity. More opinion; less research. More amusements; less joy. Our current issue is not where to find an answer, information is not illusive. Our issue is: “Can I trust what I am reading, hearing, or seeing.”

When it comes to eating, we know that there is a wise way to eat that leads to a physically healthy body. Although we have access to all kinds of foods anytime we want, we know that gorging on candy in the middle of the night is going to make us sick. We need a healthy diet for when and what to eat (and what proportions) so that our physical body will thrive. In the same way, we have access to all kinds of information and entertainment anytime we want. But if we binge-watch Netflix every day after work, or if we endlessly scroll social media every chance we get, we are consuming stuff that will make us mentally and spiritually unhealthy.

Countless studies are showing a clear connection between social media use and depression, particularly in teenagers. The average adult checks their phone at least once every 10 minutes and spends 3 hours and 15 minutes on their phone each day. This constant stimulation is hurting our brains. Neuroscientist Daniel Levitin explains that the stimulation and multitasking we experience when we use our screens causes our brains to function poorly, and raises cortisol levels which causes stress and anxiety.

On top of all of this, the information, opinions, and attitudes that we are consuming are not marked by God’s *wisdom*, but by the world’s foolishness. The Bible repeats this refrain:

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all those who practice it have a good understanding.*

Psalms 111:10

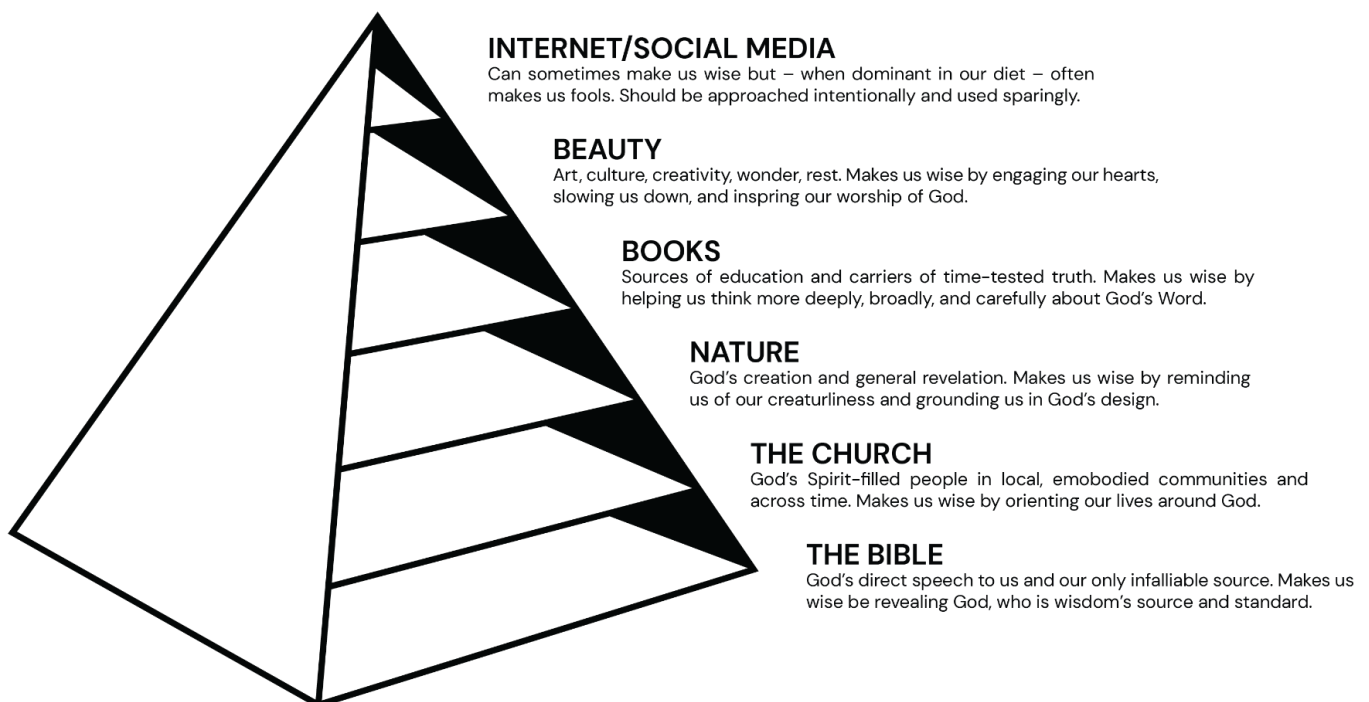
For all the knowledge and information the world boasts of, *true wisdom only comes from a relationship with God*. It starts with a “fear of the LORD” – an awe and reverence for God that the world certainly does not have. To have wisdom is to have discernment – to see the world from a God-honoring perspective, and to live in line with that perspective. Wisdom is very much about *how* we live, and choosing the path that leads to life and not destruction. Wisdom is the god-honoring application of knowledge. Knowledge is facts, wisdom is the

application of those facts that help us to thrive, live counter-culturally, and bring glory to our creator.

The Wisdom Pyramid

If we are going to pursue God's wisdom in our lives, it will require a major change to our "diet" of information, media, and entertainment. In 1992, the US Department of Agriculture released the "food pyramid" to help educate people on the portion sizes of food that are required for a healthy diet. Bread and grains were at the base level, meaning that they should be the largest portion of our diet (obviously opinions have changed since then). Oils, fats, and sweets were at the top of the pyramid, meaning that these should be the smallest portion of our diet.

What would an analogous "pyramid" look like if we were going to communicate a healthy diet for where we get our wisdom? The sources must be ordered by proximity to God. The Bible would be first - it is God's very word, the "bread" category. Next would be the Church - God's institution for bringing His kingdom to the world. Then nature - God's creation. Books written by people who are made in God's image. Beauty in arts and music that reflects God's beauty. The Internet would be last. It is the most removed from God; the most controlled and catered by artificial intelligence (not even by humans made in God's image). It's the most disembodied, and the most disconnected from reality. The internet is the "oils, fats, and sweets" category. Truth and wisdom can come from there, but it should be the smallest portion of our diet.



The challenge is that we've flipped this Pyramid on its head. We have moved to a place in our history where our phones and smart speakers are tracking and listening to our online activity and feeding us MORE of what it believes we need. Your feeds are not random, they are based on what the algorithm believes you want to see more of, so it is making us unhealthier, more worldly, and more polarized.

We want to eliminate distractions from our lives that keep us from real intimacy with God and others. We want to expose how anxiety, fear, judgment, and self-righteousness we experience are driven by and amplified by our media diet. These avenues are not evil in and of themselves, but what we have noticed is how much they are affecting the psychological and spiritual health of our community.

Instead of a restful place of intimacy with God, we can strive to live and record the perfect life, instead of resting in God's affection and love we are driven to see how many likes we have. Instead of praying for our enemies, the way Jesus instructed us to, we are triggered by consuming news cycles and podcasts designed to elicit a strong emotional reaction. We judge others on what they post, like, or ignore. Every time we pick up a device or sit behind a screen we are tempted to numbness or judgment. We posture online because it is safer and we dehumanize our brothers and sisters to screenshots, tweets, or headlines. We sit happily in our digital echo chamber, yet don't engage real people with grace, humility, wisdom, and truth.

PARENTS. Nothing is a more powerful teaching tool than example. If you have pre-teen or teenage kids, talk about why you are doing this. Invite them into the process. Set appropriate and agreed-upon goals with your kids.

This month, we want to pursue God's wisdom together by making 2 changes to our habits of information consumption:

1. Consume less

Human beings weren't made to handle the amount of information and entertainment we are consuming. Just like with overeating, we need to cut down on the amount of information and stimulus.

2. Consume what is healthy

Introduce reading the Bible into your daily life (if you haven't already). This month, we will read through the book of Proverbs together (1 chapter per day) – this book is designed to help us learn and understand God's wisdom.



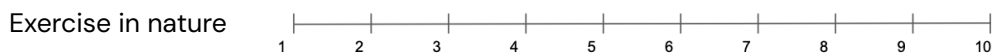
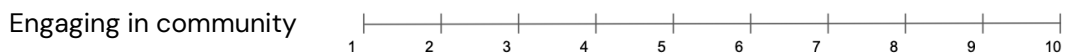
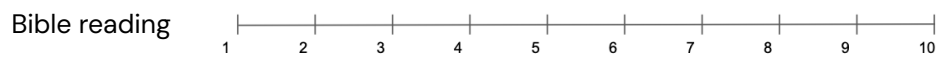
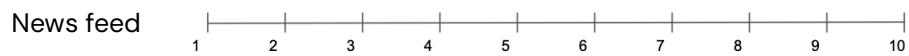
Self Assessment

BEFORE LOOKING AT YOUR PHONE! How many hours do you think you spend on it that are not DIRECTLY related to work? NOW, check your phone's settings and see if you were close. Are you surprised?

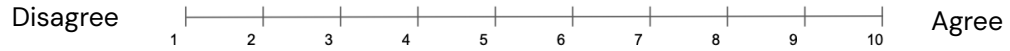
What is your morning ritual like and when does the phone make its first appearance?

ON A SCALE OF 1-10

What practices shape your view/mood/outlook positively?



I have a healthy relationship with my phone and other media streaming devices.



Are there any particular sources of information, media, or entertainment that you know are contributing to that "sickness"? List them.

How do you feel about making new habits of information consumption? Excited? Doubtful? Shameful? Angry? Irritated?

What barriers do you think you will face as you try to change these habits?

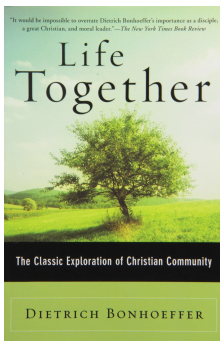
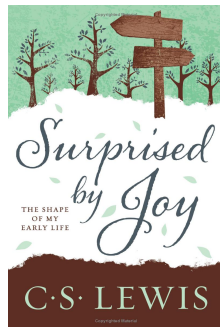
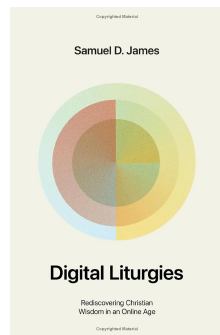
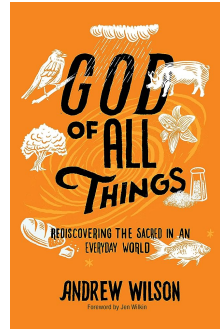
What do you think will most help you make *long-term* changes to how you consume information and media?

Practices for Week 1

Use the questions below to make a SPECIFIC and MEASURABLE plan for how you will limit your information and media consumption this month, and introduce healthy habits:

<p>COLD TURKEY Sources of media, information, and entertainment I need to cut off "cold turkey" this month:</p>	<p>LIMITING Sources of media, information, and entertainment I will limit this month:</p> <p>Daily or weekly limits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tip: Use your phone's screen time settings to set limits for these.
<p>BIBLE READING TIMES Which days and at what time each day will I aim to read the Bible? <i>The goal is to read 1 chapter of Proverbs each day, OR you can substitute your own Bible reading plan.</i></p>	<p>ENGAGING IN COMMUNITY How will I increase my connection to God's people, the Church, this month? <i>Attend corporate prayer or a worship night, attend pre-gathering prayer, invite someone for a meal, etc.</i></p>
<p>IN NATURE How will I increase my connection to God's creation in nature this month? (sit outside, walk, bike, etc.)</p>	<p>BOOK READING Are there any solid books I want to slow down enough to read this month?</p>

List of books you can easily finish in a month.





Portraits of Foolishness

As we pursue God's wisdom together, it can quickly become apparent that we still have foolishness in our own hearts. It is super tough to just change our habits. Trying to "consume less" and "consume what is healthy" (last week's discussion) is very challenging,

Proverbs is about God's design of natural wisdom and the system of sowing and reaping. Proverbs is Sage poetry, not a book of promises we can claim. Proverbs shows us how the world operates if we work "with the grain of the universe" and not against it. We want to address the heart, not just implement action. These 4 weeks are NOT intended to lead you to operate in your own strength and muscle up. Proverbs helps us understand our own heart. (Proverbs 27:19) "As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man."

Throughout Proverbs, "Lady Wisdom" and "Harlot Folly" are contrasted. Lady Wisdom speaks in public places, offering wisdom to everyone who will listen (1:20–22; 8:1–5; 9:3). Wisdom does not hide but stands there for all who seek her. Harlot Folly also cries out and speaks with a smooth tongue, trying to trap the one who does not fear God.

The Call of Lady Wisdom

· Proverbs 8:1–3 ¹Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? ²On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; ³beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud.

· Proverbs 9:10–12 ¹⁰Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment. ¹¹Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life. ¹²If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer.

The Call of Harlot Folly

· Proverbs 9:13–18 ¹³The woman folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing. ¹⁴She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town, ¹⁵calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way, ¹⁶"whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" and to him who lacks sense she says, ¹⁷"stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." ¹⁸But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

Harlot Folly is generally louder and more seductive than Lady Wisdom.

The call of Harlot Folly is the echo of Adam and Eve.

HARLOT FOLLY	LADY WISDOM
"Follow your heart."	Jesus: "Follow me."
"Love yourself."	Jesus: "Love the Lord your God [and] your neighbor as yourself"
"Find your joy, be true to yourself."	Jesus: "Deny yourself and you will discover deeper joy."
"Believe in yourself."	Jesus: "Believe in me."

You cannot get true wisdom without God.

The temptation is to get wisdom apart from God. Solomon is the exemplar of what it means to be wise without being submitted to God. Proverbs gets super practical – it lays out 5 "portraits" of a foolish person to help us clearly identify what foolishness looks like. These 5 "portraits" are summarized below:

The Simple – In Proverbs, the "simple" refers to the person who lacks discernment. They are gullible. Easily persuaded. Easily seduced. Easily given over to temptation without a fight. They are aimless in life. They pursue worthless things. They continue to make the same mistakes again and again without learning. The "simple" does not refer to a person's mental abilities, but rather a willful ignorance and lack of thoughtfulness in life.

The Mocker – the "mocker" or "scoffer" is the person who, with their words, tears down others to build themselves up. They have lots of knowledge. They are intellectually sharp. They may even be sophisticated or impressive. But they are filled with arrogance and pride. They are highly critical of everything and everyone. They think they can see everyone's true motivations. They are cynical. They do nothing themselves, but criticize everyone who tries to accomplish anything.

The Stubborn – the "stubborn" or the "obstinate" are hard-headed and wise in their own eyes. They are very convinced of themselves and their ideas, and they refuse to acknowledge when they are wrong. They hate being corrected. They refuse to learn. They don't take advice. They refuse to submit to authority. They are driven by selfishness.

The Troublemaker – the "troublemaker" is the person who is quick to take offense and quick to stir up strife. Proverbs says they "invite a beating". They flash in anger. When

they speak it is clear that everyone is against them, and they are against everyone. They spread gossip. They spread offense. They oppose reconciliation. They are not gracious. They don't show compassion. They make life miserable for everyone – themselves included.

The Sluggard – the “sluggard” is the person who is lazy and refuses to do anything difficult in life. They avoid work. They only do the minimum requirement. They take the easy way out. They make excuses. They always choose comfort and self-gratification. They are the person with no self-discipline. They waste their time and they compromise in every area of life. They let opportunity slip away because they are unwilling to do hard work.

Each of these “portraits” of foolishness is a mindset that pulls at our hearts every day. We all have a tendency toward one or more of these, but the key is to bring our foolish desires to God when they arise. He is able to change our hearts by the power of the Spirit. We need to recognize that we are being tempted in these areas and ask Him for help.



Marks of Wisdom

Walking in God's wisdom is not only a benefit to our own lives but also a benefit to others. Following God's pattern leads to life, health, and joy. All the noisy voices on the internet claim to know the path to life, *but they don't deliver*. They are sick from information gluttony, perpetual novelty, and complete focus on self. These people are tired of being sick. And if they see in our lives a path to experiencing life and joy, they will follow us! Jesus said,

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

Matthew 7:24-25

Knowing Jesus – hearing and obeying Him – is the only wisdom that can do this. All of the advice, podcasts, and blogs on the internet are *sinking sand* (see Matthew 7:26-27). All of the entertainment, social media, and news are *sinking sand*. The world's wisdom is not enough. But when we experience the storms of life, we know that God uses these trials to prove through our lives that *Jesus Christ is enough*. He is the only rock – the only firm foundation.

Having a relationship with Jesus during this digital age means we will stand out from the world in compelling and counter-cultural ways. Here are three marks of God's wisdom in this digital age:

Discernment in a “too much” world

The information gluttony of the world today is *too much*. In 2019, a *single minute* on the internet saw the transmission of 188 million emails, 18.1 million texts, and 4.5 million videos viewed on YouTube. With so much information thrown at us, it is difficult to distinguish what is important and what is trivial. Cultivating intimacy with Jesus means we will have *discernment*. We will be content with far less. We will be able to say *no*. We won't wander aimlessly on the internet – surfing and scrolling in a way that invites the voices of foolishness into our lives. We will engage it with a *purpose*. We will know when to turn it off. And we will spend far more time turning the pages of Scripture and connecting with our family and our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Patience in a “too fast” world

The world is stuck in a cycle of perpetual novelty, and it is *too fast*. There's a frantic urgency about the internet – a need to know the latest outrage, the latest headline, the latest episode. We're constantly checking for notifications. We feel under the gun to respond to everything

immediately. Everything is made to be consumed as fast as possible. Having Jesus in our lives means we will have *patience*. We won't need to be constantly connected. We won't need to be "in the know". We will have a willingness to slow down and process things. Have you ever noticed how much more enjoyable a meal is when you eat *slowly*? Life is so much more enjoyable when we slow down and when we are present with what is actually happening. With Jesus, we can slow down because we know *He is in control*. The universe doesn't depend on us knowing about everything all the time. We can be happily oblivious to information that won't matter in a week. And we can spend far more time enjoying a true sabbath, taking a nap, or enjoying a quiet moment. We can be more focused on our neighbor, co-worker, or friend that is standing in front of us, rather than the people that are screaming at us on the phone.

Humility in a "too focused on me" world

The information glut and the perpetual novelty of this digital age have resulted in a culture that is hyper-focused on self. It's almost hard to imagine someone surfing the internet or scrolling Instagram in a *selfless* way. It's all designed to make the world about you. It's all about consuming what makes you feel good, and what you agree with (the algorithm is designed for clicks, not truth). Whatever you decide is true, there's sure to be a whole bunch of supporting information and outraged people to confirm it. With the internet, everyone is an authority; *everyone is wise in their own eyes*. Having Jesus in our lives means we will have *humility*. We refuse to be wise in our own eyes – we fear the LORD instead (Prov. 3:7-8). We know we are sinful and fallible. We happily admit when we are wrong. We know we're not experts. We've submitted to another authority – Jesus. And He helps us to see that the world is not about us, it's about Him and His work of salvation for mankind.

When people see our lives marked with discernment, patience, and humility – it will be a compelling witness to them. They will wonder what makes us different. They will wonder what we have that they don't. And we will be ready to give an answer – to point them to Jesus.

Communion

The Lord's Supper / Communion uniquely depicts continuing fellowship with God, a repeated act whereby the believer remembers the Lord's death and renews his commitment to Christ and participation in his church (1 Corinthians 11:27-34).

In receiving the Lord's Supper:

- We *symbolize* the death of Christ; our actions give us a picture of his death for us.
- We *participate* and *share* in the benefits of Jesus' death.
- We *picture* the spiritual nourishment and refreshment that Christ is giving to our souls.
- We mark our *unity* with other believers.
- We *affirm* Christ's love for us.
- We are *assured* of the blessings of our salvation.
- We proclaim our *dependence* on and faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

How do we eat and drink meaningfully?

Christ is truly present each time we receive the Lord's Supper. We do not accept the belief that the elements literally change into the body and blood of Jesus, and neither do we believe that in receiving them, we are doing nothing more than taking bread and juice/wine into our bodies. Rather, there is a glorious mystery of Jesus being present in a real way whenever we partake of this sacrament. That is why it is so central to our gatherings and that is why we need to partake with both joy and soberness. It isn't that his presence is somehow in the materials, but the act of taking those materials into our bodies is a physical way for us to open the deepest spiritual parts of who we are to Christ's abiding presence.

● Retrospection: "Do this in remembrance of Me."

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (ESV) ²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

● Anticipation

Luke 22:17–18 ¹⁷And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

1 Corinthians 11:26 "For whenever we eat the bread or drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until His return."

- **Introspection**

1 Corinthians 11:27–29 (ESV) ²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

We open ourselves to the voice of the Spirit who wants to meet us in our weakness, faithlessness, or sin. We repent, and confidently stride into the throne room of God asking for help in our time of need. Our confidence is not in our work but in the completed sacrifice of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. We DO NOT forgo communion if we are sinning. We confess, repent, and take it!

POTENTIAL LITURGY TO USE

We have complete assurance in our Heavenly Father that though we are flawed, we are valued; though we have hurt people, we are forgiven; though we have sinned against God, others, and ourselves, we are accepted. There is nothing we can do, say, think, feel, or remember that will separate us from God's love through Jesus Christ, our savior. Therefore we confess with openness and with courage.

OUR RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

Our Father, we open our hearts to You and to ourselves, to examine things about us that are hard to acknowledge. Merciful Father, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

As we lean on your inviting and transforming mercy and as we confidently stand in your unwavering love we ask for forgiveness. Empower us to amend our ways, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, for the glory of your holy name. We stand in faith-filled expectation of your forgiveness and acceptance. In the name of the Father who loves us, the Son who died for us, and the Spirit who empowers us. Amen.

Self Re-assessment

Look at your phone's settings: Was there an increase or decrease in the amount of time you spent on your phone this month?

Are your morning and evening rituals regarding media the same? Have they changed? How?

ON A SCALE OF 1-10

What practices shape your view/mood/outlook positively?

