

Practices of Spiritual Discipline for the New Year: Christian New Year's Resolution suggestions from MM4C

All Scriptures taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV)

New year's resolutions are commonly attempted, failed, and then abandoned. This year, we want to challenge you to develop your relationship with God with practices rather than with resolutions. In the case of resolutions, most people consider themselves to have failed if they miss once. For example, if someone resolves to exercise daily, then the resolution is considered broken and they have failed if they miss one day. This is why most resolutions do not survive until February. However, we want to challenge you to practice spiritual disciplines rather than "resolve" to do them.

Spiritual disciplines are activities that help us to enhance our relationship with God. Some people think that physical acts are unnecessary. However, physical acts are just as important as the spiritual significance because we are both physical beings and spiritual beings. Since we are both physical and spiritual, the acts we perform are both a physical and spiritual reality. Our actions are where the physical and spiritual meet. The rejection of the physical act as an unnecessary part of the spiritual reality or the rejection of the spiritual reality as an unnecessary part of the physical act are both errors that should be avoided. As followers of Christ we must be maintain balance.

So, why are practices so important? As a martial artist, I practice my katas and techniques. I will not perform them perfectly, but I will practice them. I will practice them as often as I can. This is what practices are. When I make a mistake or miss a practice session, I do not abandon the training. I simply continue to practice the next time I am able. Practice does not mean that you will perform things perfectly; it simply means that you do not abandon the practice just because you miss one.

This is why we want to challenge you to practice spiritual disciplines rather than to make a resolution. At MM4C, we are here to help you practice these disciplines. In fact, we want to practice them with you. We want to invite you to partner with us to practice these disciplines throughout the new year.

1. Read Your Bible Every Day (we suggest beginning with 5 to 15 minutes, as possible)

And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. --- Deuteronomy 8:3

*I have laid up thy word in my heart,
that I might not sin against thee. --- Psalm 119:11*

... continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. --- II Timothy 3:14-15

Deuteronomy 8:3
Psalms 1:2; 119:9-11, 97, 105
Proverbs 2:1-5
Isaiah 55:10-11
Matthew 4:4
Luke 24:44-47
Acts 17:11
Romans 15:4
II Timothy 3:14-17
Hebrews 4:12
I Peter 2:1-3

Directed reading

- Word study
- Topical study
- Theological study
- Personal translation of the original language

Devotional reading

- Lectio Divina

If this is not currently one of your regular spiritual disciplines, we highly recommend that you begin this one. Reading even a little bit every day can yield great results. The Bible is a huge "book" and this may seem like a daunting task. In fact, the Bible is actually a library (a book of books) of 66 different books. This library is broken into two major sections: The Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was primarily adopted directly from the collection of Jewish sacred texts since Christianity began as a Jewish sect. Jesus and all of the twelve apostles were Jews. In fact, almost all of the original Christians were Jews. The New Testament is a collection of testimonies and letters written during the first century AD (CE) by the Apostles or those who had met Jesus in person. Two of these letters (the books of James and Jude) were written by brothers of Jesus.

Level 1 -- Beginner

So, rather than try to read the entire library, we recommend that you begin with only one or two books. As a new Christian, the gospel of John is a great place to start. This is the fourth book of the New Testament and describes John's time with Jesus as he traveled around Israel preaching and performing miracles. Begin with one or two chapters each day. Another great place to start is the first letter that John wrote. The book of I John (First John) is the fifth book from the very end of the New Testament. This letter helps to explain the love of God and how we express God's love to others. As this is a letter, we suggest that you read through the entire letter in one sitting. Do this every day for a month. A very common modern Christian practice is to read five Psalms each day. If you read five Psalms each day, you will go through the entire book each month. The book of Psalms is the Christian's song and prayer book and is found in the Old Testament section. The translation you use will determine exactly where it is found, so look it up in the Table of Contents. Another option is to read one chapter of the book of Proverbs every day. Again, this book is conveniently designed so that you will go through the entire book each month reading only one chapter each day. Many Christians will read both the Psalms and Proverbs each day in addition to their other readings. This is a great habit to develop. Do not be overly concerned that you are reading the same things again. Repetition is the key to memorizing scripture (See resolution #7). Also, many people choose to follow the readings from the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL.) Feel free to contact us for more suggestions when you have incorporated these into your life.

Level 2 -- If you have been a Christian for more than 2 years

If you have been a Christian for a while and would like the challenge of reading through the entire library (the Bible), there are many reading plans to allow you to read through the entire Bible in one year. We suggest the "genres" format (intothyword.org) but there are many others to choose from. Find a reading plan that fits your schedule, needs, or interests, and simply begin.

Wash yourself in the Word -- use soap:

S. Scripture – Read the scripture you have chosen for the day or that period what ever you are doing. Take your time and really read not skim. Pick out verses that speak to you or ones you would like to dig deeper into.

O. Observe – Think about what you have read. Think about the people, what would they see, feel, smell, or whatever you want to add to their experience. Write these observations down in your own words.

A. How does it Apply - Three questions you can ask from what used to be <http://thetwitterbiblestudy.com/> but is now at [Greg Surratt](#) are

- What did you learn about God?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about life?
- Any question that can help you apply what you learned to your life.

P. Pray - Pray that God can help you use what you learned, teach others, and direct your life. Listen and just take time for Him, not just you.

A note about Bible translations

Many Christians have opinions as to which translation of the Bible is the best. Some are easier to read than others. There are translations that try to translate word for word (commonly referred to as formally equivalent) and those that try to translate concept by concept (commonly referred to as functionally equivalent). Those translations which are formally equivalent -- translate word for word -- are more technical and may be more difficult for the casual reader to understand since many of the grammatical structures are complex or uncommon. Those translations which are functionally equivalent -- translate thought for thought, concept for concept, meaning for meaning, or paraphrase -- are usually easier for the modern reader to understand. Be very careful using the functionally equivalent translations as a basis for theological understanding since sometimes the grammatical structures which make these translations easier to read may alter the accurate theological understanding. When in doubt on a theological concept, refer to one of the word for word equivalence (formally equivalent) translations for a clearer understanding.

The King James Version (KJV or Authorized Version) is written in older English and is very difficult for modern readers to understand. Many words used at that time are no longer used in the same way in modern English, and this creates confusion. We do not recommend this translation for most people. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) attempts to be gender neutral and this can create problems with accurate understanding in some cases. Other technical (word for word) translated versions include the New King James Version (NKJV), New American Standard (NASB) version, the Revised Standard version (RSV), the English Standard version (ESV), and the New English Translation (NET). All of these are more technical and may be a bit harder to read or understand by a modern reader. All scriptures quoted in this document are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV). I (Derek) personally tend to use the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and have for the past 30 years, as it is probably the most literal translation.

The translations that are more functionally equivalent, thought for thought, concept for concept, meaning for meaning, or paraphrase include the New Living Translation (NLT), the New American Bible (NAB), the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), the Good News Translation (GNT), the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), the Christian Standard Bible (CSB), the New International Reader's Version (NIRV), the Message (MSG), the Passion Translation (TPT), the Common English Bible (CEB), and the New International Version (NIV). Many of these versions are commonly used by Christians for their devotional reading. Some of the more popular versions are the New International version (NIV), the New Living Translation (NLT), the Message (MSG), and the Passion Translation (TPT). Any of these are good for your readings. Choose one which is easy for you to understand and that you enjoy reading. Do not be overly concerned with deep theological concepts or discussions at this point. The important thing is that you enjoy your reading experience. If you struggle with your reading, you will not want to continue. Reading the Bible is life (Deuteronomy 8:3).

2. **Attend Church Regularly**

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place which he will choose: at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks, and at the feast of booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed; --- Deuteronomy 16:16

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. --- Acts 2:46-47

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. --- I Corinthians 11:26

Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching. --- I Timothy 4:13

Exodus 23:14-17

Deuteronomy 16:16

Psalms 133:1

Matthew 18:19-20

Acts 1:14; 2:42-47

Romans 12:4-8

I Corinthians 11:24-26; 12:12-27

Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 5:18-21

Colossians 3:16

I Thessalonians 5:11

I Timothy 4:13

Hebrews 10:23-25

I John 1:7

Regular church attendance means different things to different Christian traditions. Some meet monthly (historical Quakers); some meet weekly (most); some meet almost daily (Catholic and high church). We suggest that you regularly attend church as your church community expects. For most Protestant denominations in America, that would be weekly. If your church meets weekly, then we encourage you to attend weekly. If your church meets less often, then regular attendance would be whenever your church chooses to meet. If your church meets more often, then you should be attending services more often than only once a week. If your church holds services more than one day per week or daily, then you should be attending each of those services consistently. Here at MM4C, we meet monthly. Since we only meet monthly, you should commit to attending every month.

Church services are designed for Christians to meet together for corporate worship of God and to share in the rituals (sacraments) of the Christian faith. If you are attending church for the purpose of "learning about God" or to meet with others, then you are attending for the wrong reasons. Catechism, Bible studies, and small groups are where you learn about Biblical concepts and live out your faith with others. Larger meetings like church services are more like large birthday parties or anniversaries. It is good to catch up with people, but that is secondary to the point of attendance which is to honor the person for whom the meeting is held. For Latin Catholic, Eastern Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Episcopal churches, the point of attendance is to receive the spiritual food of the body of Christ in the Eucharist. For low church Protestants, regular church attendance is for you to hear the sermon, publicly declare your fealty to the King of Kings, and participate in the programs and activities of the family of God.

3. **Pray Daily**

*So I will bless thee **as long as I live**;*

I will lift up my hands and call on thy name. --- Psalm 63:4

Seven times a day I praise thee

for thy righteous ordinances. --- Psalm 119:164

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,

to sing praises to thy name, O Most High;

*to **declare thy steadfast love in the morning,***
and thy faithfulness by night,

to the music of the lute and the harp,

to the melody of the lyre. --- Psalm 92:1-3

*And Isaac **went out to meditate in the field in the evening**; --- Genesis 24:63*

My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat,

and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips,

*when **I think of thee upon my bed,***

*and **meditate on thee in the watches of the night**;*

for thou hast been my help,

and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy. --- Psalm 63:5-7

*My eyes are **awake before the watches of the night,***

***that I may meditate upon thy promise.** --- Ps 119:148*

Joshua 1:8

I Chronicles 16:11

Psalm 1:1-3; 33:1; 46:10a;

62:1-2; 63:4-7; 91:1-2; 92:1-

3; 118:164 119:148, 164

Matthew 6:6-13;

14:22-23

Mark 1:35; 11:24-26

John 15:7

Acts 10:30

Romans 12:12

Philippians 4:6-7

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

James 4:8; 5:13

Praying the Daily Hours (Psalm 119:164)

Morning Prayer or Lauds

1. Around 6 AM -- **Morning Prayer** or Lauds, major hour (Psalm 92:2)

Daytime Prayer, which can be one or all of:

2. Around 9 AM -- **Midmorning Prayer** or Terce (Third Hour) (Psalm 119:164)
3. Noon -- **Midday Prayer** or Sext (Sixth Hour) (Psalm 119:164)
4. Around 3 PM -- **Midafternoon Prayer** or None (Ninth Hour) (Psalm 119:164)

Evening Prayer or Vespers

5. Around 6 PM -- **Evening Prayer** or Vespers, major hour (Gen. 24:63)

Night Prayer or Compline

6. Bedtime Around 9 PM -- **Night Prayer** or Compline (Psalm 63:3; 92:2)
7. Around Midnight -- **The Office of Readings** or Matins, major hour (Psalm 63:6; 119:148)

4. **Join a Bible Study**

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ...And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. --- Acts 2:42-47

And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. --- Acts 5:42

So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another — I Corinthians 11:33

What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. --- I Corinthians 14:26

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. --- Colossians 3:16

Psalm 133:1

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Matthew 18:19-20

Acts 2:42-47; 5:42

I Corinthians 11:33; 14:26

Galatians 6:2

Colossians 3:16

I Thessalonians 5:11

I Timothy 4:13-14

Hebrews 10:25

Joining a Bible study group is a very important discipline. While church services are designed for Christians to meet together for corporate worship of God and to share in the rituals (sacraments) of the Christian faith, Bible study groups are where you will actually learn Biblical concepts and live out your faith with those in the group. Connect with a group of people that fit with your lifestyle but that will challenge you to learn and incorporate what you learn into your daily life. MM4C has a Bible study group that meets weekly on Wednesday mornings at 0600 (6 AM) that will allow you to connect with others, learn Biblical principles, and be challenged to incorporate those principles into your daily life. Your Bible study group is where you will ask questions, wrestle with how to implement difficult practices, receive encouragement, and encourage others to live their best life for God. This is the group of people to whom you will confess your sins and who will support you during your difficult times. This is the group of people with whom you will practice loving your brother, rejoicing with them during their good times, and providing support to others in their times of need. In short, your Bible study group is where you will learn to "step up" and live out your Christian life with others whom you can trust.

5. **Try Fasting**

Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Aha'va, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him a straight way for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. --- Ezra 8:21

“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.” --- Esther 4:16

*“Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?*

*Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him, --- Isaiah 58:6-7a*

*“Yet even now,” says the LORD,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
and rend your hearts and not your garments.”*

*Return to the LORD, your God,
for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
and repents of evil.*

*Who knows whether he will not turn and repent,
and leave a blessing behind him,
a cereal offering and a drink offering
for the LORD, your God?*

*Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly;
gather the people. --- Joel 2:12-16a*

Didache 2

Exodus 34:28

Ezra 8:21-23

Esther 4:16

Isaiah 58:6-11

Daniel 10:2-3

Joel 2:12-16

Matthew 6:16-18

Luke 4:1-2

Acts 13:2-3

Fasting is an important discipline that has been widely misunderstood. Fasting is a time of refocusing on God and what he is doing in our lives. Fasting is commonly understood as doing without food in order to focus on spiritual concerns. While this is a valid understanding of fasting, there are still many who misunderstand what this means or how to practice it. Fasting can also be a withdrawal from anything that directs our attention away from spiritual things. Fasting can be simply removing meats, oils, and dairy from our diet for a period of time. These fasts help us to relate to the poor since these foods are common in the diets of the affluent but rarely in the diets of the poor. I know a man who fasted from beer for an entire year.

Fasting has been practiced from the earliest days of Christianity. If you follow the church calendar, you will note that Christians fast in one form or another for over half of the year. The entire season of Advent, the first season of the church year, is a time of fasting as is Lent, the forty days before Easter. Fasting is a way of life for the Christian.

Level 1 -- Beginner

There are several ways to begin practicing fasting. We suggest giving up one or two meals consistently each week. For example, every Wednesday you could not eat breakfast or both breakfast and lunch. The purpose of the fast is not simply to withdraw (from food, in this case), it is to draw near to God. So, during the times that you would normally eat, you will want to read scripture, pray, journal, and generally use that time to focus on God. Since the first century, Wednesday and Friday have been set aside as the days to fast every week. "Let not your fasts fall on the same days as the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays. Keep your fast on Wednesdays and Fridays." -- Didache 2

If you wish to try a longer fast, you could remove something from your daily meals. Perhaps you would eliminate meat, sugar, or dairy (butter, milk, cheese, yogurt, creme, etc.) from your meals for a period of time (a few days to multiple weeks). This is the idea behind the 40 day fasts of Lent and Advent where the church fasts from meat and dairy from land animals and olive oil for a period of 40 days prior to Passion week and Christmas.

Also, try other types of fasts like fasting from media for a week. Do not watch TV, movies, internet media (YouTube, Netflix, paid subscriptions, etc), social media, etc. for at least a week. Perhaps fast from electronic technology (cell phone, Fitbit, Apple watch) for a period of time: a day, an evening, or an hour or two. This would be especially beneficial if you are spending time with your family or worshipping God.

Level 2 -- If you have been a Christian for more than 2 years

1. If you do not have an established weekly fast, this is a great time to implement that. See the Level 1 suggestions to help you get started. Just as you should be praying and attending meetings regularly, you should also be fasting regularly.
2. Try the longer fasts (Lent and/or Advent) this year.
3. Practice the Isaiah 58 fast: As you fast a meal or two, give that meal to a needy person. Either donate the monetary equivalent of the meal, or pack a lunch but give it away to a needy person while you fast that meal.

6. **Give Cheerfully**

You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him; because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land. --- Deuteronomy 15:10-11

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? --- Isaiah 58:7

But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have ... --- Acts 3:6a

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. --- James 2:14-17

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

Isaiah 58:6-11

Matthew 6:1-4; 25:35-40

Luke 12:33-34

Acts 2:44-45; 3:1-10 ;5:1-11

Romans 12:8

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:3-12

James 2:14-17

I John 3:17-18

Cheerful giving is the command for Christians. Many Christians are incorrectly taught to "tithe." This incorrect teaching comes from a complete misunderstanding of what exactly the tithe was, what it was for, and what was to be tithed. Correcting this misunderstanding about tithing is well beyond the scope of this document, but the expectation of practicing charity and giving is definitely part of the Christian life. We have been given the privilege of participating in God's economy by giving to others.

Level 1 -- Beginner

Giving, like many of the other disciplines in this list, should be practiced regularly. Just as reading the Bible, praying, fasting, and meditation are practiced regularly (most are daily), so should giving be a regular discipline. There are seasons of giving on the Christian calendar. The season of Lent is specifically one of those seasons where giving to the poor is taught and expected. Christmas is also a time where giving is commonly expected.

Your local church that you regularly attend is a good place to begin this discipline. Determine what or how much you will give and then give. Make sure that you do this at least monthly as you develop your discipline. You may decide to give more often. Do not be concerned about

percentages or amounts at this point. Be open to the Holy Spirit to guide how much to give. Be open to God to reveal where else he may want you to give.

Level 2 -- If you have been a Christian for more than 2 years

Do not become myopic about your giving. Many Christians only give to their local church and nothing more. You should be giving freely to those in need as well as supporting various ministries -- Christian radio, Christian podcasters and YouTubers, teaching ministries, food pantries and other ministries to the poor, etc. Your local church is a good place to start, but it should not be the only ministry to which you give. If you give regularly, be open to God to reveal where else he may want you to give.

Also, be aware that giving to those in need is rarely about money. Giving money is only the very beginning level. Giving to those in need includes food, clothing, shoes, coats, or many other things. As you open your mind and heart and become aware of what people need, you will find yourself looking for ways to fill those needs. Do not simply buy into our culture of "throwing money at a problem" and think that it is meeting needs. Be open to the Holy Spirit to see what people truly need. Sometimes, people simply need a soul friend.

7. **Memorize Scripture**

And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. --- Deuteronomy 6:6-9

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; --- Joshua 1:8a

*I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD;
yea, I will remember thy wonders of old.
I will meditate on all thy work,
and muse on thy mighty deeds.
Thy way, O God, is holy.
What god is great like our God? --- Psalm 77:11-13*

*I will meditate on thy precepts,
and fix my eyes on thy ways.
I will delight in thy statutes;
I will not forget thy word.
My eyes are awake before the watches of the night,
that I may meditate upon thy promise. --- Ps 119:15-16, 148*

Genesis 24:63

Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Joshua 1:8

Psalms 1:1-3; 63:5-8; 77; 119:11, 15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148; 143:5-6; 145:5

Wisdom 12:22

Sirach 6:37; 14:20; 39:7

Colossians 3:16

Memorizing scripture has been a spiritual discipline for thousands of years. When you memorize scripture, it allows you to recall that scripture when you need it. This can help you with your own spiritual journey; it can help you resist temptation; it can help you when speaking to others about a topic the memorized scripture covers.

Level 1 -- Beginner

A great scripture to memorize that many Christians have committed to memory is Psalm 23. You should also memorize the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4. If you are daily reading through the Psalms you will find other scriptures that speak to you that you will want to remember. Also, I Corinthians 13 is a very popular chapter to memorize.

Level 2 -- If you have been a Christian for more than 2 years

Memorization of larger sections of scripture should be your goal. The books of James, I John,

Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians are great places to start. Other ideas include Romans 14, John 1, Matthew 6-7 (The Sermon on the Mount), and I Corinthians 13, as mentioned above.

Scripture memorization does not necessarily just mean memorizing scriptures word for word. If you do not know the history of the scripture story and how Abraham relates to Noah, or how Moses relates to Paul, then I suggest that you learn the complete story of God from creation through the first century AD. The Basic Bible Guide (www.basicbibleguide.org) and Learn the Bible in 24 Hours (khouse.org) are good tools to help you accomplish this.

8. Practice Forgiveness

You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. --- Leviticus 19:18b

*Good sense makes a man slow to anger,
and it is his glory to overlook an offense. --- Proverbs 19:11*

And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. --- Mark 11:25

Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, 'I repent,' you must forgive him. --- Luke 17:3-4

Leviticus 19:18

Proverbs 19:11

Matthew 6:14-15; 7:1-5; 18:21-35

Mark 11:24-26

Luke 17:3-4

Romans 12:17-21

Ephesians 4:31-32

Colossians 3:12-15

James 1:19-20

Forgiveness is an extremely important practice for Christians to learn. In practice, forgiveness does not necessarily mean forgetting that someone has wronged you; it means not holding the wrong done to you against the person who wronged you and harboring bitterness toward that person. Forgiveness also means that the broken relationship has the opportunity to heal and grow. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean nor require that the relationship will "go back to the way it was."

Forgiveness is a command by God, but like most of God's commands (like loving our neighbor as we love ourselves), we humans find this difficult, bordering on impossible, to practice. This is because we, as fallen humans, can not do this without the power of God in our lives. Rather than feeling guilty (or even angry) at the command to forgive, learn to forgive by asking God to teach you to forgive the way he does. Ask God to change your heart so that you can see the person who wronged you in the way that God sees that person. Most people feel that grace is for them but justice is for everyone else. Ask God to help you give the grace that you want for yourself to others around you and especially to those who have or will hurt you. It helps to remember the great debt that you have been forgiven from by God in order to realize that what hurt others may have done to you is not that huge. This is the meaning behind the parable of the forgiving king in Matthew 18.

9. **Be Content With What You Have**

*Better is a little that the righteous has
than the abundance of many wicked. --- Psalm 37:16*

*The fear of the LORD leads to life;
and he who has it rests satisfied;
he will not be visited by harm. --- Proverbs 19:23*

*I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how
to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger,
abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me. --- Philippians 4:11b-13*

Psalm 37:16

Proverbs 15:13; 19:23; 30:8-9

Ecclesiastes 3:9-13; 5:10

Luke 3:14

Acts 20:33-35

I Corinthians 7:17-24

Philippians 4:10-13

I Timothy 6:6-10

Hebrews 13:5

James 3:13-17

Contentedness is a Christian virtue that is difficult to practice in our culture. Our culture is based on envy, covetousness, and greed. Marketing departments spend a great deal of time convincing you that you need a gadget or thing that you do not currently have and you may not have ever considered having. We are constantly bombarded with the message that we need to have what someone else has (covetousness and envy). We are told that we need more and more (greed). There is a reason that God says it is difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Many "things" tend to pull us away from our relationship with God and cause us to rely on ourselves rather than God.

10. **Begin Volunteering**

*One man gives freely, yet grows all the richer;
another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.
A liberal man will be enriched,
and one who waters will himself be watered. --- Proverbs 11:24-25*

*if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday. --- Isaiah 58:10*

And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.' --- Matthew 25:40

Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body. --- Hebrews 13:1-3

Proverbs 11:24-25

Isaiah 58:6-11

Matthew 9:37-38; 10:8-10; 25:35-40

Luke 6:35; 12:33-34

Acts 20:33-35

I Corinthians 9:17-27

Galatians 6:2-10

Ephesians 2:8-10

Colossians 3:17, 23-24

I Timothy 6:17-19

Titus 3:8

Hebrews 13:1-3

James 2:15-17

I Peter 4:9-11

I John 3:18

We are God's representatives here in this world. As such, we should always be looking for chances to demonstrate God's love to those in need around us. God has graciously prepared good works for us to do and will guide us to them if we will simply listen and allow him to lead us. It is also highly recommended that you keep a journal of these encounters so you can look back and review how God has used you to spread his love.

11. Break an Addiction

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be enslaved by anything. --- I Corinthians 6:12

Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. --- I Corinthians 10:12-13

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. --- Galatians 5:1

Romans 5:3-5

I Corinthians 6:12-20; 10:12-13; 15:32-34

Galatians 5:1

James 5:15-16

We have freedom in Jesus; however, the flesh continues to demand our attention. It is impossible to appease the flesh. It is only through the power of God that we are able to turn from those death dealing actions. It is also extremely difficult to do this alone. You should have at least one or two men that you can rely on to walk with you and help you bear your burden. So, you should also find a mentor or accountability partner.

12. Find or Be a Mentor or Accountability Partner

Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects. --- James 5:16

My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins --- James 5:19-20

Psalm 133:1

Galatians 6:1-10

Hebrews 10:24; 13:17-18

James 5:13-20, 19-20

I Peter 3:15

Christianity is designed to be lived in community. We do not live out our Christian walk alone. We are commanded to confess our sins to each other, pray for one another, serve one another, give as our brother has need, encourage each other, and push each other to do good works. We can not do this alone. You should find someone (or a group of people) to walk with you and encourage you and push you to do good works.

13. **Be a More Loving and Involved Man, Husband, Father, Friend**

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. --- Ephesians 5:21

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. --- I Corinthians 13:4-7

Genesis 2:24

Deuteronomy 24:5

Proverbs 15:1; 18:22; 19:14; 21:9; 31:10

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Romans 12:10

I Corinthians 13:4-7

Ephesians 5:21, 25-33

Colossians 3:19, 21-24

Hebrews 13:4

I Peter 3:7; 4:8

14. **Control the Tongue -- Refuse to Gossip or Complain**

*A perverse man spreads strife,
and a whisperer separates close friends. --- Proverbs 16:28*

And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell. ... but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. James 3:6-8

Psalms 15:1-3; 34:13; 106:25

Proverbs 10:19; 11:9, 13; 15:4; 16:28

Matthew 12:34-37

I Corinthians 6:9-10; 10:9-10

Ephesians 4:29

Philippians 2:14-15

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

II Timothy 2:15-17a

James 3:3-17; 5:9

I Peter 4:9

Controlling the tongue may be impossible for humans, but God is able to give you the power to do so. Commit to only speak blessings to others. Do not gossip, tear down others, or speak evil of others. Do not even listen to anyone who does these things.

15. Do Random Acts of Kindness

*He has showed you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? --- Micah 6:8*

*Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with
brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. --- Romans 12:9-10*

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared
beforehand, that we should walk in them.--- Ephesians 2:10*

Isaiah 58:6-11

Micah 6:8

Luke 6:35

Acts 3:1-8; 9:36; 28:2

Romans 12:9-10

Galatians 5:22-23

Ephesians 2:10 4:32

Hebrews 6:10; 13:1-2

We are God's representatives here in this world. As such, we should always be looking for chances to demonstrate God's love to those in need around us. God has graciously prepared good works for us to do and will guide us to them if we will simply listen and allow him to lead us. It is also highly recommended that you keep a journal of these encounters so you can look back and review how God has used you to spread his love.

16. Invite a Friend

I Peter 3:15

One of our privileges as ambassadors to the King is to tell others what God has done in our lives. As you share with others and they express a desire to speak to other Christians, you should invite them to accompany you to one of the monthly MM4C meetings or weekly Bible studies. Be a mentor and soul friend.

17. Listen to Christian Music

Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. --- James 5:13

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. --- Ephesians 5:18-20

Psalms 118:19-29

Ecclesiastes 7:5

Romans 10:17; 12:1-2

Ephesians 5:18-20

Philippians 4:8-9

Colossians 3:16

James 5:13

Singing to God is one of the singular joys of the Christian walk. Listening to music that praises God and lifts him up is the best way to incorporate singing and worship in your daily life. There is Christian music for almost every genre of music. Popular Christian music can be found on the radio. In Colorado Springs, you can hear this popular music on WAY FM (99.3), KBIQ (102.7), or KLove (96.5 or 106.9) . Non-commercial stations are more able to speak freely and truly minister to people, so I recommend WAY FM at 99.3.

If you are unable to find Christian music in your favorite music genre, please contact me (Derek) at 719-310-3305 and I will help you find some. I currently have Christian music in pop, soft rock, hard rock / metal, easy listening, *a capella*, choral, folk, country, bluegrass, , new age, Celtic, Hebrew / Messianic, traditional hymns, and most things in between. If I do not have it, I can help you find it. I am always interested in expanding my music content.

18. Read a Certain Number of Christian Books Each Month

Recommendations:

- *Putting God First: How to Make God the #1 Priority in Every Area of Your Life* --
- *How to Read the Bible for Yourself* --
- *Spiritual Man* -- Watchman Nee
- *The Good and Beautiful God* -- James Bryan Smith
- *The Good and Beautiful Life* -- James Bryan Smith
- *The Good and Beautiful Community* -- James Bryan Smith
- *A Guidebook to Prayer* -- Mary Kate Morse
- *Mere Christianity* -- C.S. Lewis
- *Celebration of Discipline* -- Richard Foster
- *The Making of an Ordinary Saint: My Journey from Frustration to Joy with the Spiritual Disciplines* -- Nathan Foster
- *Living by the Book* -- Howard Hendricks
- *The Blue Parakeet* -- Scot McKnight
- *Sacred Rhythms* -- Ruth Haley Barton
- *Streams of Living Water* -- Richard Foster
- *The Naked Gospel* -- Andrew Farley
- *Final Steps in Christian Maturity* -- Jeanne Guyon
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines* -- Dallas Willard
- *Faith the Pleases God* -- Bob George
- *Classic Christianity* -- Bob George
- *The King Jesus Gospel* -- Scott McKnight
- *The Didache* -- First Century Christian manual for daily living

In all areas of life, reading will enhance your understanding and increase your success. This is no different in your spiritual life. As you read, you will be challenged to increase your faith and incorporate new ideas into your daily spiritual walk. Some books will help you understand difficult Christian concepts (George, Nee, Lewis, McKnight), some will help you incorporate new ideas into your life (Foster, Morse, Smith, Willard), and some will affirm what God has already told you personally. Incorporate reading in a way that fits in with your lifestyle. Some people read one or more books every week and some people choose one book for an entire month. Whichever way you choose, reading will enhance your spiritual life.

19. **Journaling**

... he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law ... --- Deuteronomy 17:18

Many of the previous entries have mentioned journaling. Journaling is a way to ponder and meditate on what God is doing in your life. Sometimes God will speak to you but, over time, you may forget what he said unless you write it down. Journaling is also a great way to pray and dialog with God. Share your concerns, frustrations, and joys with God in writing.

Another way to meditate through journaling is to write out the scriptures. A popular way to do that today is with "Journibles." These are preprepared notebooks for you to write out scripture. Of course, you do not need a fancy notebook to do this. Simply get a composition notebook or spiral bound notebook and begin writing out scripture. I can personally tell you that this is a great way to study, meditate, and even pray the scriptures.

20. **Silence**

21. **Meditation**

And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. --- Deuteronomy 6:6-9

This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; --- Joshua 1:8a

*I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD; yea, I will remember thy wonders of old.
I will meditate on all thy work, and muse on thy mighty deeds.
Thy way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? --- Psalm 77:11-13*

*I will meditate on thy precepts,
and fix my eyes on thy ways.
I will delight in thy statutes;
I will not forget thy word.
My eyes are awake before the watches of the night,
that I may meditate upon thy promise. --- Ps 119:15-16, 148*

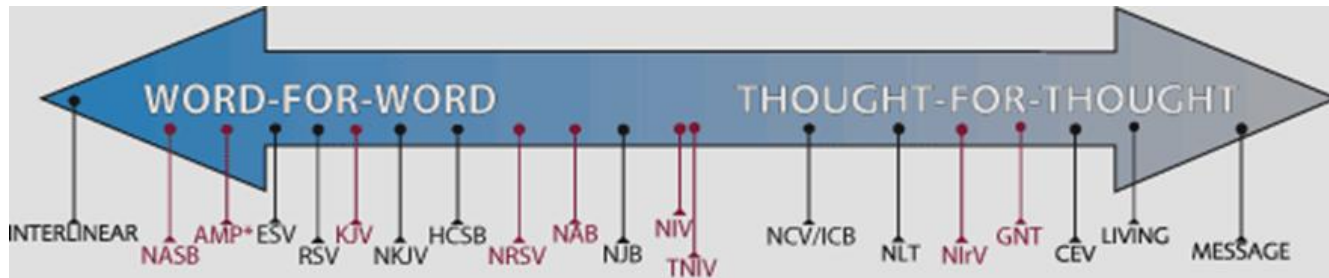
Genesis 24:63	143:5-6; 145:5
Deuteronomy 6:6-9	Wisdom 12:22
Joshua 1:8	Sirach 6:37; 14:20; 39:7
Psalm 1:1-3; 19:14; 63:5-8; 77; 111:2	Philippians 4:8
118:164; 119:11, 15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148;	Colossians 3:16

Meditation is one of the most misunderstood practices due to the great amount of misinformation spread by well-meaning Christians. Christians in the west, especially in America, have avoided meditation because the same methods are also used in eastern religions. However, this practice has had a long and rich history within Judaism and Christianity. There is nothing evil or bad about meditating. In fact, as can be seen by the numerous scriptures listed above, it is a practice encouraged by the Bible.

The act of meditation is simply quieting the mind by emptying it or stilling it of extraneous thought: this is most easily accomplished by focusing on intentional breathing. Focusing on your breathing gives your active mind something to occupy it, thereby quieting it --- similar to focusing an unruly child with a diversion.

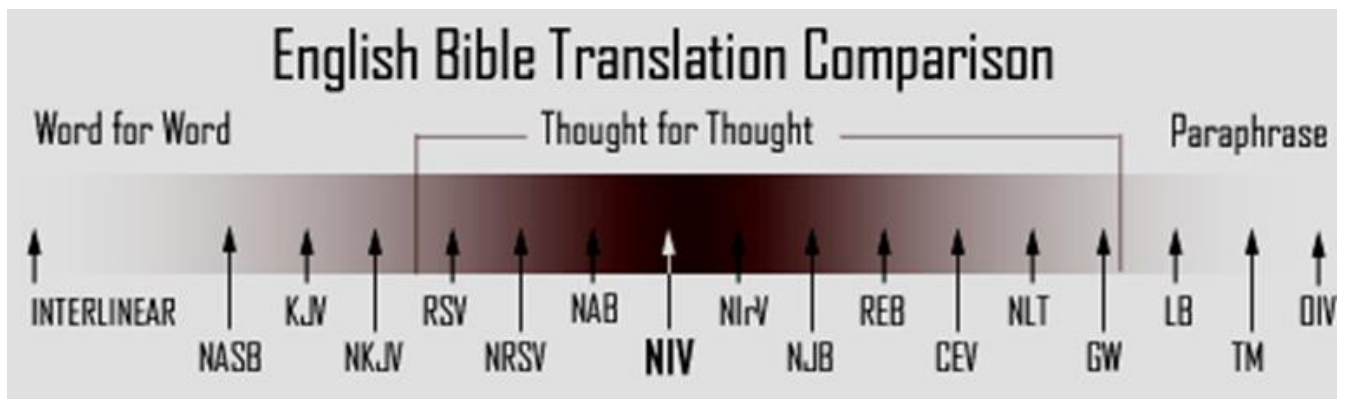
There are also many postures of meditation. You can meditate while sitting, laying down, standing, or even walking. It is interesting to note that each of these postures is mentioned in Deuteronomy 6.

Translation Comparison Charts



Above chart taken from <http://www.zondervanbibles.com/translations.htm> <link no longer active>

NASB	New American Standard Bible (1971; update 1995)	NIV	New International Version (1984)
AMP	Amplified Bible (1965)	TNIV	Today's New International Version (NT 2001, OT 2005)
ESV	English Standard Version (2001)	NCV	New Century Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1952)	NLT ¹	New Living Translation (1 st ed. 1996; 2 nd ed. 2004)
KJV	King James Version (1611; significantly revised 1769)	NIrV	New International reader's Version
NKJV	New King James Version (1982)	GNT	Good News Translation (also Good News Bible)
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Version (2004)	CEV	Contemporary English Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (1989)	Living	Living Bible (1950). Paraphrase by Ken Taylor. Liberal treatment of 'blood.'
NAB	New American Bible (Catholic, 1970, 1986 (NT), 1991 (Psalms))	Message	The Message by Eugene Peterson (1991-2000s)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible (Catholic, 1986; revision of 1966 Jerusalem Bible)		



English Bible Translation Comparison chart taken from
<http://www.gospelcom.net/ibs/bibles/translations/index.php> <link no longer active>

Translations not identified in previous list

OIV Oxford's Inclusive Language Version – revision to NRSV to be more gender neutral and politically correct.

GW God's Word to the Nations. Translation/paraphrase by William Beck. Little known.

REB Revised English Bible

Translation Comparison Chart from Zondervan

Version	Reading Level	Readability	Number of Translators	Translation Philosophy	Example Verse
NASB [apb1] New American Standard Bible (1995)	11.00	Formal style in modern English but more readable than the King James Version.	54	Word-for-word	But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB)
AMP [apb2] Amplified	NA	Expanded and "amplified" by means of a system of brackets and parentheses, which sometimes make for fragmented reading	Frances E. Siewert, plus 12 others	Word-for-word plus additional amplification of word meanings.	We, on the other hand, will not boast beyond our legitimate province and proper limit, but will keep within the limits [of our commission which] God has allotted us as our measuring line and which reaches and includes even you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (AMP)
ESV [apb3] English Standard Version	8.0	Literal style, but more readable than the King James Version	100+	Word-for-word	But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)
KJV [apb4] King James Version	12.00	Difficult to read due to 17th-century English vocabulary and word order	54	Word-for-word	But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (KJV)
NKJV [apb5] New King James Version	9.0	Easier word usage, but somewhat choppy because it maintains 17th century sentence structure	119	Authors used the original KJV as a benchmark, while working to produce an accurate and modern word-for-word translation	We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us--a sphere which especially includes you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)
HCSB [apb6] Holman Christian Standard Bible	N/A	A highly readable, accurate translation written in modern English	90	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but according to the measure of the area of ministry that God has assigned to us, which reaches even you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (HCSB)
NRSV [apb7] New Revised Standard Version	10.40	Contemporary, dignified with generic language in reference to humans	30	Attempts a balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (NRSV)
NAB [apb8] New American Bible (Roman Catholic)	6.60	A clear and straightforward translation that reads smoothly. Written in basic American English.	55	Word-for-word	But we will not boast beyond measure but will keep to the limits God has apportioned us, namely, to reach even you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (NAB)

NJB [apb9] New Jerusalem Bible (Roman Catholic)	7.4	A highly readable, accurate translation written in modern English	36	Balance between word translation and meaning	By contrast we do not intend to boast beyond measure, but will measure ourselves by the standard which God laid down for us, namely that of having come all the way to you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (NJB)
NIV [apb10] New International Version	7.80	an accurate and smooth-reading version in modern English	115	Attempts to balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought	We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (NIV)
TNIV [apb11] Today's New International Version	N/A	same as NIV	115	Balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought. Deliberate attempt to be gender neutral	We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us, a sphere that also includes you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (TNIV)
NLT [apb12] New Living Translation	6.3	A readable translation; uses vocabulary and language structures commonly used by the average person	90	Translators were involved in bringing the classic Living Bible from its status as a paraphrase to a thought-for-thought translation of Scripture.	But we will not boast of authority we do not have. Our goal is to stay within the boundaries of God's plan for us, and this plan includes our working there with you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)
CEV [apb13] Contemporary English Version	5.40	Clear, simple English that a child can understand, but with a mature style that adults can appreciate	100+	Thought-for-thought	We don't brag about something we don't have a right to brag about. We will only brag about the work that God has sent us to do, and you are part of that work. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (CEV)
NIrV [apb14] New International Reader's Version	2.90	easy to read and understand; uses simple, short words and sentence	11	Balance between word translation and meaning, with an emphasis on meaning where necessary for simplification	But I won't brag more than I should. Instead, I will brag only about what I have done in the area God has given me. It is an area that reaches all the way to you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (NIrV)
GNT [apb15] Good News Translation, formerly Today's English Version (TEV) and Good News Bible (GNB)	6.0	Very simple, readable version without jargon. Uses a limited vocabulary.	R. Bratcher (NT); Bratcher plus six others (OT)	Thought-for-thought	As for us, however, our boasting will not go beyond certain limits; it will stay within the limits of the work which God has set for us, and this includes our work among you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (GNT)
The Message [apb16]	4.8	An easy-to-read, modern-language paraphrase	Eugene H. Peterson	Thought-for-thought. Converts the original languages into the tone and the rhythms of modern-day American speech while retaining the idioms and meaning of the original languages.	We're not, understand, putting ourselves in a league with those who boast that they're our superiors. We wouldn't dare do that. But in all this comparing and grading and competing, the quite miss the point. We aren't making outrageous claims here. We're sticking to the limits of what God has set for us. But there can be no question that those limits reach to and include you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (The Message)

[apb1] A highly respected formal translation of the Bible. Purpose of the work was to update the American Standard Version into more current English. Published in 1971. Updated in 1995. The most literal is now more readable.

[apb2] A popular translation used to understand the hidden meaning of Greek and Hebrew words. Published in 1964 (updated in 1987). Break through the language barrier.

[apb3] A literal update of the Revised Standard Version, seeks to produce word-for-word correspondence. Published in 2001.

[apb4] Traditionally loved and accepted by all Christians. Purpose in translation was "to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue which they can understand." Published in 1611. Timeless treasure.

[apb5] A modern language update of the original KJV. Purpose was to update and modernize the original KJV but preserve the KJV as much as possible. Published in 1982.

[apb6] A new translation that attempts to combine both formal and dynamic equivalence. Published in 2004.

[apb7] A widely accepted translation in the tradition of the King James Version. Purpose was to "make a good one better." Published in 1990.

[apb8] Published under the direction of Pope Pius XII, this Catholic version of the Bible represents more than 25 years of effort by the Catholic Biblical Association of America. All editions include the Deuterocanonical/Apocryphal books. Published in 1970.

[apb9] An updated version of the 1966 Jerusalem Bible. The New Jerusalem Bible is the official English language text used in Catholic liturgy outside the United States.

[apb10] A best-selling translation, widely accepted by evangelical Christians. Purpose in translation was to "produce an accurate translation, suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing, and liturgical use." Published in 1978.

[apb11] Based on the NIV, the most read and most trusted translation. Combines uncompromising accuracy with the clarity of contemporary language. New Testament published in 2001; Old Testament published in 2005. The classic translation in today's language.

[apb12] The New Living Translation is a dynamic equivalence translation based on the work of 90 Bible scholars and a smaller team of English stylists. These scholars and stylists went back to the original languages and sought to produce the closest natural equivalent of the message in natural, contemporary English. Published in 1996.

