

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Welcome
- Connect – **SLIDE** fathomchurch.org/connect
- Prayer – **SLIDE** fathomchurch.org/pray
- Year-end-giving – **SLIDE** fathomchurch.org/give
- Sunday, January 3 – 9 & 11am. **SLIDE** Register at fathomchurch.org

BLANK SLIDE

INTRODUCTION: RESOLUTIONS

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do, please turn with me to John chapter 15. The Gospel of John chapter 15 is where we'll be spending our time together today.

Also, I really hope you all had a great Christmas.

- For those of you who I saw in-person on Christmas Eve,
- and to those of you who engaged online,
- man, I hope your celebration of the birth of Christ
- was a great joy and blessing.

But now we turn to the next holiday, New Years! 2020 is almost over, y'all!

And I'm not sure if you're like me at all, but I really like New Years, specifically because I really like making resolutions.

Now, I know it's super hip for people to mock the idea of New Year's Resolutions, but I really like making them.

In fact, I like any “new” opportunity to insert a challenge or goal into my life. This doesn’t just happen for me in the new year, but sometimes on the first day of a month I’ll make sorta a new month resolution.

Like, No Shave November.

- When I was a youth pastor
- and had a youth staff
- I would make my guys do No Shave November.

And one of the guys I worked with

- was like half Wookie, half chia pet.
- Ok? He was the missing link.
- When he would shave one side of his face,
- by the time he reached the other it had started to grow back.
- You know that guy?

But seriously during No Shave November he didn't shave at all,

- and his beard hair connected with his neck hair,
- to create a seamless hair covering!
- And I was like, “Bro, you have a felmet.”
- He’s like, “What’s a felmet?”
- I was like, “It’s a furry helmet. You’re a freak.”

I love that kind of thing!

- Like giving up something for Lent...
- or I had a buddy who did Sober October,
 - so, no alcohol for him for a month...

- I once did Mustache March,
 - where I grew a pretty wispy,
 - dirty looking mustache,
 - much to the chagrin of Maryse...
 - she renamed it NO MAKEOUT MARCH.

But I like resolutions, and the New Year is a perfect time for these kind of changes.

TRANSITION

But, as followers of Christ,

- this is the perfect time of year
- to really assess what kind of changes
- we want to make in our relationship with God.

And Jesus gives us instructions in part of his final teachings, in what's called the Farewell Discourse, in John chapter 15. Let's look at this together.

SLIDE JOHN 15:4–11

[4] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. [5] I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. [6] If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. [7] If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will

be done for you. [8] By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. [9] As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. [10] If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. [11] These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

EXPLAIN: ABIDE

- So, at the very end of his teaching ministry,
- right before he would go to the cross
 - to die for the sins of the world,
- Jesus teaches that our obedience
- and bearing fruit
- and a life full of joy
- are all bound up in the word ABIDE.

You hear it over and over and over again in this passage.

- You want Joy in Christ? Abide.
- You want to grow in Christian maturity? Abide.
- You want to bear fruit? Abide.

If your New Year's Resolution is

- to become more like Jesus,
- to progress in your discipleship,
- to GO DEEPER with God...
- then...
- the solution is to abide in Christ.

Now, for most of us, I'm hoping that is part of your desires for 2021.

- I hope part of your desire is to grow.
- To grow up.
- To GO DEEPER.
- This should be on all of our New Year's Resolutions.

ILLUSTRATION: HARPER GROWING UP

It's like this: on the day my daughter was born, immediately, I loved her completely! But I still wanted her to grow up.

Actually, it began even earlier than that,

- because, one of the happiest days of my life
- was when we were in the ultrasound room,
- and you know they put that jelly on Maryse's belly,
- and it's like an alien,
- just swimming around in there.

And the tech said, *"congratulations, it's a girl."*

- And I didn't have sisters growing up,
- so, I didn't know,
- but instantly I thought of my little girl
- and I knew she was precious.

And then the scan went on,

- and I'm just watching,
- and the tech's like, "Look, she's got hair!"
- And it looks like she's got hair all around the back of her head,
- but the top's bald.

And I'm like,

- "Oh no! My little girl's got a skullet!"
- You know what a skullet is?
- It's a mullet...with bald on top.
- If you've got a skullet
- I pray someone loves you enough to rebuke you.
- But I prayed, "Lord Jesus, heal her of this malady..."
- Cause it ain't going well for the girl with a skullet!"

But then when she was born,

- and they put her in that warmer...
- kinda like where they put the McDonald's hamburgers...right?
- They just slide her in that thing.
- and I saw that she had out-grown the skullet...
- and I had this relief...
- like, "Phew!"
- And I looked at her, and she was perfect!
- I was her daddy. She was my little girl.

But...listen, I'm not satisfied that she would stay that way forever!

- Gosh I loved her then,
- and even on days when I miss that little skullet freak...
- if I'm honest, I want her to grow up

You see, over time, as Harper grows into the woman that God has her to be, we celebrate that growth, that change.

It's actually a sad and tragic thing to see a child, or especially an adult, who doesn't grow up. It's a sign that something's wrong!

APPLICATION

And it's a sad thing we all-too-often see in American Christianity,

- where someone gets saved! Right?
- They become Born Again...
- they become a Christian...
- but then they never really grow up.

And we celebrate conversions and baptisms!

- But here at Fathom we want to be a place
- that's serious about the depth that God calls us to
- as we mature as disciples.

That's why we say our mission is to glorify God by making disciples.

- We want you to change.
- We want you to mature.
- We want you to GO DEEPER.

RECAP: DISCIPLINES

So, all fall we walked through a sermon series we simply called 'The Disciplines',

- and we essentially talked at great length
- about HOW we do what Jesus just instructed us to do...
 - Abide in Christ...
 - stay connected to Christ...
 - with the goal of obedience, fruit, and joy.
- You want to grow up?
- You want to mature in your faith?

To quote CS Lewis:

SLIDE *“If you want to get warm you must stand near the fire. If you want to be wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them.”* **BLANK SLIDE**

And the way, historically, that Christians have practiced this is through the means of disciplines.

Now, we talked for 6 weeks about some of the historical spiritual disciplines.

- But what I want to do on this last Sunday of the year
- is to bring these all together to help guide us into 2021.

So, what I want to propose to you today is: **SLIDE DON'T MAKE RESOLUTIONS...MAKE A DISCIPLINE PLAN** to GO DEEPER with God this year.

Yes, resolve is needed. BUT, resolve is not enough.

- Resolve will dry up on you!
- And when resolve fails you...
- you need discipline to take its place!
- You need a plan.

And historically, Christians have created plans for spiritual growth

- sometimes called a Rule of Life,
- or in the social-psychological world
 - they can be called Life Plans,
- but we're calling them Discipline Plans. **BLANK SLIDE**

EXPLAIN: TRELLIS

So, let's dig into this. What is a discipline plan, and why is it necessary for GOING DEEPER with God?

Well, Peter Scazzero in his book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* talks about the root idea in the Greek culture comes from the idea of a vine and a trellis.

- Which certainly makes sense
- considering Jesus saying,
- *"I am the vine,*
- *you are a branch,*
- *and if you want to bear fruit,*
- *you gotta stay connected to me!"*

So, a trellis is a support structure that people use to grow grapes.

- And that structure's purpose
- is to enable a grapevine
- to get off the ground and grow upward,
- becoming more fruitful and productive.
 - It gets it up off the ground.
 - It gives it structure to grow.
 - And it even points it in the correct direction
 - for the best growth.

So, apparently, a wild vine out in nature will bear a fraction of the fruit that it is capable, AND the fruit that it will bear is at risk of being snatched up by an animal or something.

EXPLAIN: DISCIPLINES PLAN

Now, take that metaphor, and apply it to our spiritual growth.

- A discipline plan is a support structure
- that helps us abide in Christ,
- and become more fruitful spiritually.

Very simply,

- this is an intentional,
- conscious plan
- to keep Christ at the center
- of everything we do.

And we said of the disciplines, that these are best practiced in simplicity and consistency. Right?

- Small, simple things
- practiced very regularly,
- over a lifetime
- are the things that produce Christian maturity.

Author and professor Michael Horton says this:

SLIDE *"We have grown accustomed to running sprints instead of training for the long-distance marathon. We have plenty of energy. The danger is that we will burn ourselves out on restless anxieties and unrealistic expectations."* **BLANK SLIDE**

And so, we said we were going to train in these things. We were going to practice these disciplines. And a discipline plan brings it all together.

EXPLAIN: UNCONSCIOUS PLAN

Author Justin Earley says this:

SLIDE *“There is a difference between what we call education and what we call formation. Education is what you learn and know—things you are taught. Formation is what you practice and do—things that are caught. We are all living by a specific regimen of habits, and those habits shape most of our lives.”* **BLANK SLIDE**

Listen, you already have a plan for developing your spiritual life...

- it’s just like an unconscious plan...
- not a conscious plan.

You have a way of living that is discipling you.

John Mark Comer points to all kinds of research when he says that the last thing you put your mind to and the first thing you put your mind to each day significantly forms your worldview.

- And if we’re honest, for many of us,
- that’s not God.
- It’s Facebook.
- It’s Instagram.
- It’s email.
- It’s the Today Show.
- It’s Fox News or CNN.

A Discipline Plan is meant to help us

- take the disciplines we want to practice,
- and deliberately implement them in our lives,
- and thus, create that structure for us
- to grow into the men and the women
- God intends for us to become.

TRANSITION

So, we've created this disciplines plan that can be downloaded at

SLIDE fathomchurch.org/disciplines

And what I want every one of you to do

- over the next few days,
- before 2020 ends,
- is to print this out,
- and start writing out your discipline plan for 2021.

So, this breaks down our disciplines into daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual chunks, and I want to encourage you to think through simple and consistent practices you can build into your plan.

So, to give us some help today, let me share with you my discipline plan. It won't necessarily look like yours, but I hope it will help out a bit.

BLANK SLIDE

DAILY

So, every morning I'm up early to spend some time with Jesus...really spending time training myself to abide.

Now, I do morning for a couple reasons.

- First, cause I'm a morning person.
 - Like, I don't even set an alarm,
 - I'm just naturally up early.
- But second, because if I'm not up before Harper,
 - I'm going to have a hard time focusing
 - with "Let it go" blazing in the background.

So, I start my day there, and I need you to hear me on this...

- I really try NOT to look at my phone
- for the first couple hours of my day.
- Sometimes I cheat, and I regret it...
 - because if I check my email,
 - or texts,
 - or news,
 - or especially social media...
- I find myself swept into things
- I really don't want to give my first and best to.

So, I keep my phone out of reach.

Also, all my notifications are turned off

- from 7pm to 7am.
- Because if I hear dings or buzzing
- I'm like Pavlov's dog
- just salivating
- wondering what's happening.

SILENCE

So, I start each morning with a few things.

- I first just sit and try to be still before God, and do nothing.
- I breathe and I try to picture myself at the feet of Jesus.
- And I spend 10-15 minutes just sitting,
- and this is in the Sabbath portion of my Disciplines Plan,
- because it's like a little micro rest.

And hear me, it's awkward. Ok? Maryse has come downstairs at times to find me staring blankly at the wall. But I just try to start in silence.

PRAYER JOURNAL

And then I open my prayer journal and I write out my prayers to God.

- And I talk to him about where my heart is.
- And I talk to him about my struggles.
- And I pray for my family.
- And I pray for my neighbors.
- And I pray for our church.

But I probably spend the next 15 minutes or so in my journal.

SCRIPTURE

Then I open my Bible and spend time in the scriptures.

- I need a reading plan,
- and we've got more of these for you at
 - **SLIDE** fathomchurch.org/disciplines

We made two this year for you to choose from this year.

- One is through the New Testament in one year,
 - for 5-day-per-week.
- And the other is through the entire Bible in one year,
 - for seven-days-per-week.

Feel free to download either one of those if you want to join us in reading the scriptures in 2021. **BLANK SLIDE**

- But I need a plan.
- I need structure.
- So, I read 3-4 chapters each morning.

And I'm in the Bible for like 15 more minutes, and just in that, I try to read through the whole Bible every year.

READ

And then I read one chapter out of some spiritual book,

- just to feed my soul
- from the collective wisdom
- of the Christian tradition.

So, that's about 1 hour for me in the morning.

WORK PAUSES

Now, once I'm at work I have my phone set to buzz at me two times each day.

- At 11:30am and at 4pm.
- And when that buzzes,
- I push away from whatever I'm working on
- for just 5 minutes,
- and I try to recenter myself on Jesus.

I say things like,

- *"Jesus, I give what I'm working on to you.*
- *You don't love me more or less because of what I'm accomplishing."*

And if I'm in a meeting when that buzzes,

- I just remind myself that it's not just us in that meeting,
- but Jesus is there with us.
- It's just a pause to abide with him.
- And that's on my prayer section of my plan.

HOME

And then when I roll into my garage at the end of the day

- I pause once more,
- and take a deep breath,
- cause I don't know what kind of crazy I'm walking into!
- And then I head into my house
- to do what a black pastor friend of mine calls:

- *“Tending to the Queen”...*
- you following me?
- Or in my case,
- I’m tending to the queen,
- and to a princess...
 - sometimes literally
 - cause she’s running around in a princess dress!

But for the next hours, I’m not done...I’m just on second shift!

- I’m on with my girls.
- Just trying to be present.
- Trying to help momma out.
 - *“What do we got tonight? Bath? On it.*
 - *You need help with dinner? What can I do?”*

And then once we get Harper down...and Maryse and I rest a little together on the couch. We head to bed at about 9...

- Now, here’s a piece of marriage advice for free.
- I tell every couple I do pre-marital counseling with
- to try to go to bed at the same time.
- Go to bed together.
- This isn’t a law, alright?
- But I just think it’s a really good thing in marriage to practice.

And then Maryse and I pray together every single night.

- We pray for people heavy on our hearts.
- We pray for our daughter.
- Even when I’m travelling, we pray on the phone.

And then I read some fiction, and shut off the light, and go to sleep. Only to rinse and repeat the next day. So, that's pretty much my daily.

WEEKLY

Now, weekly, I **fast** every Thursday from breakfast and lunch.

- And I'm doing that every week for different purposes.
- Sometimes I'm fasting for someone else.
- Sometimes I'm fasting just to GO DEEPER with God.

And if you want to know more, I told you all about it in the fasting sermon.

And then my family attends our Discipleship Group **community** every Wednesday night.

- And listen, I'm a participant of that D-Group.
- I'm not the leader,
- thanks so much to Kevin and Jesse,
- because as much as I'm the pastor of this church,
- I'm also a member of this church,
- and I need to be discipled in community
- the same way we all do!

And then Saturday is our **sabbath**. And we really try to shut it all down on Saturday.

- No church work.
- No phones.
- No chores.

- Just pleasure stacking.
- It's the best day of the week!

Listen to the sabbath sermon if you want more instruction there.

And then we're in **church** every Sunday. It's a part of our disciplines.

- Now, obviously I work here.
- But this is a discipline for our whole family.
- We want to serve and worship
- with our church community every week that we can.

And I know this isn't cool to say anymore, but I really think if you want to grow into maturity in Christ, you need to make church attendance a priority in your disciplines plan.

MONTHLY

And then monthly, well really bi-monthly,

- Maryse and I do a date night,
- which has become way more difficult in COVID,
- but we're trying to be creative.

And we also **give** monthly.

- We give our first 10% to Fathom,
- and then Harper sponsors a Compassion child.
- We also give to a friend who's an inner-city-missionary to the homeless.

- And then every time there's a meal train
 - Maryse is first to sign up to bring a meal,
 - and if there's a baby born,
 - she's likely going to drop a bill or two
 - on baby clothes at target to bless that family.

QUARTERLY

Quarterly we try to take a long weekend, where we're not here at Fathom.

- That's because this is my occupation,
- and I need that for my health.

And then we try annually to take 2 weeks off in the summer and two weeks off after Christmas,

- which is why you're watching this video,
- cause that's what I'm doing right now.

CONCLUSION

So, church, that's my disciplines plan...

- and I'm reviewing it right now,
- preparing to commit to it for 2021.

And please note, that this has been a thing that has been developed and reworked a ton over the last 20 years of me following Christ.

- Remember, simple and consistent.
- If you're doing NOTHING right now...
- don't try to take it all on,
- but simply be intentional with something in 2021.

I'm encouraging us all:

SLIDE DON'T MAKE RESOLUTIONS...MAKE A DISCIPLINE PLAN.

Build a trellis...a structure to help you GO DEEPER with Jesus this year.

I've said this all through the disciplines series, but **you can do this.**

- This isn't only for pastors...
- Or "really spiritual people"
- This is for you!
- Abide in Christ!
- The discipline isn't the win...being a disciple of Jesus is.
- The plan isn't the win...
- it's just the means to help you abide all the more in Christ.

Let's end the year with C.S. Lewis one more time.

SLIDE *"If you want to get warm you must stand near the fire. If you want to be wet you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to, or even into, the thing that has them."* **BLANK SLIDE**

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

- Full joy. How's that sound for 2021?

And the Spirit of God has not called you to do or be what he will not empower you to walk in.

Happy New Year, church. See you in 2021

Let's pray. **PADS**

RESOURCES USED:

- Carson, D.A. The Gospel According to John.
- Earley, Justin. The Common Rule.
- Foster, Richard. Celebration of Discipline.
- Horton, Michael. Ordinary.
- Lewis, C.S. Mere Christianity.
- Practicing the Way. <https://practicingtheway.org>
- Scazzero, Peter. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality.