

Strategic Discipleship Methods and Ideas (SDMI) for Implementing This Emphasis

Bible Reading

- Hold a Bible Read-a-thon for teens. This could be used as a fund raiser for a Bible society.
- Order Bibles from a Bible society to give away to children, teens, and adults.
- Give a gift to the people who bring their Bibles to Sunday School during the emphasis.
- Provide Bible reading calendars for all ages.
- Have Bible memorization verses for children and have them recite them during the morning worship time.
- Bring in old family Bibles, Bibles in other languages, Bibles in various versions and paraphrases, and on for display.
- Identify one of the Pauline epistles to read as a congregation.
- Identify several Psalms to read this week.
- Identify an internet daily devotional to read.
- Write how the Bible passages affected your life this week.

Prayer

- Plan for a neighborhood prayer walk* for the area where your church is located.
- Have church attendees and members living in the same community plan a prayer walk for their areas.*
- Take the responsibility list for each class and divide the names on the list among the class members. Encourage people to prayer and contact the names on their portion of the list during the coming week.
- Pray for guidance to identify someone who is open to the Gospel and pray for the opportunity to share the Gospel with him or her.
- Identify one of the following groups as the focus of the church's prayers for a week:
 - Children
 - Youth
 - College and Young Adults
 - Middle and Senior Adults
 - Co-workers or fellow students
 - People who need salvation
 - Marriages in the church and community

- Community leaders and public workers such as police and firefighters
- Plan small group prayer nights.
- Plan a concert of prayer or an around the clock prayer vigil.
- Pray for the local school system, including public schools, Christian schools, home schoolers, and any institutions of higher education and training.

** Prayer Walk

Prayer walk has been called “praying on site with insight.” The goal is to pray while walking. You can do this alone, as families, in small groups, or large groups. You can either pray for the area in which you’re walking or combine exercise with prayers. When you are praying for specific areas, your walking/praying sites can include workplaces, neighborhoods, sites of consecrated use, overlook points, sites of past sin, or even sites of ongoing sin in the community.

Outreach & Evangelism

- Have a Sunday School class party and intentionally invite friends who do not attend a Sunday School class.
- Have a block party and invite your neighbors. Also invite your Sunday School superintendent and pastor to come and meet your guests.
- Between Sunday School and morning worship, have a brunch and invite neighbors and friends. During the brunch, introduce Sunday School teachers and give information about the class they teach.
- Sponsor a neighborhood “Let’s Get Acquainted Day” at the church. Have a festival of activities for the family. (Have a sign-in sheet available for names, addresses, phone, and emails.)
 - Children... games, inflatable toys, face painting, pony rides, etc.
 - Teens...concert with a teen emphasis, ultimate Frisbee, sports events, etc.
 - Adults...pie eating contest, exhibitions and workshops on topics such as household repairs, car repair, quilting, canning, candle stick making, etc.
- Invite co-workers and classmates to attend morning worship. As part of the worship service consider asking one person to tell how a co-worker has impacted his or her life for Christ, and one student share how a classmate has lived a Christ-like example.
- Encourage people who have no family living in the area to invite another family for Sunday School and worship and to then have them over for a meal after the services.
- Recognize the single adults in the Sunday School/church. Let them know they are valued, and recognize their involvement as a vital part of the

Sunday School/church family. Single Adult Ministries includes those who are divorced, never-married and widowed.

- Have the Sunday School children invite their grandparents to come to Sunday School and attend their Sunday School class. If they do not have grandparents in the area ask them to “adopt” grandparents for the day and come to the class.
- Honor special family groups, such as the family with the most present in Sunday School, the most children present, the most grandchildren present, or the family with the most generations present. Do this during the morning worship service, and possibly have a token gift available for them.
- Ask a few families to take part in the worship service on this Sunday in roles such as reading scripture, presenting a skit, or singing.
- Ask one or two people to share with the congregation the influence their family has had on their Christian faith journey. These testimonies can serve as encouragement for the rest of the church to take seriously their connections with their families.
- Encourage each family to practice family devotions. [Word Action's connect!](#) is a great resource for families with young children.
- Distribute [card-size invitations](#) to each person to invite unchurched family members to attend the Sunday School celebration on the last day of this emphasis.

Encouragement

- Have class members contact a person in the church that has encouraged them.
- Have class members contact a person who is not in the church that has encouraged them.
- Do anonymous acts of kindness for someone this week.
- Help decorate another classroom.
- Bake cookies and give them away.
- Pray for the requests made during your Sunday School class or small group gathering last week.
- Start a small or accountability group.
- Surprise a co-worker or fellow students with a card.
- Pay for the order for the person behind you in a drive through.
- Offer a sincere thank-you and a smile to someone who is serving you such as a clerk, bank teller, or waiter.

Community/Service

- Hold a free a car wash sponsored by NYI or the teen Sunday School class.
- Provide free baby sitting for single moms in the church sponsored by prime time adult and teen classes.

- Have Sunday School classes sponsor a work and witness program to another church. Have them present the follow up pictures and report during Sunday School class time.
- Have “Blue Jeans” Sunday. During the Sunday School class time, clean up the church area and parking lot.
- Identify the senior adults in your congregation that need some extra help with home maintenance. Have teen and adult classes help them with their needs.
- Plan a car care day for senior adults and single moms in your community.
- Plan a trip to a nursing home in your community to visit and encourage the residents.
- Contact another church in your community and do a service project for them.
- Plan a trip to the nearest rescue mission, homeless shelter, or other service organization in your community.
- Plan a mother’s day or evening out. Have the teens help plan and carry out the activities for the evening.
- Plan a school supply drive.
- Start a coffee shop ministry.
- Provide some after school programs, including tutoring, for children in the church’s community.

Fellowship

- Plan a bike ride or walk-a-thon. Invite the community to join the fun.
- Host a vintage car show. Invite community people to show their cars.
- Have a cookout and service at a park or on the church lawn. Provide free give -aways for adults, teens, and children.
- Divide the congregation into small fellowship groups. Have leaders plan activities ranging from games to backyard barbeques.
- Encourage inter-generational classes for a Sunday. Have the adult Sunday School classes adopt a children’s or teen class and meet together for the lesson, food, fun, and fellowship.
- Plan a game night for the congregation. Ask people to bring table games and a snack (or provide popcorn and ask people to bring sodas.)
- Develop a presence on facebook or other internet social networks.

Meditation

The biblical understanding of meditation is listening to God and seeking to obey Him. The Psalms are rich with examples of mediation. Through meditation, God spoke to His people – not because they had any special abilities but because they were willing to listen.

- Through Sunday School and small groups, help people understand the real purpose of meditation by revealing to them three common misconceptions about Christian meditation:

- Myth 1: *It is synonymous with the meditation of the Eastern religions that are typically an attempt to empty the mind.* No, Christian meditation is an attempt to fill the mind through connecting with our personal, loving God.
 - Myth 2: *Meditation equals inaction.* No, meditation is a tool to redirect our lives so we can deal successfully with the world around us. It opens us to God's guidance so we can go into the world with perspective and balance.
 - Myth 3: *Meditation is a form of "Christian psychology."* No, it is not a discipline designed for us to explore our own subconscious minds. It is intended to help us explore our relationship with God, to acknowledge His presence, and to commune with Him.
- Through Sunday School and small groups, help people understand the forms of genuine Christian meditation:
 - **Meditating on Scripture.** This is not the same as a study or analysis of Scriptures. It is a time to humble ourselves and receive God's Word as it is addressed to us. It is a time to allow one story, parable, passage, or even a single verse to take root in our mind and heart.
 - **Palms Down, Palms Up Meditation.** This is a form of meditation in which you simply become still and silent and allow your mind to focus on God's presence. Sitting first with your palms down symbolizes your desire to let go of fears and feelings that separate you from God. After a time, turning your palms up is a symbol of your desire to receive what God is offering to you – peace, patience, or encouragement.
 - **Meditating on Our World.** This is a time to soberly contemplate creation and to learn about life from nature – perseverance, growth, change, life, death, and more. Through this contemplation we can learn about the kingdom of Heaven. In addition, this is a time to seek understanding and the biblical significance of the events going on in the world. It allows us quiet time to look for God's insight into world events and to deeply consider how we can be instruments of salt and light.
 - Encourage every Sunday School and small group member to set aside time at least once a week (perhaps for only 15-30 minutes at first) for quiet meditation. Tell them in advance that you will ask for reports on their experience in a few weeks. Follow up after 4-6 weeks by asking those who have added meditation to their schedules to share with the class/group its effect on their lives.
 - Talk to parents about meditating with their children. Some will be reluctant at first. Encourage them to experience meditation on their own before they share it with their children. When teaching meditation to children, the goal should be the same as with adults – listening to God and seeking to obey Him. Meditation with children should be limited to one minute for each

year of their age. Teaching children to be still before God can have a profound effect on their relationship with Christ.

- If there is not currently a quiet place in your church for meditation, talk with church leaders about developing a small space for this purpose.

Fasting

Fasting is an exercise designed to bring the flesh under the subjection of the Spirit. The purpose of fasting, in combination with meditation and prayer, is to get you attuned to the Spirit so you can hear what God is saying and be guided to do His will.

- Have the pastor's message address the discipline of fasting.
- Have each Sunday School class or small group encourage members to fast one meal in the upcoming week. During the time the meal would have been eaten, ask the class members to spend that time in prayer and meditation. Provide a list of prayer suggestions for class members. (Note: Consult your physician beforehand if you have a physical condition that could be negatively affected by fasting.)
- For class members who, for health reasons, cannot fast one meal, encourage them to "fast" (or skip) another activity and use that time instead for prayer and meditation.
- Distribute to class/small group members a card or paper with Isaiah 58:6-7. Ask them to meditate over this Scripture, and ask the Spirit to direct them in prayer for the 7 reasons Isaiah lists for fasting:
 - To bring justice
 - To undo heavy burdens and break the yoke of bondage
 - To free the oppressed and loose the bands of wickedness
 - To share food
 - To provide shelter for the poor
 - To clothe the naked
 - To provide for one's family
- Help children understand the concept of fasting by sharing the story of Esther. Encourage children to think of ways they can fast (food or activity) and use the time to pray for their friends and family.

Journaling

Journaling is one way to communicate with God. Christian journaling combines prayer, scripture reading, and a deeper analysis of God's teachings. It's an excellent way to spend time with God and draw closer to Him.

- Share with Sunday School and small group members the essential steps to journaling:
 - Pray, pray, pray.

- Read, read, read your Bible.
 - Write, write, write your prayer requests, praises, confessions, goals, and responses to the Bible passages you have read.
- Encourage class and small group members to experiment with journaling. If possible, provide each member with a small journal (available at many \$1 stores). Challenge the people to journal at least three times a week. After 4-6 weeks, ask them to report back how journaling has affected their spiritual growth.
 - Children too can be taught the spiritual benefits of journaling. Let them make personal journals with construction paper covers and computer paper pages. Hole punch and tie with decorative ribbon or staple. Even very young non-readers can journal by drawing pictures. As with meditation, journaling is another way for children to develop a close relationship with Christ.

Stewardship

- Before taking the regular offering, have an individual or couple give a personal testimony about how the Lord has taught them to give 10% or more to the Lord's work as their first and highest financial priority. Have them explain briefly how they felt about this decision and how the Lord has blessed them for their obedience. (Note: Testimonies can be video taped and played during the pre-service or service.)
- **Google** "Brian Kluth 100 verses to encourage generosity." Use one of these verses weekly in the church bulletin, read one before taking the offering, reference one or more as theme verses for special funding initiatives, or use one as the basis for a lesson or sermon on generosity and giving.
- Plan an all-church tithing Sunday. Challenge everyone to bring a full 10% of their income as an offering on the designated Sunday.
- Provide cards and ask people to write (without giving their names) how much their tithe would be if they gave 10% of their income. Tally this information and give the total back to the congregation. Share the difference between this figure and the actual average monthly tithe given to the church. Stress how much more could be done for the Kingdom if everyone would faithfully give at least 10% to the church.
- If your church does not already do so, encourage the staff to send out quarterly giving reports to the congregation. This will help the congregation feel more involved with the finances of the church, and it will help them see specific areas of need.
- Long-term: Have a qualified lay person in your church begin a Christian financial counseling ministry to help families in trouble. As families begin to get their finances in order, they will begin to faithfully give to the Lord's work.
- Help people think about stewardship of their time and talents as well as their finances. Encourage or challenge people through Sunday School

classes and small groups to prayerfully consider ways they can share their time

- Activities with children:
 - Collect milk and juice cartons for children to decorate as offering banks for home. Encourage them to save money from gifts and allowances. Use this to discuss the importance of giving tithes and offerings.
 - Talk about the things people do to help in the church. Discuss these jobs and how important they are. Have children make cards to thank these people for the work they do. Use this activity to discuss the importance of giving God our time and talents.
- Children can learn a lot about stewardship by participating in service projects. Let the children help you plan the project. Consider the ages of the children in your group when planning. Make sure the children are in safe situations and avoid the use of dangerous tools. Some ideas include:
 - Make colorful boxes to collect food or clothing at church for shelters or food banks.
 - Collect food for your church's food pantry or local food bank.
 - Plant flowers around the church
 - Recycle cans or newspapers