

22 Days to the Dominican

Day 1

Freedom to Live, Freedom to Love, and Freedom to Learn

It is for Freedom that Christ has set us free...(Galatians 5:1)

To meditate is to think deeply. Think of the following as meditations designed to prepare you for your time in the Dominican Republic. They are not meant to connect the dots for you; they are meant as individual thinking exercises. In other words, simply reading will not provide for you what we hope these will do. Instead, I would recommend that you set a period of time, each day – a certain number of minutes that is reasonable for you and still not too big that you won't do it. Then, during that time, read the quotes and think about them; read the questions and think about them. Sometimes it is helpful to journal your thoughts. As you are thinking, if you have questions, write those down.

One of the things that we are praying for as you come to spend some time with us in the Dominican Republic is that you would leave here knowing what it means to glorify God in your life in greater way. As you meditate on these thoughts, see if you can discover a concrete answer to the question, "What does it mean to glorify God?"

I hope this is a guide that will enable you to draw closer to the Lord, that will help you escape the distractions that scream for your attention, and that will prepare you for what the Lord will do in your life while you are in the DR.

Christ has set us free!

Jason Hilgeman

What is salvation?

What is the point or goal of salvation? In other words, why would God save man?

What does it mean to glorify God with your life?

“The goal of salvation is *not* to get us into heaven. Properly understood, heaven is not a goal at all, but a destination. Heaven is vitally important, and it is part of the package, if you will, but it must never be the center of our attention. Heaven is only a glorious byproduct of something far more central. Salvation is a *life*, and when we have this life, this *zöe*, physical death becomes merely a minor transition from this life to greater life.”¹

1 Corinthians 6:20 “For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

¹ Richard J. Foster, "Salvation is for life," *Theology Today* 61, no. 3 (October 1, 2004): 299.

Day 2

“Both human experience and the Bible teach that increased knowledge – even knowledge of the Scriptures – does not automatically produce transformed people.”²

Christianity is unique. The life of Christ can actually become our life. We can be changed from the inside which causes us to change on the outside. False religions can only change people on the outside.

Is it possible that Christians might be changed only on the outside? Can Christianity mimic false religions in this way?

How are we changed?

Matthew 23:27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.”

II Corinthians 3:18 “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”

² John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 188.

Day 3

I served for many years as a pastor, knowing all the while that there was a vacuum in my preaching. I could tell people how to accept Christ as Savior, we could talk about being in heaven after Jesus came back, but I had very little to tell them about the *present* aspect of salvation. If we don’t know something of the reality of salvation in our present life, it doesn’t mean that we are lost, but it means that the whole thing takes on an air of unreality.... We have got to get a grasp on how our faith relates to where we are right now. ³

What does it mean to know the “reality of salvation in our present life?”

In what ways is Christ real in your daily life? The force of this question is not “in what ways do you serve Him or acknowledge Him;” rather, the focus is “In what ways is His life revealed in you?”

Colossians 3:4 “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

³ Eduardo J. Echeverria, "The Christian faith as a way of life: in appreciation of Francis Schaeffer (on the fiftieth anniversary of L'Abri Fellowship)," *Evangelical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (July 1, 2007): 245.

Day 4

John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Truth is not a set of rules to be obeyed, mysteries to be known or evidences to be mastered, but Christ, by whom we know and are known. Truth is not discovered, it is revealed in relationship to both the head and the heart. Therefore, Truth is not something merely known or proclaimed but Someone experienced, tasted, and seen as the Psalmist says, by grace, faith, and presence that not merely knows the Truth but loves him.⁴

What is the difference between knowing Truth and loving Truth? What would it look like to love Truth?

Does loving Truth mean knowing Truth less?

How do we know when we get the two misprioritized?

⁴ Ed Stetzer and David Putman, *Breaking the Missional Code: Your Church Can Become a Missionary in Your Community*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 119.

Day 5

The irony is that most people crying for ‘meat’ are really crying for minutia. They want to learn the deeper truths about the times of the rapture rather than how to live the Christian life. True meat teaches people how to be transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they will live like Christ, love like Christ, and leave what Jesus left behind.⁵

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

What does it mean that our spiritual service of worship is to present ourselves as a living, holy sacrifice? Is that even possible?

Is there value in knowing about the end times? If they should be pursued, how should we pursue topics like this?

⁵Ibid., 80.

Day 6

John 18:38 “Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’”

John 8:32 “and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

It is a key principle, too generally overlooked, that the Bible is not concerned with abstract truth; on the contrary, it always sees truth as related to life. “He that doeth truth,” wrote John, “cometh to the light” (John 3:21).⁶

What is truth?

What does exposure to truth do?

If truth brings freedom, why is it so often rejected?

⁶ Frank E. Gaebelien, “Toward a Philosophy of Christian Education,” in *An Introduction to Evangelical Christian Education*, ed. Edward J. Hakes (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1964), 45-46.

Day 7

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Now, some might be shocked to hear that what the ‘church’ really needs is not more people, more money, better buildings or programs, more education, or more prestige. Christ’s gathered people, the church, has always been at its best when it had little or none of these. All it needs to fulfill Christ’s purposes on earth is the quality of life he makes real in the life of his disciples. Given that quality, the church will prosper from everything that comes its way as it makes clear and available on earth the ‘life that is life indeed.’⁷

What place do money, programs, education, etc. play?

How can he say “all it needs...is the quality of life he makes real in...his disciples?”

What is “abundant life?” How do we make it “clear and available?”

⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Rediscovering Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship*, (San Francisco, California: Harper San Francisco, 2006), xiv.

Day 8

As we're walking down life's road, we arrive at a tall pole with signs pointing in two different directions. The marker leading to the left simply says Pleasing God. The one leading to the right reads Trusting God. We must choose one.⁸

If we choose trusting God, where does that take us? How does it affect me?

If we choose pleasing God, where does that take us? How does it affect me?

Finish this sentence: In order to live the Christian life, I must...

Colossians 2:6 "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him"

Hebrews 11:6 "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

⁸ Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and John Lynch, *TrueFaced: Trust God and Others with who you really are*, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2004), 37.

Day 9

The love of the Lord culminates in this, that we should be like Him. He died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. I find that one who is set on usefulness does not advance like the one set on personal affection to Christ.⁹

Ephesians 2:4-7 "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

What is the significance of the usage of past tense in these verses? ...made alive, raised, seated?

What is the difference between being "set on usefulness" and setting "personal affection" on Christ?

⁹J. B. Stoney as quoted by Miles Stanford in *J. Butler Stoney: An Ascension Anthology*, 42.

Day 10

True or False. “If the only thing I had was a relationship with God, that would still be good.”

Genesis 2:18 “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”

As unredeemed people, “the deepest part of who we are is vibrantly attached to no one...we are profoundly unknown and therefore experience neither the thrill of being believed in nor the joy of loving or being loved.”¹⁰

Think about the Fall of man. What affect has that had on interpersonal relationships between people?

Think of three specific examples of ways we are walled off from one another. These can be societal norms that cause us to close ourselves off or they could be things we do to ourselves to shut ourselves off.

¹⁰ Lawrence J. Crabb, *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships: a Radical New Vision*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Word Publishing, 1997), 44.

Day 11

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (I John 4:10). This means if you are going to love others as Christ loved you, you must be ready to take the initiative. In fact, taking initiative in love-giving is an act of sacrifice in itself. The initiator is more vulnerable to rejection. The successful initiator must expend emotional energy and creativity finding successful ways to initiate. It’s so much easier to respond when you sense someone likes you, isn’t it?¹¹

John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

How do you overcome the barriers to initiating with other people?

What kind of love is John talking about if it results in others saying – “that guy/gal is a disciple of Christ?”

If that does not characterize your life, what is the answer?

¹¹ Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery, *Organic Disciplemaking: Mentoring Others into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership*, (Houston, Texas: Touch Publications, 2006), 68.

Day 12

What would it be like if we had a vision for each other, if we could see the lost glory in ourselves, our family, and our friends? What would the effect on your sons or daughters be if they realized that you were caught up with the possibilities of restored glory, of what they could become – not successful, talented, good-looking, or rich but kind, strong, and self-assured, fully alive.¹²

Do we even have this responsibility – to look at one another this way? Why or why not?

Think about two people who you influence. What is your vision for them?

Genesis 4:9 “Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ And he said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’”

Romans 12:10 “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor”

¹² Lawrence J. Crabb, *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships: a Radical New Vision*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Word Publishing, 1997), 65.

Day 13

Why should we be involved in missions?

What part does missions play in relationship to the glory of God?

The highest of missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission (important as that is), nor love for sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God...), but rather zeal – burning and passionate zeal – for the glory of Jesus Christ... Only one imperialism is Christian... and that is concern for His Imperial Majesty Jesus Christ, and for the glory of his empire.¹³

Psalms 86:9 “All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name.”

Psalms 95:6 “Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”

¹³ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 9.

Day 14

The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christ-like and so dwelling in *his* “faith and practice,” systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs to that end. By these decisions and actions, even today, one enrolls in Christ’s training, becomes his pupil or disciple... In contrast, the non-disciple, whether inside or outside the church, has something ‘more important’ to do or undertake than to become like Jesus Christ.¹⁴

What does it mean to be a disciple of Christ?

Is it possible to be a Christian and not a disciple?

What would it look like to “rearrange your affairs” towards discipleship?

| Corinthians 9:24-27 “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

¹⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Rediscovering Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship*, (San Francisco, California: Harper San Francisco, 2006), 7.

Day 15

The twentieth-century model of missions leaves the vast majority of Christians out of the church’s spiritual battle. The model could be summed up as, “feed the world spiritual fish.” This is an oversimplification, but as a generalization it isn’t far from reality. Our commission on the other hand is more like, “Distribute spiritual fish samples and then train all those who want more to fish for themselves AND teach them to teach others to fish!”¹⁵

2 Timothy 2:2 “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

If you were responsible to shepherd a group of people, how would you train them to fish and teach others to fish?

Why does the author say that the wrong model leaves the majority of Christians out of the battle?

How does the right model bring the majority of Christians into the fight?

¹⁵ Steve Saint, *The Great Omission: Fulfilling Christ's Commission Completely*, (Seattle, Washington: YWAM Publishing, 2001), 19.

Day 16

Mark 12:30 “and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

“Too often people think about their “spiritual lives” as just one more aspect of their existence, alongside and largely separate from their ‘financial lives’ or their ‘vocational lives.’ Periodically they may try to ‘get their spiritual lives together’ by praying more regularly or trying to master another spiritual discipline....God is not interested in your ‘spiritual life,’ he is interested in your life.”¹⁶

What does it mean to submit my whole self to God?

Where does loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength conflict with the “real world?”

How could recognizing those conflicts enable a believer to be “whole?”

¹⁶ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 15.

Day 17

The most common mistake made by well intentioned leaders... is turning discipleship into a curriculum that a serious disciple completes and then graduates from. Instead of supporting an ongoing process, a program focuses on finishing the material, learning the information, and developing certain skills such as giving a testimony or using different methods of Bible study.¹⁷

Philippians 3:10-14 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing I *do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Why are we so prone to programs as a measurement of spiritual maturity?

What does Paul prioritize as the number one pursuit in his own discipleship?

What is the “one thing” Paul says he does? Why would that be important in this context? In other words, what pitfall are we prone to?

¹⁷ Bill Hull, *Choose the Life: Exploring a Faith That Embraces Discipleship*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2004), 36.

Day 18

Now, many of you will know that the “flesh” most often shows up in the scripture, not in association with “cigarettes and whiskey and wild, wild women,” but with *religious* activities. When Paul in Philippians 3:3 says that he too has “reason for confidence in the flesh,” he proceeds to give us a list of *religious credentials* that is quite overwhelming.¹⁸

Is Christianity defined by what we do? Don't do?

If we say “no,” are we then free to do whatever we want? Explain.

What is fleshly?

Romans 6:1-4 “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

¹⁸ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Rediscovering Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship*, (San Francisco, California: Harper San Francisco, 2006), 46.

Day 19

The opposite of righteousness is to value and enjoy what is not truly valuable or rewarding. This is why people are called unrighteous in Romans 1:18. They suppress the truth of God's value and exchange God for created things. So they belittle God and discredit His worth.¹⁹

What is righteousness?

In what areas is it easy to be unrighteous? Why?

Psalms 14:2 “The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God.”

¹⁹ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 21.

Day 20

|| Corinthians 10:4-5 “for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”

What are the fortresses that we destroy? How do we destroy them?

Does this happen naturally? Is there anything required on the believer's part?

Why is it that the vast majority of Christian believers remain largely unexposed to Christian leaning – to historical-critical studies of the Bible, to the content and structures of the great doctrines, to two thousand years of classic works on the Christian life, to the basic disciplines of theology, biblical languages, and Christian ethics? Why do bankers, lawyers, farmers, physicians, homemakers, scientists, salespeople, managers of all sorts, people who carry out all kinds of complicated tasks in their work and home, remain at an elementary school level in their religious understanding? How is it that high school age church members move easily and quickly into the complex world of computers, foreign languages, DNA, calculus, and cannot even make a beginning in historical-critical interpretation of a single text of Scripture? How is it possible one can attend or even teach in a Sunday School for decades and at the end of that time lack the interpretive skills of someone who has taken three or four weeks in an introductory course in the Bible at a university or seminary?²⁰

²⁰Edward Farley. "Can church education be theological education?" *Theology Today* 42, no. 2 (July 1985): 164-165. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 24, 2008).

Day 21

We need freedom to discover how God wants us to grow, for his design will not look quite the same for everyone. Perhaps God speaks to us in special ways through nature. Perhaps he made us to be informed by music. We may have an above-average capacity for silence and prayer. Or we might respond most strongly to images, symbols and the fine arts. C.S. Lewis once surmised that each person is created to see a different facet of God's beauty – something no one else can see in quite the same way – and then to bless all worshipers through all eternity with an aspect of God they could not otherwise see.²¹

What things do you find yourself doing naturally?

What is it that your friends and family would say that you can't help but do?

Think over the last year. At what point did you feel most fulfilled?

Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.”

²¹ John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 53.

Day 22

You will not become occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ till you learn that He has so perfectly cleared the ground for you, that now you can turn around and delight yourself in Him.²²

Hebrews 10:14 “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

How should Hebrews 10:14 affect us in a practical way today?

What does it mean that “He has so perfectly cleared the ground for you?”

Why does that provide the ability to delight in Him? What is the connection?

²² J. B. Stoney as quoted by Miles Stanford in *J. Butler Stoney: An Ascension Anthology*, 50-51.