

The Normal Christian Life: Not Weak, Not Weird, Not Wandering

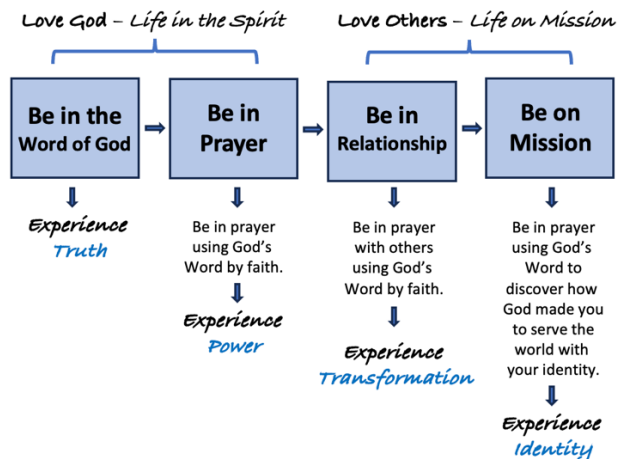
Week One: *What is Normal?*



Life submitted and controlled by Jesus is not just for the few religious fanatics. It is the normal outcome of those who truly choose Jesus. Submission to God and the God-centric life is what Jesus produces in us because it is who Jesus is. To have Jesus in our lives is to live as he lives—fully submitted to and centered on God in everything. When we live with Jesus as our center, we will naturally **love God** and **love others**. This is also the path to what we really want in life—love, joy, peace, abundance. Conversely, the absence of a God-centric life is truly the source of most of our woes.

So What? What am I supposed to DO with this?

- **The God-centric life starts with a decision** to want God more. Do I want Him to have sovereign control over my life?
- **The decision to want God more is a relational decision.** The mechanical, technical “do this” comes second. If I want God more, do I want God enough to “do” the cultivating work of building an intimate relationship with Him?
- **Consider the four steps** to living the full and normal Christian life—*Be in the Word*; *Be in prayer*; *Be in biblical community*; *Be on mission*. Which of these four are the next habit you need to focus on and even begin to master?



This week, make a commitment to *invest four blocks of time* to meditate on God’s Word slowly and carefully and surrender to God for His help.

Day One: *Have you truly chosen Jesus?*

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon **Galatians 2:20** and **John 10:10**.

Reflect: The normal outcome for those who truly choose Jesus is a life of complete surrender to let him be in control. When we make this internal decision, Jesus does within us what only Jesus can do—transform us into people of love, joy, peace, and abundance. The absence of this abundant life betrays that we likely have not fully chosen Jesus. We may joyfully accept aspects of Jesus—his forgiveness, his moral example, his promise to answer our prayers—and yet hold back from truly making him our Lord.

- *Have you fully chosen Jesus? What are you holding back?*
- *What is hindering you from giving Jesus control over your life? Is it doubt about his reality? Is it fear that he may ask you for something you don’t want to give?*
- *What would it look like for you to transfer control of your life to Jesus? Can you release to him the authority to guide and even direct your decisions? Can you trust he will lead your steps to the best outcomes? Can you begin to inquire of Jesus through “listening prayer” for your day-to-day decisions?*

Pray: *God, examine my heart and mind. Where am I holding back all my heart from you? What areas or situations in my life am I still clinging to control? Are there aspects of myself that I do not see that You want to reveal to me? Help me surrender over to you all that I am and all that is important to me. Become my Lord. I offer you my heart in full. In Jesus’ name! (ALSO: Consider praying **Psalm 139** as your own prayer to God!)*

Day Two: *What does proactive love look like?*

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon **Matthew 22:37-40** and **Deuteronomy 6:4**.

Reflect: The most important scripture in the Old Testament—called the Jewish “Shema”—is **Deuteronomy 6:4**. During his ministry, Jesus told his

followers that everything God wants for us can be summed up in two phrases: **love God** and **love others**. At first glance, we might consider the warm affection we feel for God and the general affection we have for people to “check the box” and fulfill this command. But is warm affection all that God really meant when He called us to love Him and His people? Is there a deeper love you could have for God than you presently do?

- *Psychologists will tell us that love is a choice, not a feeling. How have you chosen to love God? Is there anything about love for God that you have yet to choose?*
- *What would it look like for you to be more proactive in your love for God? What new behaviors would you choose to engage?*
- *How about the same for loving others? What would a more proactive love for others look like?*

Pray: *God, you know my heart already. You know how well I love you. I want to love you with nothing held back. Reveal to me what choices I need to make to love you not from a feeling, but rather from my heart. Help me to choose you fully. Reveal to me specific actions and activities I should engage that would deepen that love. In Jesus' name!* (ALSO: Consider praying **Psalm 18:1-3** as your own prayer to God!)

Day Three: What is “normal” power from God?

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon **Acts 1:4-8**, **Acts 2:1-4** and **Galatians 5:25**.

Reflect: Jesus told his disciples to wait on God to send the Holy Spirit in power before they went any further in their walk with him. Living “in step” with the Holy Spirit means to listen carefully for His leadership in our lives and to recognize the subtle, internal impulses that we sense are from Him. When we carefully follow His leading and prompting—*when we submit to His authority to lead us*—we will instinctively begin to love God more fervently and love others more proactively. We will do this because this is who the Holy Spirit is, fully submitted to and centered on God in everything. When we follow His lead, we will love God and others.

- *Have you ever experienced a distinct leading from the Holy Spirit in your life? What did it feel like? How did you know it was Him?*
- *When the Holy Spirit leads us, there is distinct power available to us—empowerment to follow Jesus and fulfill his mission for our*

lives. Have you experienced this power? What do you think it would look like in your life?

- *Have you asked God to fill you with His Holy Spirit? Why not do it now: sincerely and continuously?*

Pray: *God, please fill me with your Holy Spirit in the same way you filled your early disciples. I want to have all of you and all that you are empowering me for. I surrender my all to you. Fill and equip me. I will follow you wherever you lead. In Jesus' name!* (ALSO: Consider praying **Psalm 51:10-12** as your own prayer to God!)

Day Four: Will you follow the shepherd to green pastures?

Read slowly and carefully meditate upon **John 10:1-10** and **Psalm 23**.

Reflect: Jesus promises to lead us as a shepherd. His guidance will lead us to abundant life when we submit fully to it and actually follow him. But the devil wants to rob us of that outcome. He wants to keep us mired in stress, despair, anger, bitterness, and anxiety. He achieves this aim by deceiving us, which in turn steals our faith and kills the sincerity of our hearts. Jesus has come to defeat the devil in our lives and give us abundance. But to gain that abundance, we must choose to follow Jesus and not the lure of the devil.

- *How has the devil robbed you of abundant life? What deception has he effectively used against you?*
- *How can you be more certain of Jesus' leading in your life than the devil's deceptive lure? (Hint: it might have to do with being “in the Word of God” on a regular basis!) Is it worth the time and energy for you to invest in God's Word frequently and thoroughly enough to unmistakably know Jesus' leading?*

Pray: *God, reveal to me where I may be living under a particular point of deception that comes from the enemy. Open my eyes to things that I consider important that are not in alignment with your truth. Guide me into all truth. Lead me into your Word with clarity. Open the scriptures to speak your mind and your counsel to me. I commit myself to follow your leadership in everything you reveal to me. In Jesus' name!* (ALSO: Consider praying **Psalm 23** as your own prayer to God!)