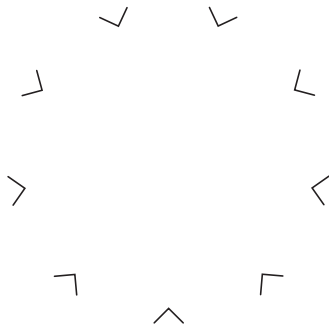


A Four-Session Guide
to Reading the Bible as an
Apprentice to Jesus



The Scripture Practice

From John Mark Comer
and Practicing the Way



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Bible as an Apprentice to Jesus**



WaterBrook

John Mark Comer and Practicing the Way

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Getting Started

Welcome

Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?

—Luke 24v32

At the center of human history is a person—Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. Until very recently, much of the world measured time itself by the years leading up to and following his birth. And since the earliest days of the community of Jesus, the library of writings called the Bible have been central to the lives of Jesus' followers.

Written over more than a thousand years, by dozens of different authors, and in multiple languages and genres of literature, the Bible can sometimes feel like a bewildering maze of history and poetry and laws and letters and more.

Yet when you put it all together, you realize this collection of writings tells one long, cohesive story that leads us to Jesus.

But we don't read this library the way we read the daily news or a social media caption or even other books. In fact, the digital age has rewired our brains, making it very difficult for us to read Scripture the way it was *designed* to be read—slowly, deeply, prayerfully. At times, communally.

We created this Practice to help you learn how to read Scripture as a spiritual discipline, as a way of meeting God on every page and opening your spirit to his Spirit to heal and change you from the inside out.

This will require us to learn to read Scripture *as apprentices of Jesus*, not just for *information*, but also for *formation*. It will require us to rewire our brains so they can deeply attune to God's speaking voice as we read. And it will require us to make immersing our minds and hearts in Scripture a practice, a daily discipline of love.

How to Use This Guide

A few things you need to know

This Practice is designed to be done in community, whether with a few friends around a table, within your small group, in a larger class format, or with your entire church.

The Practice is four sessions long. We recommend meeting together every week or every other week. For those of you who want to spend more time on this Practice, we've included an additional four weeks of bonus conversations in the appendix to go deeper in Scripture and discussion. You are welcome to pause for these conversations in between sessions or skip over them.

You will all need a copy of this Companion Guide. You can purchase a print or ebook version from your preferred book retailer. We recommend the print version so you can stay away from your devices during the Practices, as well as take notes during each session. But we realize that digital works better for some.

Each session should take about one to two hours, depending on how long you set aside for discussion and whether or not you begin with a meal. See the sample session on the following page.

Are you a group leader or facilitator? See page 112 for helpful information and additional ideas and tips on running this Practice.

Our Practices are designed to work in a variety of group sizes and environments. For that reason, your gatherings may include additional elements like meals or worship time, or may follow a structure slightly different from the following sample. Please adapt as you see fit.

Sample Session

Here is what a typical session could look like.

Welcome

Welcome the group and open in prayer.

Introduction (2–3 min.)

Watch the introduction and pause the video when indicated for your first discussion.

Discussion 01: Practice reflection in triads (15–20 min.)

Process your previous week's spiritual exercise in smaller groups of three to five people with the questions in the Guide.

Teaching (20 min.)

Watch the teaching portion of the video.

Discussion 02: Group conversation (15–30 min.)

Pause the video when indicated for a group-wide conversation.

Testimony and tutorial (5–10 min.)

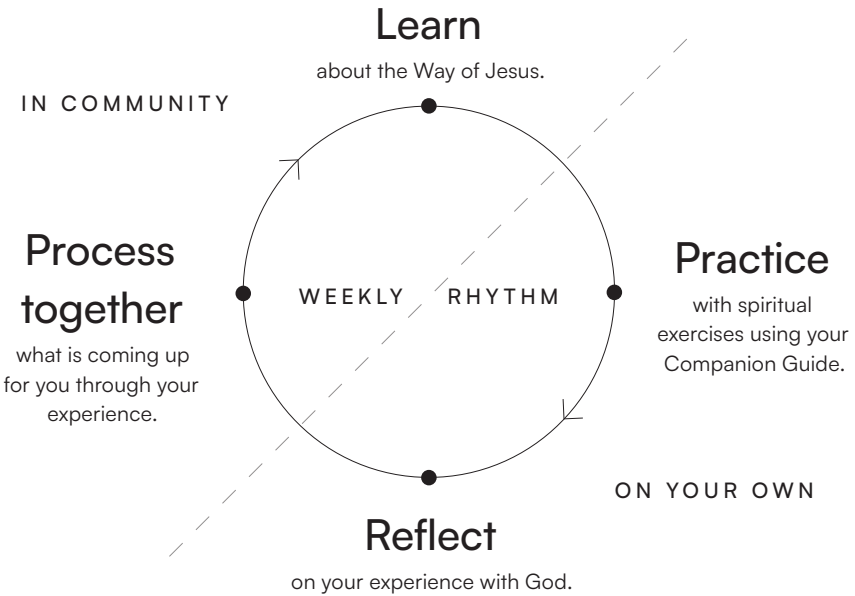
Watch the rest of the video.

Prayer to close

Close by praying the liturgy in the Guide, or however you choose.

The Weekly Rhythm

The four sessions of this Practice are designed to follow a four-part rhythm that is based on our model of spiritual formation.



01 Learn

Gather together as a community for an interactive experience of learning about the Way of Jesus through teaching, storytelling, and discussion. Bring your Guide to the session and follow along.

02 Practice

On your own, before the next session, go and “put it into practice,” as Jesus himself said.* We will provide weekly spiritual exercises to integrate this Practice into your everyday life, as well as recommended resources to go deeper.

03 Reflect

Reflection is key to spiritual formation. After your practice and before the next session, set aside 10–15 minutes to reflect on your experience. Reflection questions are included in this Guide at the end of each session.

04 Process together

When you come back together, watch the introduction, and then start by sharing your reflections with your group. This moment is crucial because we need each other to process our lives before God and make sense of our stories. If you are meeting in a larger group, you will need to break into smaller subgroups for this conversation so everyone has a chance to share.

* Philippians 4v9.

The Spiritual Health Reflection

One final note: Before you begin Session 01, please set aside 20–30 minutes and take the Spiritual Health Reflection. This is a self-assessment we developed in partnership with pastors and leading experts in spiritual formation. It's designed to help you reflect on the health of your soul in order to better name Jesus' invitations to you as you follow the Way.

You can come back to the Spiritual Health Reflection as often as you'd like (we recommend one to two times a year) to chart your growth and continue to move forward on your spiritual journey.

To access the Spiritual Health Reflection, visit practicingtheway.org/reflection and create an account. Answer the prompt questions slowly and prayerfully.

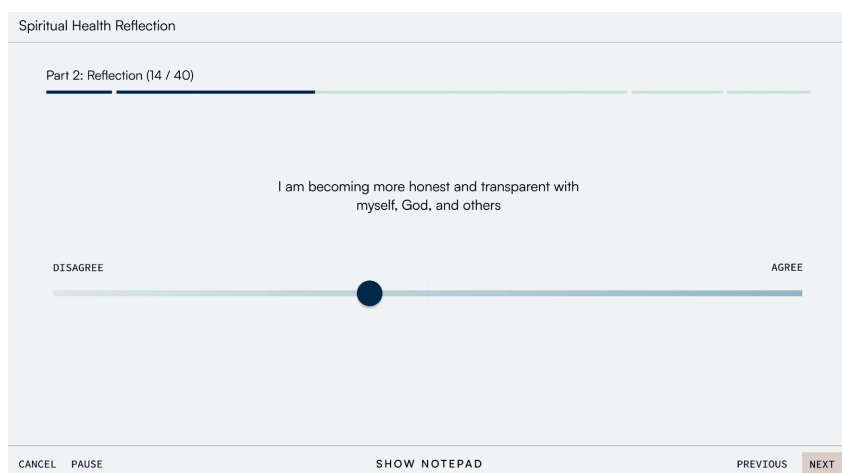
Spiritual Health Reflection

Part 2: Reflection (14 / 40)

I am becoming more honest and transparent with myself, God, and others

DISAGREE AGREE

CANCEL PAUSE SHOW NOTEPAD PREVIOUS **NEXT**

The image shows a screenshot of a digital interface for a "Spiritual Health Reflection". At the top, it says "Spiritual Health Reflection". Below that, it indicates "Part 2: Reflection (14 / 40)". A progress bar is shown with a dark blue segment on the left and a light green segment on the right. The main content is a statement: "I am becoming more honest and transparent with myself, God, and others". Below the statement is a horizontal slider with a dark blue circle in the middle, indicating a level of agreement. The slider is labeled "DISAGREE" on the left and "AGREE" on the right. At the bottom of the interface, there are several buttons: "CANCEL", "PAUSE", "SHOW NOTEPAD", "PREVIOUS", and "NEXT".

The Practicing the Way primer

If this is your first time engaging with a Practicing the Way resource, we invite you to set aside 15 minutes before Session 01 to watch a primer on spiritual formation. This will give you a brief overview of the *why* behind spiritual practices and key insights to guard and guide your coming practice.

Log in to your online Dashboard or sign up to watch the primer at launch.practicingtheway.org.



SESSION 01

Read

Overview

Jesus was a rabbi, or a teacher, of the Torah—the Bible of his day. His mind and imagination were saturated in Scripture. Listen to his teachings! They are *full* of quotes, allusions, metaphors, and hyperlinks back to the Hebrew Bible.

Our goal is to read Scripture as *apprentices of Jesus*. This means we don't read it the way we read an online article or textbook chapter or even a literary novel. Unlike other works of literature, *the author is with us in the room*.

Our goal isn't just to *read* Scripture, but also to meet Jesus on the page. To be *with* him, to become *like* him, and to be formed into the people who live out what we read. Or as Jesus put it, “to obey everything I have commanded you.”*

That's why our posture is even more important than our technique. We must come to Scripture with the hearts of disciples—sitting at Jesus' feet and listening for his word.

* Matthew 28v20.

Teaching

Key Scripture

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

—Matthew 5:17–19

Session summary

- Jesus was clear: His mission was not to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them. He embodied and realized the promises of the Old Testament in every way.
- There is a reciprocal relationship between the role of Scripture in our lives and the depth of our formation as Kingdom people. A key part of our apprenticeship to Jesus is allowing Scripture to constantly shape our imaginations, emotions, words, and actions.
- As apprentices, our goal is to be with Jesus, become like him, and do as he did—and each aspect of this goal requires us to regularly immerse our minds and hearts in Scripture.
- Reading Scripture as apprentices of Jesus requires us to read *formationally*, not just *informationally*.
- As we read, it's important to remember that Jesus himself is in the room with us. Our goal is to meet him on every page.

Discussion Questions

Now it's time for a conversation about the teaching. Pause the video for a few minutes to discuss in small groups:

- 01 What was one insight from the teaching you want to carry with you this coming week?

- 02 Do you resonate more with reading Scripture for information or formation? Why?

- 03 Would you consider yourself more of a left-brained person (analytical, rational) or right-brained person (intuitive, symbolic)? How has that impacted the way you read Scripture?

- 04 What's the primary obstacle you face to the regular reading of Scripture (e.g., time, your sleep habits, parenting, work schedule, intellectual questions, emotional triggers)?