

“Choose Wisely”
Surviving the Pandemic: Ancient Practices for a New Normal
Matthew 22:1-10
Dr. Mark Foster
October 4, 2020

“Ancient spiritual wisdom can become modern common sense.”
“While it might be common sense, it is not yet common practice.” – Ryan Atwell

Last Week: We all become our _____. Our habits are not _____.
Try a new _____ habit of kneeling prayer three times a day.
Try a _____ habit of a conversation with a friend. “Is there anything you aren’t telling me?”
This habit cultivates the kind of life where you know and are known by those _____ to you.
A _____ of life is the way we get our hands on our habits.
These habits are designed to help us spend our days for the sake of _____, rather than just ourselves.

“Christianity is a lifestyle – a way of being in the world that is simple, non-violent, shared, and loving. However, we made it into an established religion and avoided the lifestyle change itself.”
– Richard Rohr

A New Daily Way of Life: The Table Is Where Life Happens

Our culture puts busy schedules at the _____ of life and then tries to fit meals in around them.
We are not _____.
For thousands of years, Christians have placed the _____ at the center of life.
We are _____ of God designed to eat regularly with others: dependent and communal.
The need to eat reveals three things:

1. Our dependence on _____.
2. Our dependence on each _____.
3. Our dependence on _____.

“Every single bite signifies a moment when something died to give you life.” – Justin Earley

The daily habit of eating at least _____ meal with others rearranges our priorities around God’s communal table and acknowledges that we are made for one another.

“How we live together is the most persuasive sermon we’ll ever get to preach.” – Christine Pohl

A New Weekly Limit

We become the _____ we consume. Choose wisely.
The Bible is a story of how God is _____ us.
Unlike books where we choose the stories, screens now _____ stories to us whether or not we want them.
You can’t watch or listen to _____ that everyone else is. Choose wisely.
Choose content that leads you to _____, beauty, and community.
Justice in the Bible is much more than policing; it is _____ with nothing missing or broken.
Watch media with someone else. We are more discerning when we choose _____.
Turn off “auto-play” and read your _____. What does YouTube predict for you?

Action Steps: Daily: kneeling prayer three times a day and one _____ with others.
Weekly: have a one-hour conversation with a friend and choose _____ hours of wise media a week.

Daily Reading & Reflection

October 5 – October 9

Monday – Psalm 119: *“With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments. I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.” - Psalm 119:10-11*

In Sunday’s message, Pastor Mark began by saying, “Ancient spiritual wisdom can become modern common sense.” For generations, the people of God have turned to the Scriptures to inform how they live their lives, and these ancient words have the power to instruct us today just as they have in the past. When we seek out of the Word of God rather than seeking the approval of the world around us, we will find that our daily habits reflect the heart of God. If we start our days in Scripture instead of on the screens of our phones or computers, we are reminded that the world is in need of God’s healing grace, and it is through us that the world can experience it.

Tuesday – Exodus 12: *“If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it.” - Exodus 12:4*

Sharing a meal with others has long been a measure of hospitality. In many Middle Eastern and European cultures, extending bread and salt to a guest was an offering of safety, welcome, and respect. When we come together with our friends and family for a meal, our faces are turned to one another and our backs are turned to distractions. The institution of the Passover meal in today’s Scripture reading reminds us that when God has us gather together to break bread, God uses that time to prepare us for re-entering a world which can be hostile towards us. We share in communion in our worship together, and are then sent out into the world to be God’s vessels of goodness and grace.

Wednesday – Joshua 1: *“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.” - Joshua 1:8*

There is no shortage of content for us to consume on a daily basis. Podcasts, TV shows, YouTube videos, news coverage, books, online articles. They follow us from the moment we wake until the minute we fall asleep. These mediums shape the way that we think and feel, and inform the way that we interact with the world around us. Without a doubt, what we choose will influence us. Pastor Mark encouraged us to choose content which leads us to beauty, community, and justice. If we struggle to find that, we can always return to the Word of God where we will be reminded again of the story of God saving us.

Thursday – Matthew 14: *“Jesus said to them, ‘They need not go away; you give them something to eat.’ They replied, ‘We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.’ And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’” - Matthew 14:16-18*

Eating and sharing meals used to be a central part of life regardless of class or status. The day was spent sourcing, cooking, and sharing food. It was a time for family and fellowship. Today, many of us experience meals as something that we need to force into our schedules or forego altogether in the name of efficiency. On Sunday, Pastor Mark reminded us that eating reveals three things: 1.) Our dependence on God; 2.) Our dependence on each other; and 3.) Our dependence on creation. There is a reason that Christians place the Table at the center of our lives – we have the opportunity to experience the miracle of God’s provision in the same way as those who gathered on the hillside to hear Jesus speak.

Friday – 1 Timothy 4: *“If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed.” - 1 Timothy 4:6*

“We become the stories we consume,” Pastor Mark said last Sunday. It is good for us to limit the amount of time we devote to social media, entertainment, and news consumption. Things that appear on our screens can increase our anxiety, blood pressure, or even lead to fights between loved ones. When we cut down the time we spend consuming media and increase the time we spend reading and reflecting on God’s word, the more peace we can experience. As today’s reading reminds us, we can be most faithful in our service to God when we are immersed in the Scriptures and teachings of Christ.