BEVIVE

A HANDBOOK FOR GROWTH



WEEK 1: CULTIVATE

BY RYAN SCHMALL



Hello Friends,

As followers of Jesus, we are called to discipleship. To some, this word can be intimidating, confusing, or simply not explained. Discipleship, at its heart, is about aligning our life (priorities)? with the way of Jesus and modeling our lives after him in all that we do. Sometimes we can over complicate this reality, but my desire for this devotional is to re-frame your understanding of discipleship and help you think critically about your own life as you have chosen to enter into relationship with Christ. Each week is broken down into one simple concept as we think about the process of ongoing discipleship in our lives: cultivate, plant, nurture, and grow. These seven days are an invitation for you to dive deeper into these ideas through Scripture and intentional questions to examine your own journey and how you can grow closer to Jesus. Every day will be divided into four sections:

- Get Ready An opportunity to prepare ourselves for what God wants us to hear.
- Read the Word A time to dig deep into a specific passage connected to the week's main idea.
- Own Your Thoughts An invitation for you to honestly examine your own life as you wrestle with questions connected to the passage for each day.
- Welcome Change A moment with God to reflect on how you can grow in your relationship with Him.

You may have noticed that the four sections also spell out the acronym GROW, which I hope is a simple reminder to you that this devotional is all a part of the growth process as we transform into deeper disciples in Christ.

Feel free to use this guide however best fits you in your life. Print it out, write on it, grab your own journal, or use it as a guided reflection time - it's your choice! Whatever you need to connect more to our God who loves you so incredibly much!

- Ryan Schmall



You may be wondering why I chose to title this devotional, "Revive." Let me explain.

One of my favorite pastimes is growing a vegetable garden. While I knew I could just go to the store and purchase some tomatoes or artichokes, there was something fulfilling about growing my own produce. I enjoyed working hard and watching my plants grow and develop. My family and I always ended up with an abundance of vegetables that we could then share with our friends and neighbors. My dedication to bringing life to this garden ultimately lead to my ability to share that very life with the world around me. This process of gardening beautifully reflects the concept of life. However, as we know from the life of Jesus, an abundant life actually begins with a death.

Death comes first and then resurrection.

Every year when the time came to replant the vegetable garden, there were usually remnants of last year's harvest. To prepare the garden properly so that new life could flourish, I had to get my hands dirty - literally. I had to tear out the old garden to make space for the new one... but the hard work didn't end there. I had to also give my garden the proper attention it needed to flourish such as keeping a watering schedule, looking out for weeds and disease, and protecting it from harsh weather. I knew that this intentional care had to be done in order to revive- to bring new life to where something was dead.

This is the way Jesus pointed us. If you have made the decision to follow Christ, then you have decided to abandon your old self and embrace a new one through Jesus. So what then, is discipleship?

Discipleship is the hard self-work we carry out to enter into the abundant life with Christ that He desperately wants us to experience. It is the revival of ourselves in Christ as we intentionally tend to the lives God has given us.

So, are you ready to begin?



When we choose to commit ourselves to Jesus, there's an acknowledgement we must all makethat our previous life was empty but a life with Jesus brings resurrection. In that sense, our previous life resembles that of a dead garden: it hasn't produced anything of true value and we are in desperate need of revival. Acknowledging this means that in order to fully embrace the new way of life Jesus has called us toward, we have to confront our old selves.

In Matthew 4, we see Jesus calling Peter and Andrew to follow him and shortly after, James and John. It's easy to read this story and miss the momentous reality of what Jesus was asking them to leave behind. The lives of these men revolved entirely around fishing. At this point they were probably comfortable in their everyday routine and had a plan for their future. But Jesus didn't say, "Follow me from the comfort of your home." He invited them to abandon the lives they knew to embrace a new one.

For us, maybe that means leaving...

- monetary comfort
- toxic relationships
- · where we live
- old thought patterns
- · destructive lifestyle choices

Which brings us back to the dead garden of our former life. Discipleship begins by acknowledging the "dead" within us and ripping it out. In gardening, this is the process of cultivation, or the preparation of the soil. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a parable to highlight the importance of good soil as a starting place. Cultivating good soil is no easy task. In fact, it can be downright difficult, but it's ultimately necessary to pave the way for our new life in Christ so that it may flourish.



cul·ti·vate | \ 'kəl-tə-,vāt \cultivated; cultivating transitive verb 1: to prepare or prepare and use for the raising of crops. also: to loosen or break up the soil about (growing plants)

Get Ready

Take a moment and remove any distractions that may shift your focus. Turn your cell phone off, find a quiet space, whatever you need! Once you are ready, ask God to help fixate your heart and mind on what He has for you to experience today.

Read the Word

Matthew 13:1-23

Own Your Thoughts

As you read this passage, what do you think makes up "good soil?" Examine your own life for a moment. Are there aspects of how you are living that don't cultivate "good soil?" If so, take a moment to name them. Perhaps it's an attitude, an addiction, or a multitude of other things. Once you've identified them to the best of your ability, take some time to think about what you might need to do to free yourself from those things. You can use the space on the next page to write.

Welcome Change

Reflect on what you've written or considered in the section above, and ask God to reveal to you how to bring about change that will result in "good soil."





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Get Ready

Find a space where you can be present with God without distractions. Find your list or notes from yesterday if you have them. Invite Him to continue to move in your life and reveal His will for you as you draw closer to Him.

Read the Word

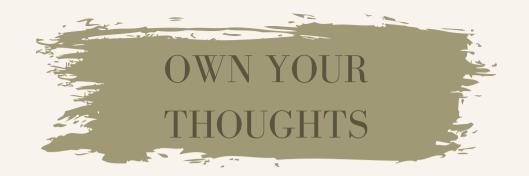
Matthew 4:18-22

Own Your Thoughts

For the disciples, it was probably not an easy decision to leave their old life behind. Yet, when Jesus invited them to abandon their lives to follow him, they listened. How difficult do you think this was for them? As you consider your own faith journey, how difficult was it for you to let go of the old ways and patterns of your life before Christ? What obstacles keep you from faithfully abandoning your old ways? You can use the space on the next page to write.

Welcome Change

Pray for clarity on how you can overcome the obstacles you see in your life that keep you from the life God has for you.





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Get Ready

Quiet your heart and take a moment to ask God to help you more clearly see His path to growth in your life.

Read the Word

Isaiah 43:18-19

Own Your Thoughts

This verse is set in the larger context of a passage dealing with the unfaithfulness of Israel. Despite Israel's failings, God continued to display profound mercy in their lives, continually paving the way forward for new life. One major issue for the Israelites was their continued returning to old thoughts and actions. Essentially, their growth was held captive by their past. How do you allow the past to grab a hold of your life and halt your ability to experience the "new thing" God has for you? Is it a bad habit? Or perhaps it's a stance in your heart? Maybe you made a bad decision you simply can't free yourself from? Whatever it is, spend some time considering why you allow that to trap you.

Welcome Change

As you reflect on the previous question, ask God to help you identify new ways forward that free you from the trappings of the past.





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Get Ready

Take a moment to ask God to quiet your mind, heart, and soul as you invite Him to continue cultivating the soil of your life.

Read the Word

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Own Your Thoughts

Paul was someone who certainly had a questionable past before discovering Christ. As he ministered around the world, he often encouraged people to distance themselves from the ways of the world so that they could fully experience life as God intended - in relation with Him! In this passage, Paul speaks of reconciliation. What does that idea mean to you? What in your life must be reconciled through Christ so that you can experience the "new creation" way-of-living he speaks of?

Welcome Change

Ask God for forgiveness as an act of reconciliation for the ways in which you have ignored or abandoned His ways.





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Get Ready

Spend a moment preparing your heart in prayer, asking God to give you the courage to honestly acknowledge your need for more of Him in your life.

Read the Word

Galatians 2:11-21

Own Your Thoughts

In this passage, we find Paul confronting Cephas because of the way he's allowed the culture to dominate his way of life. For a moment, think of the ways our own culture cultivates "bad soil." Our culture breeds anger, resentment, bitterness, and hate among many other deadly realities. Sometimes it can be alluring, however, and easily entice us away from the cultivation of "good soil." How have you allowed culture to infiltrate your own life? What can you do to stop its ability to grab a hold of you?

Welcome Change

Invite God to show you new ideas and habits to help you better filter culture's attempt to deteriorate your ability to cultivate a healthy foundation.





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Get Ready

Spend some time with God reflecting back on the week. Thank Him for His ongoing grace and love in your life as you work through the difficult work of cultivation within yourself. Invite Him to continue revealing ways in which you can grow closer to Him.

Read the Word

1 John 1:5-10

Own Your Thoughts

As this passage helps us acknowledge, we can't grow in the light until we are honest about the darkness. At its core, this is about us recognizing our need for a savior. God sent Jesus to pluck us out of the darkness. We owe this life in the light to Him and Him alone. Our response to this is one of gratitude and thankfulness, and we embody those with our very lives. It is never too late for any of us to enter into this way of living. Are there areas of your life where you continue to choose walking in the darkness? What would it look like for you, practically, to live in the light?

Welcome Change

Reflect on your answers and thoughts to the questions above. Ask God for His help for you to choose walking in the light as your pursue a deeper relationship with Him.

