

DISCIPLINES OF GOD'S WORD

CITY SESSIONS: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR LIFE

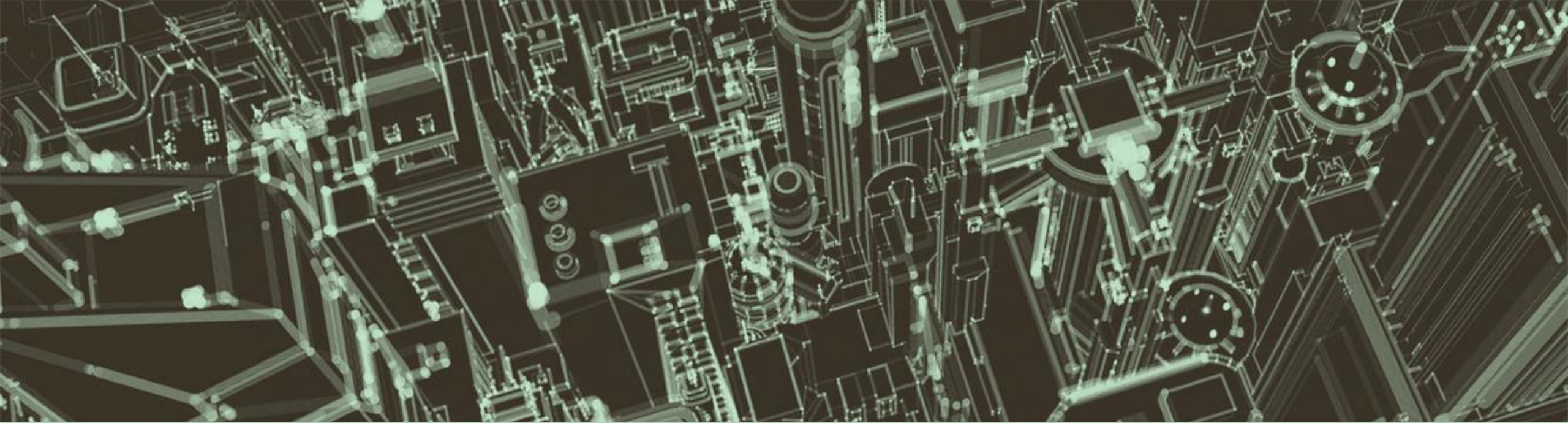


DISCIPLINES OF GOD'S WORD

- Nothing is more important than that intake of God's Word, and no other discipline can substitute for it.
- It is the primary way that God speaks to us today.
- Remembering that the goal of the disciplines is godliness and Christlikeness, to know God and Christ, we must intimately know the Word of God.
- Thus, it is fitting for us to start with spiritual disciplines centered around taking in God's Word, the Bible.

“Our world of printed as well as verbal noise can drown out the reality and wonder of God’s Word. There are always other books to read and speakers to listen to. Of course God does use books and people to speak to us. But Scripture is a primary way that the Holy Spirit opens us up to the God who is beyond us.”

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun



HEARING GOD'S WORD



HEARING GOD'S WORD

“If we don’t discipline ourselves to hear God’s Word regularly, we may hear it only accidentally, just when we feel like it, or never hear it at all. For most of us, disciplining ourselves to hear God’s Word means primarily developing the practice of steadfastly attending a Bible-believing church where the Word of God is faithfully preached.”

Donald S. Whitney

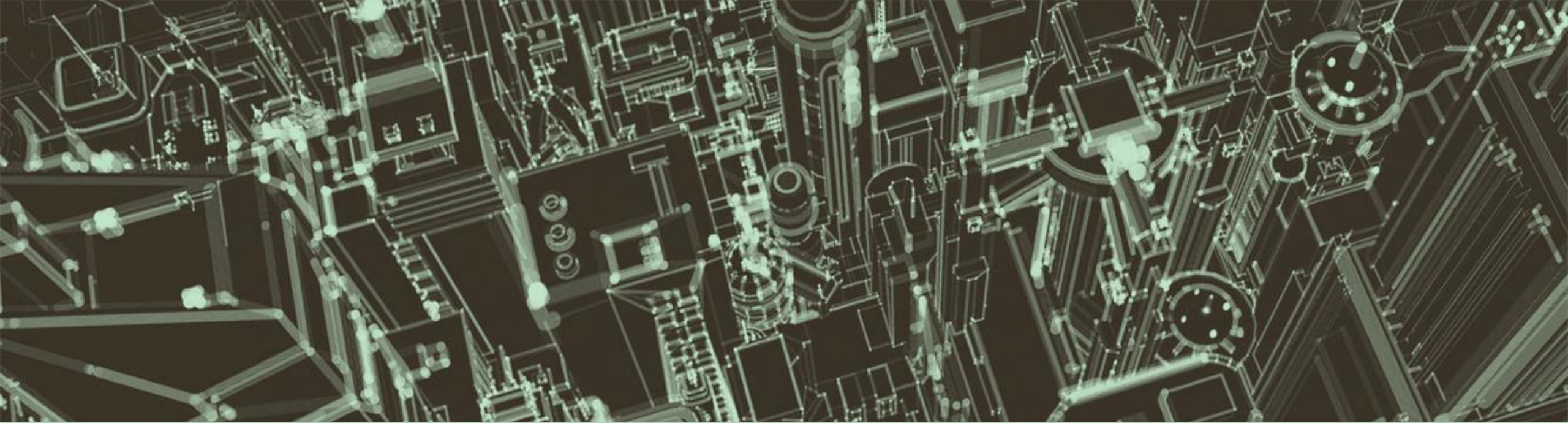
- This also means steadfastly attending Community Groups where the Word of God is read aloud every week.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

- “He said, “Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” Luke 11:28
 - The purpose is never merely listening. It is always to “keep it.”
- “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.” Romans 10:17
 - “...much of the faith we need for day-to-day living after conversion comes from hearing the Bible’s message.” – Whitney
- “Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching.” 1 Timothy 4:13
 - We must commit ourselves to coming together to hear God’s Word regularly.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

- Additional Points:
 - The Bible is the *living* Word of God. We should read it this way.
 - Practice reading it aloud.
 - Prepare ourselves before we read or hear it.
- “This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the word of God, which also works effectively in you who believe.” 1 Thessalonians 2:13



READING GOD'S WORD



READING GOD'S WORD

- Only 11% of Americans read the Bible every day. More than half read it less than once a month or ever at all.
- Of “born-again-Christians” only 18% read it every day. 23% never read it at all.
- How much of God's Word should we read?
- How often should we read God's Word?

READING GOD'S WORD

- “Have you not read...?” Matthew 19:4; Mark 12:10
- “He answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on *every* word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4
- “*All* Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16
- We need to read ALL of God's Word!

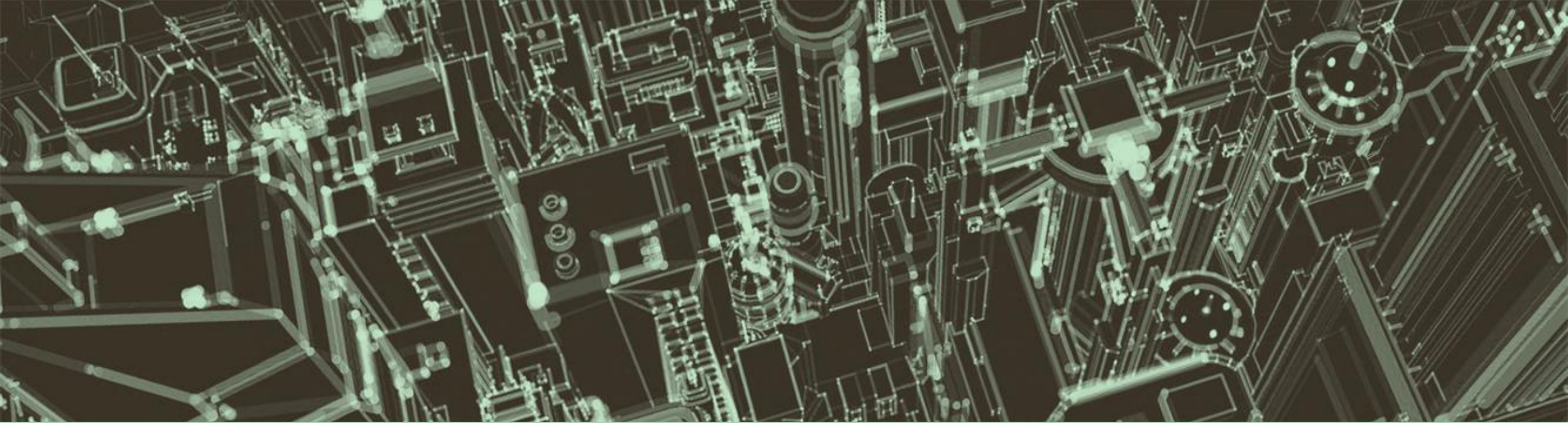
READING GOD'S WORD

“A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough for the next six months, or take sufficient air into his lungs at one time to sustain life for a week. We must draw upon God's boundless store of grace from day to day as we need it.” – D. L. Moody

- “Give us today our daily bread.” Matthew 6:11
- We need to read God's Word EVERY DAY!

READING GOD'S WORD

- Three Practical Suggestions:
 - Find the time!
 - Just 15 minutes a day will get you through the Bible in 1 year.
 - Find a reading plan.
 - Just 3 chapters a day and 5 on Sundays will get you through the Bible in 1 year. There are many reading plans available.
 - Try reading a variety of places in Scripture.
 - Find at least one word or phrase to meditate on each time you read.
 - This will help keep this discipline from being a mundane chore.



STUDYING GOD'S WORD



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- “Reading gives us breadth, but study gives us depth.” – Jerry Bridges
- “Now Ezra had determined in his heart to study the law of the Lord, obey it, and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel.”
Ezra 7:10
- “The people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”
Acts 17:11
- “When you come, bring the cloak I left in Troas with Carpus, as well as the scrolls, especially the parchments.” 2 Timothy 4:13

STUDYING GOD'S WORD

“Here the, is the real problem of our negligence. We fail in our duty to God’s Word not so much because it is difficult to understand, not so much because it is dull and boring, but because it is work. Our problem is not a lack of intelligence or a lack of passion. Our problem is that we are lazy.”

– R. C. Sproul

STUDYING GOD'S WORD

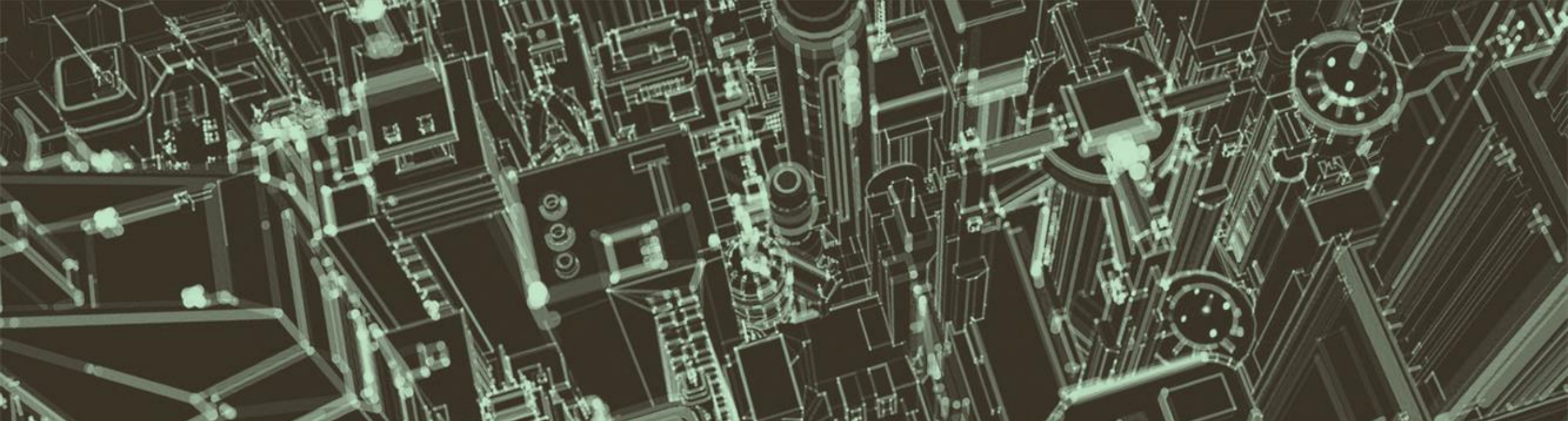
- “The basic difference between Bible reading and Bible study is simply a pen and paper.” – Whitney
- Write down observations, insights, and questions as you read.
- Find key words and cross-references.
- Outline a chapter paragraph-by-paragraph.
- Do word, character, topical, and book studies.
- Study the Bible with other people!
- Find good study Bibles, commentaries, and books for help.

STUDYING GOD'S WORD

Remember...

“Our desire to know more, read more, and study more can be another expression of our culture and its acquisitive nature. Knowing God, not knowing more, is the goal.” – Richard Rohr

- ...the goal of Bible study is not simply to know more, but to know God and to become more like him.



METHODS FOR TAKING IN GOD'S WORD



METHODS FOR TAKING IN GOD'S WORD

- Do you have to be a Bible scholar? Can ordinary people really dive into the depths of God's Word?
- “Brothers and sisters, consider your calling: Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth.” 1 Corinthians 1:26
- Likely, the methods are the problem, not you!
- “While hearing and reading plant the seed of Scripture into the soil of our souls, other disciplines are the water and sun God uses to bring the growth and fruit of Christlikeness in our lives.” – Whitney

METHODS: MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD

“No doubt the ability to read and access to books and computers are wonderful gifts. But a mind so overwhelmed with information that nothing is known by the heart can leave the soul at the mercy of the last mental image that took our fancy. Memorization allows us to choose words and images that shape our minds and hearts.”

- Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

METHODS: MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD

- “I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you.” Psalm 119:11
 - With Scripture stored in your mind, the Holy Spirit can bring it to your attention when you need it most. (Eph. 6:17)
- “Listen closely, pay attention to the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge. For it is pleasing if you keep them within you and if they are constantly on your lips. I have instructed you today—even you—so that your confidence may be in the Lord.” Proverbs 22:17-19
 - Memorization strengthens your faith by repeatedly reinforcing God’s truth, often just when you need it.

METHODS: MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD

- It can prepare you for unexpected witnessing or counseling opportunities that come your way.
- “Your decrees are my delight and my counselors.” Psalm 119:24
 - It becomes a means of the Holy Spirit in guiding you.
- “How I love your instruction! It is my meditation all day long.”
Psalm 119:97
 - It fuels meditation on Scripture no matter when or where!

METHODS: MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD

- YOU CAN DO IT!
- Suggestions:
 - Choose verses relating to where the Lord is working on your life, or choose a section of Scripture (not just a verse).
 - Write them out or draw pictures to help remember them.
 - Memorize Scripture word-for-word! (do not settle for less here)
 - Find a method of accountability.
 - Review daily! Maybe work it into you regular Bible reading time.

METHODS: MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD

- “While some advocate a kind of meditation in which you do your best to empty your mind, Christian meditation involves filling your mind with God and His truth.” – Whitney
- Meditation is “deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture, or upon life from a scriptural perspective, for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer.” – Whitney
- “Meditation is a way we train the mind to stay put so it can explore appropriate associations.” – Calhoun

METHODS: MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD

- “This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.” Joshua 1:8
- “How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! Instead, his delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” Psalm 1:1-3

METHODS: MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD

- “But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works—this person will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:25
- What do all of these passages have in common?
 - Meditation leads to action and to blessing.

METHODS: MEDITATING ON GOD'S WORD

- Read Big; Meditate Small
 - Try choosing a passage from your reading that stood out to you and reflect on it. Whenever your mind wanders, return to the passage and focus your attention back to it.
- There are many methods of meditation. Here are just a few:
 - Rewrite the passage in your own words.
 - Ask: What does it teach? or How does this apply to me?
 - Pray through the text.
 - Create an artistic expression of it, or draw symbols representing it.
 - Ask questions from Philippians 4:8
 - Find applications of the text!

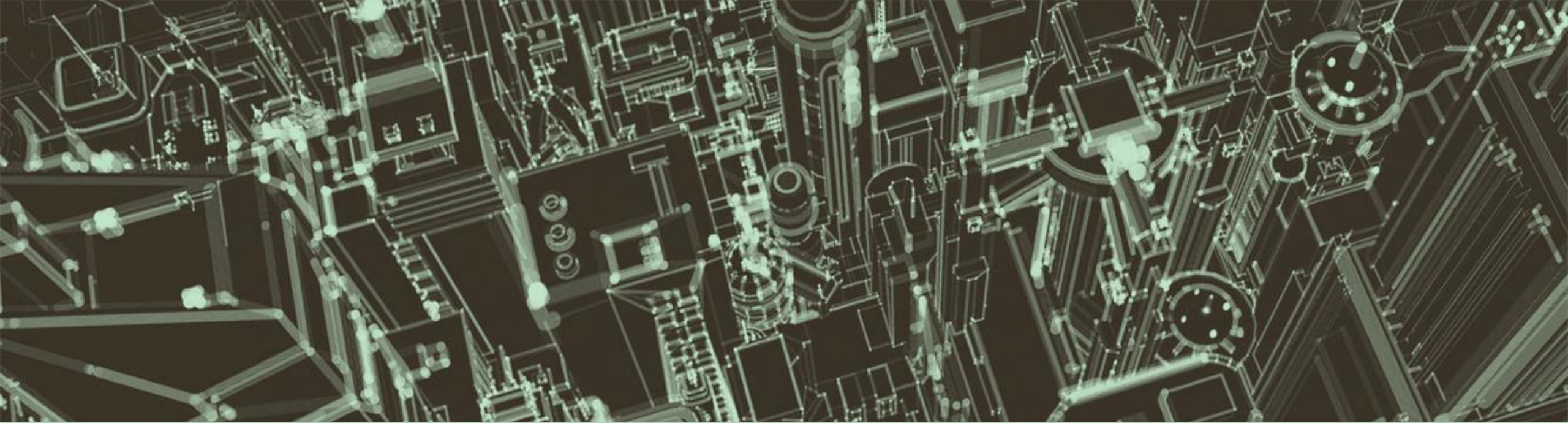
METHODS: APPLYING GOD'S WORD

- *Remember!* This is for the purpose of godliness.
- Recall the instructions from the Scripture above in Joshua 1, Psalm 1, and James 1. We meditate on God's word so that we can apply it, and when we do, we will be blessed.
- So, expect to discover an application in the text!
 - “Prove yourselves to be doers of the word...” James 1:22
- Also, study to understand the text so it isn't misapplied!
- Do this by meditating on the Word, asking application-oriented questions of it, and making sure to name a response you will make to what you have read.

METHODS: APPLYING GOD'S WORD

“Take every word as spoken to yourselves. When the word thunders against sin, think thus: “God means my sins”; when it presseth any duty, “God intends me in this.” Many put off Scripture from themselves, as it only concerned those who lived in the time when it was written; but if you intend to profit by the word, bring it home to yourselves: a medicine will do no good, unless it be applied.”

- Thomas Watson



CONCLUSION

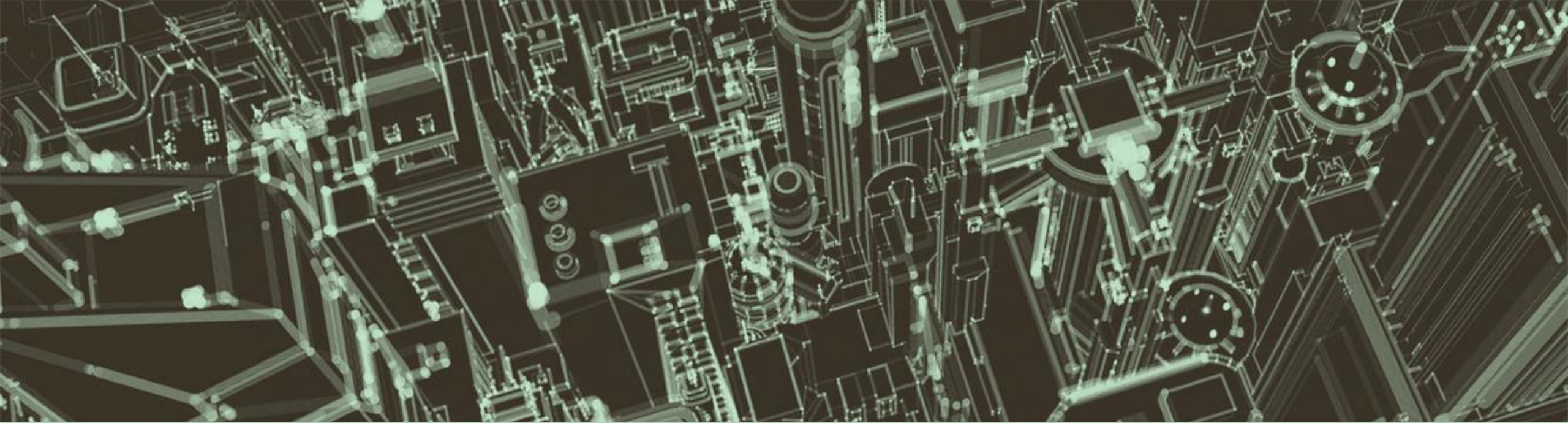


“Jesus exemplified the love of God’s Word in every area of his life. He used Scripture to answer those who tested him, resist temptation, find guidance, encourage his hear, comfort others, explain his actions, and ultimately face his own death.” – Calhoun

- Since our goal is Christlikeness, let us look to Christ as the example of taking in and using God’s Word, and let the Holy Spirit guide us and empower us as we do.

“Let the Word break over your heart and mind again and again as the years go by, and imperceptibly there will come great changes in your attitude and outlook and conduct. You will probably be the last to recognize these. Often you will feel very, very small because increasingly the God of the Bible will become to you so wonderfully great. So go on reading until you can read no longer, and then you will not need the Bible anymore, because when your eyes close for the last time in death, and never again read the Word of God in Scripture you will open them to the Word of God in the flesh, that same Jesus of the Bible whom you have know for so long, standing before you to take you forever to His eternal home.”

- Geoffery Thomas



QUESTIONS?

