****

**Discipleship Boot Camp**

When potential soldiers enter the military, everyone experiences the same challenge: basic training or boot camp, called different things depending upon the branch. This is an experience of tremendous change where old habits and attitudes are broken and new ones are formed. The young person enters boot camp from whatever background and experience they have and emerge a couple of months later with the groundwork, habits, knowledge, and drive to continue a military career. For the entire time of their service and even longer, they will rely on these basic disciplines, learned as a raw recruit, to give them a pattern for success.

 When we become followers of Jesus, although we may need an experience like boot camp for new believers, usually there is not an established atmosphere or environment to provide the tools and accountability to establish the patterns that will help us grow spiritually. New believers struggle and “old believers” either are poorly established or need a refresher of information and motivation. Wherever you are spiritually, these four basics can benefit anyone who takes the time to use them for spiritual vitality and health in their relationship with God.

 Anytime you feel that your spiritual life is not what it should be, review this material and use it to help you grow personally, disciple your children, grandchildren or anyone God puts in your path. Feel free to share these with others.

 In the month of August 2020, our church will use the first four weeks of this material in lieu of our Sunday morning Bible study time. There will be a video shown that supports that week’s lesson. Bro. Kevin’s sermons will be on the same topic for that week. Please take these materials and use them either individually or with your family.

**Discipline #1: Establish a Daily Bible Reading Habit**

God speaks to us through His Word. The Bible is our guidebook for life. When the disciples followed Jesus as He lived on earth, they simply followed Him. Wherever Jesus went, they followed, watched, listened, and obeyed. Today, the Holy Spirit lives inside us and directs us. God will not direct us in any way that is contrary to scripture. The problem is, do we know what is in scripture? Are we immersing ourselves in it regularly? Do you know more baseball stats or movie lines than you know scripture? The Bible is a living book. It is fresh every time it is opened when the Spirit enlivens our minds to its truth.

Habits make up our lives. You may wake up and make your bed first—or not. You will probably act habitually for large portions of your day. Reading the Bible should be part of every day for anyone who follows Jesus. Over half the people in our nation are disengaged from scripture, that is, they interact with the scripture infrequently if at all (Barna, 2019).

 To do this together as a church, we are asking everyone to read one chapter in John per day. John has only 21 chapters so even if you miss a few days, you will finish it in the month of August. Set that as an individual or family goal to do this. The book of John is a rich and revealing look at Jesus’ life and ministry.

In military boot camp, the habits set are not your choice. You are awakened, exercise, eat, train, and sleep at set times. To set this habit for yourself, you will need to set a time and place. If you do not do this, you may miss a day or more of Bible reading. If it is prepared and waiting then you are more likely to do it. What if you left your toothbrush just anywhere? Would you be able to locate it when it was time to brush your teeth? You put the toothbrush and paste beside the bathroom sink so it is ready to use. In the same way, prepare your place to study the Bible.

As you become a regular Bible reader, you are learning to be systematic in your reading. Don’t just use the open and point method of reading scripture. While all the Bible is true, no one will master the Bible or its’ content doing this. Imagine trying to learn how to repair a car or cook a dish this way. Choose a Bible translation you can understand or you can find some on your smart phone app YouVersion (Bible app). Whether you use a plan or set a specific daily goal—do it. Reading through a book of the Bible is good because you can see the context around the verse. This helps you determine its meaning.

“The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation.” – D. L. Moody

Acts 20:32 tells us the Word of God will “build you up.” Who doesn’t need building up? Studying the Bible habitually will help you determine truth. If you are reading truth, when you hear something contradictory to what you are reading, you will recognize it as a lie. Ephesians 4:14 tells us that we can be thrown by anything we hear. The Bible won’t give you every detail of your future but it will give you the wisdom and preparation spiritually from God to make decisions as they come. Become like Christ by being in His Word.

Lastly, don’t be discouraged as you read and study. There are always those who know more about scripture or who have studied more. Start where you are today and set a habit to be in the word of God every day.