

June 10 – Read Luke 10:38-42. In the New Testament, to “sit at someone’s feet” meant becoming that person’s disciple. (In Acts 22:3, the apostle Paul described his student days with the literal Greek phrase “at the feet of Gamaliel.”) In this story, “Martha did what the culture valued in women: cleaned the house and cooked the food. Mary did what the culture valued in men: became a disciple.” * Jesus put no gender or other limits on who he wished to teach. He wanted all his followers to grow spiritually. The contrast challenged stereotypes about gender roles: one sister was “preoccupied with getting everything ready for their meal,” the other one “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his message.” Which one sounds more like the way you live your life? Jesus said, “Mary has chosen the better part.” Are there ways in which you are choosing, day by day, to sit at the Lord’s feet and listen to his message? Jesus told Martha, who seems to have seen many details of her role as hostess as critically important, that “One thing is necessary” (or, as The Message renders it, “One thing only is essential.”) What would making Christ the only essential thing in your life look like? How would it affect your priorities, time use, leisure activities and other choices? How might it offer you greater freedom in your life?
* *John Ortberg, Who Is This Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012, pp. 54*

June 11. Read James 1:2-5. Every life has challenges—sometimes minor, other times trials that test the very fiber of our being. James urged Christians to meet life’s tests as “occasions for joy.” He didn’t mean the tests were pleasant, but rather that times that test us, in small or large ways, are chances to grow endurance. God will use that endurance, James went on, to “complete its work so that you may be fully mature, complete, and lacking in nothing.” James offered a realistic view of life: there will be hard times. How can our faith shape the way we view these trials? James urged his readers to see the tests as “occasions for joy.” When have you faced a trial in your life and learned from it? How have you seen God use hard times to test and grow your faith toward greater endurance and maturity? James did not write through naïve, rose-colored glasses. He knew human nature is not at all inclined to view tests as “occasions for joy.” That’s why in verse 5 he wrote that God will freely give wisdom to anyone who asks. In what ways does God’s ability to “grow you” through life’s challenges help you view hard times differently? When has God given you wisdom to face a tough challenge?

June 12. Read 2 Timothy 2:14-15, 23-25. Paul urged Timothy to value reading and applying the principles of the Bible accurately. As Timothy’s spiritual mentor, Paul urged him to “Present yourself to God as...a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” Doing that correctly also involved embodying its principles in the way he taught and shared. “Be kind toward all people” was an important part of teaching effectively. You may have heard the saying that “if you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything.” In what ways are you learning and understanding more of the Bible’s overarching message, and not just snippets here and there? How can an informed, Christ-centered study of the Bible help you discern truth from falsehood among the many religious ideas that clamor for your attention? Verse 14 says, “Keep reminding people of these things...” Paul didn’t just call Timothy to study the Bible for himself. He wanted him to accurately share its story with others. How is what you learn in the Bible shaping your life, especially the ways that you interact with others in your family, neighborhood, school or workplace? What spiritual subjects “trigger” in you a desire to argue? How does the Holy Spirit help you deal with those feelings?

June 13. Read Psalm 119:11-12, 103-105. To grow spiritually from Bible reading calls for us to open our heart as well as our mind to what God wants to say to us through the Bible. Sometimes all we know of Psalm 119 is that it is “the longest chapter in the Bible.” But it is so much more than that. Today’s passage offers a lovely prayer model that can prepare us to “hear” and value God’s word on the pages of Scripture. “I have hidden your word in my heart,” the psalmist wrote. What does it take to move the word from the printed page (or the screen) into your heart? One effective way to start is to choose a short Bible passage (e.g. John 3:16-17, Psalm 23, or even if you want to start with a really short passage Psalm 119:11 from today’s reading) and commit it to memory this week. At the same time, remember this: “The Bible is more than just a big book of inspirational verses and some do’s and don’ts. It’s a story. And like any story, it requires proper context. The Bible we hold in our hands today has been translated across multiple languages and was originally written in a culture much different than ours. This is important to understand because without proper context you will ultimately read the Bible out of context.” * How can you grow in your ability to relate all the “pieces” of the Bible to the big story it tells? * Tyler Speegle, “Five Signs You’re Reading the Bible All Wrong.” *Relevant Magazine*, July 27, 2017, web version ([click here to read the full article](#))

June 14. Read James 1:22-25. Growing in faith involves study, but it is not simply an intellectual exercise. James the apostle said God seeks “doers of the word,” not just “hearers.” That idea shaped the life of John Wesley, Methodism’s founder. Based on what they studied in Scripture, he and his friends got actively involved in helping prisoners and widows in Oxford. Holding together personal and social holiness has remained important to Wesley’s spiritual descendants ever since. Have you ever known a person who “talked a good game” about religious devotion, but whose actions and attitudes did not match their words? If so, how did that person affect the other people over whom they had influence? When have you discovered a mismatch between your words about faith and your actions? In what ways has your allegiance to Christ altered your activities, priorities and lifestyle? James used a phrase that may startle us at first, writing of “the perfect law, the law of freedom.” When have you found in your own life that ignoring God’s principles to do whatever you feel like produces, not freedom, but a hurtful kind of slavery? In what ways have you found that living out God’s calling increases your freedom rather than limiting or frustrating it?