

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

How We Live

Daily Time in God's Word



SERIES: HOW WE LIVE · PILLAR 1 OF 4 · OAKHILL

Discipleship is apprenticeship, not admiration — and an apprentice has to actually hear from the one they're following. Prayer is our voice reaching toward God; Scripture is His voice reaching toward us. This session is about restoring that second, often-missing half of the conversation, and discovering that God examines our hearts not to catch us out, but to walk with us — giving us exactly what we need for today, one day at a time.

MESSAGE SUMMARY

Four Daily Practices

The "How We Live" series describes the rhythms Oakhill believes shape a genuine follower of Jesus: regular time in Scripture, regular prayer, regular giving, and regular fellowship with other believers. None of this was designed in a planning meeting — it traces back to *Acts 2:42, 44–45*, where the earliest Christians organized their whole common life around these same four habits, long before there was a building, a budget, or a program to run. Imagine a small group of believers stranded somewhere remote with nothing but a Bible and these four commitments — given enough time, a real, functioning church would take shape among them. Everything else a church builds around these practices supports them; it doesn't replace them. This session opens with the first: making regular space to sit with God's Word.

Discipleship Means Listening

To be a disciple is to be a student — someone learning under a teacher, not simply someone who enjoys watching from a distance. That relationship only works if the student can actually hear the teacher. It helps to separate two things that easily blur together: prayer is us speaking to God, while Scripture is God speaking to us. Many of us have built a spiritual life almost entirely on the first half, filling the space with our own words and rarely pausing to receive anything back. And when we do sense God speaking, it's often indirect — filtered through someone else's sermon, a podcast episode, a friend's advice, or a counseling session. None of that is bad, but secondhand words are easy to set aside once they've been heard. A word God gives you directly is much harder to shrug off. One simple way to gauge this: if someone close to you asked what God has been saying to you lately, would you have a real answer?

The Real Obstacle

Our go-to explanation is a lack of time — but that doesn't hold up, since we consistently make room for whatever we actually want to prioritize. Something deeper is usually at play: sitting quietly with Scripture has a way of surfacing the parts of ourselves we work hard to keep hidden, even from ourselves. *Hebrews 4:12–13* describes God's word as alive and sharp enough to expose the true motives of the heart, laying everything bare before Him. That exposure isn't news to God — He already sees it all; what changes is that we finally see it too. That's the same reason *James 1:23–25* compares Scripture to a mirror: none of us can view our

own hearts accurately without one. It's also what makes *Psalms 139:23–24* striking — David asks God to search him without flinching, not because he has nothing to hide, but because he trusts what God does with what He finds. God doesn't search us to condemn us. He searches us to lead us somewhere better.

Bread for Today, Not the Month

In *Exodus 16*, God feeds a frightened, hungry Israel with bread that appears on the ground each morning, attached to an unusual rule: gather only what's needed for that day. Whatever was saved overnight went bad by morning, with one exception — a double portion allowed before the Sabbath stayed fresh. That detail is telling: the bread was perfectly capable of keeping. It spoiled only because that was the point being taught. Moses later spells out the reason in *Deuteronomy 8:3* — the hunger and the daily provision were meant to teach Israel that people live not on bread alone, but on what God speaks. Generations later, Jesus hands His disciples the same principle inside the Lord's Prayer (*Matthew 6:11*): give us today's bread — not next month's, not a guaranteed supply for the year ahead. God isn't mainly solving a logistics problem here; He's cultivating a relationship that requires returning to Him again tomorrow. Which means treating Scripture as optional on a given day isn't neutral — it can mean missing whatever was specifically prepared for that day: a word, a correction, an encouragement suited to that exact moment. Skip it once, and little is lost. Skip it as a pattern, and we end up trying to meet today's pressures on a supply of grace that's already gone stale.

Where to Begin

A few practical starting points: choose a time when you're genuinely alert, not whatever's left over at the end of the day. Choose one quiet, specific place and keep returning to it, the way Jesus had places He regularly withdrew to. Start small — fifteen minutes is enough; there's no advantage to starting with an hour and quitting within a week. Read until something stands out, then stop — the goal isn't finishing a set amount of text, it's actually hearing something. Write down whatever that one thing was, even if it's a single sentence.

A Testimony Kept in a Jar

Exodus closes this story with an unusual instruction: preserve a jar of that daily bread permanently, placed in the most sacred space Israel had, so that later generations who never walked through the wilderness could still see tangible proof of how God had provided (*Exodus 16:32–34*). In the same way, what God speaks to us through Scripture isn't only meant for the day we receive it — over time, those moments build into a testimony: the record of how God shaped, corrected, and carried us. Nearly everyone who has spoken real wisdom or encouragement into your life was very likely drawing on years of gathering that themselves first. Mentoring others isn't mainly a skill to be trained into someone — it flows out of genuinely having been fed, and then having something authentic worth passing on (*2 Timothy 2:2*).

An Invitation

For anyone who feels spiritually empty right now and isn't sure where to even start: in *John 4:13–14*, Jesus tells a woman at a well that the water He offers becomes a permanent, self-renewing source of life — never

running dry. That offer stands for anyone who needs someone to simply sit with them and pray this week.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Acts 2:42, 44–45

Hebrews 4:12–13

James 1:23–25

Psalms 139:23–24

Exodus 16:4

Deuteronomy 8:3

Matthew 6:11

Exodus 16:32–34

2 Timothy 2:2

John 4:13–14

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WARM UP

- 1 Picture a typical week. Where does time with God actually fit in, realistically? What tends to crowd it out?

DIGGING INTO THE WORD

- 1 Read Acts 2:42–45. What do these verses reveal about how the earliest believers structured their daily lives? Of the four practices — Scripture, prayer, giving, fellowship — which comes most naturally to you, and which feels hardest?
- 2 It's easy to fill our spiritual life with talking to God and leave little room to hear from Him. What would change this week if you approached Scripture expecting to actually receive something, not just review information?
- 3 Read Hebrews 4:12–13 as a group. Verse 13 says everything is already known and exposed before God. How does that change the purpose of sitting with Scripture — from feeling caught out, to being known and led somewhere good?
- 4 Read Psalm 139:23–24. What allows David to invite this kind of honest examination so confidently? What would it take for you to pray something like this yourself this week?
- 5 Read Exodus 16:4 and Deuteronomy 8:3. Why design the bread to spoil overnight, with an exception before the Sabbath? What might God have been building into Israel's daily rhythm — and what could that mean for ours?

- 6 Treating Scripture as optional on a given day can mean missing something specific God had for that exact day. Has there been a stretch where you faced a new challenge relying on an old, secondhand answer instead of a fresh one? What happened?
- 7 Read Exodus 16:32–34. Why preserve a jar of manna as a permanent testimony for people who never lived through the wilderness themselves? In what ways might your own time in Scripture eventually become part of someone else's story?

APPLICATION

- 1 When was the last time something from Scripture felt aimed specifically at you, rather than arriving secondhand through someone else's words? What made that moment different?
- 2 Is anyone in the group walking through a season that feels spiritually dry or disconnected right now (John 4:13–14)? How can this group support and pray for each other this week?

"What has God been saying to you lately?"

THIS WEEK'S COMMITMENT

Commit to three small things — small enough to actually do.

A TIME

Pick a slot when you're genuinely alert, not a leftover moment. Set it before you go to sleep tonight.

A PLACE

Settle on a specific, quiet spot in advance, rather than deciding on the spot.

A PERSON

Name one person who will check in with you — and who you'll check in with in return.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we confess that we have too often relied on what others gathered instead of gathering for ourselves, and it has left us running on empty.

You have set something before us each morning meant just for us, and too often we have stayed inside instead of receiving it.

So we choose to come out — starting tomorrow, and the day after that.

Search us honestly. Say what needs saying, and give us the courage not to explain it away, but to let You reach the person underneath every defense we carry.

And when You feed us, keep us from hoarding it — give us at least one person to share it with, so what we receive doesn't end with us.

In Jesus' name, amen.