

LEADER'S GUIDE

FROM THE AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLING
30 DAYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

30 DAYS

TO

GROWING IN



YOUR FAITH

ENRICH YOUR LIFE
IN 15 MINUTES A DAY

MAX ANDERS

HOW TO USE THIS LEADER'S GUIDE

Welcome to the Leader's Guide for *30 Days to Growing in Your Faith*. We're glad you have chosen to lead others through this book. We want to make it as easy as possible, and to give you the help you need to make it a successful experience.

The book itself is self-instruction, structured so that a person can take him/herself through it without a teacher. However, many people find it easier, and sometimes more enriching, to go through it with others. To do so enables a reader to have the experience of reading the book, but beyond that, to have the benefit of input and support from others. For that reason, we have created this guide to help make it as positive an experience as possible for everyone.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

You might choose to do more than one chapter at a time. If you meet weekly and only do one chapter, it will obviously take thirty weeks to complete the book. That might be fine for your group, but if that is too long, you might choose to do more than one chapter at a time to meet whatever time schedule works best for your group.

You might ask group members for their contact information (if you don't already have it) so that you can reach out to them between meetings.

To begin, have them read the assigned chapter(s) ahead of the meeting.

REVIEW

When the meeting starts, spend a few minutes reviewing the content of the chapter. Perhaps go through the lesson as a summary, and then ask what goes in the blanks, to get the information back into their minds.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Ask if anyone has any questions over the material from the chapter. Answer the question(s) if you are able. If you are not able, commit to bringing an answer the next week. If you need help, you might contact a pastor or Bible teacher.

If this Q & A time precipitates discussion, feel free to allow it to progress as seems appropriate. You might get a good answer from another participant.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

When the review time is complete:

1. Warm Up Questions. Allow the time allotted for this to go as long as seems appropriate.
2. Discussion Questions can be discussed in the group, assuming the group dynamic allows. If there is not a ready openness in the group, you might have them write out their answers, and then if time allows, ask if anyone wants to share what they wrote.
3. Decision Time Questions can be discussed if your group is more than a small group. If it is a discipleship or spiritual accountability group where they have pre-agreed to be forthcoming, then these questions can be asked, answered, and discussed.

If this is a small group and not a spiritual accountability group, then you might have the participants journal their answers for a brief time. Then, if dynamics and time allow, you might ask if anyone wants to volunteer to share what they wrote down.

CONCLUSION

If you are still thinking about it, we want to encourage you to take a group (or even just one other person) through this book. You could be the catalyst in a person's life to get him/her started, or jumpstarted, in a new season of spiritual growth. Who knows what kind of blessings might result, and/or trials avoided, as a result of others having a fuller understanding how to grow in their faith?

So, look over the book, look over this Leader's Guide, and if you think the Lord could use you to help take others through the book, we hope you will find this guide a valuable resource.

CHAPTER 1: THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and
with all your soul and with all your mind.”
—Matthew 22:37 (ESV)*

*Delight yourself in the LORD; and He
will give you the desires of your heart.
—Psalm 37:4*

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: What is the key to happiness?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for the opportunity to gather together to learn more about your will for us. Please be with us and fill us with your Spirit, and please help us to better know you. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What do you *naturally* think you might need other than (or in addition to) God to be happy in life?

What is your greatest fear in giving yourself completely to God?

Are you convinced that your true happiness is found in God and not in sin (anything outside the will of God)? If not, why do you think you doubt it?

DECISION TIME

Have you made the decision to follow God completely as the source of true happiness in life?

If not, what do you think is the primary reason why? What could you do to bring yourself to the point where you would be willing to make that decision?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is an eternal perspective, and why is it important?

**Tip for Leading a Group Discussion:* Ask group members for their contact information so that you can reach out to them between meetings.

CHAPTER 2: THE NECESSITY OF AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;
for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*
—2 Corinthians 4:18

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where
thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither
moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your
treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*
—Matthew 6:19–21

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: Why is it important to focus on eternity rather than our temporal plans and circumstances?

PRAYER

Father, we know you are in control of all things, and we surrender our plans to you. We trust you to know what is best for us, and we believe that you will walk with us through whatever you have planned for us. Thank you for your mercy and faithfulness. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What is an eternal perspective?

How does having an eternal perspective change how you view your day-to-day struggles?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How completely do you think you have abandoned yourself to an eternal perspective?

What is your greatest fear in doing so?

Are you prepared to allow God to use trials in your life to convert your perspective from a temporal one to an eternal one?

DECISION TIME

Are you prepared to abandon yourself to an eternal perspective now?

If not, what do you think is the primary reason why? What could you do to bring yourself to the point that you would be willing to make that decision?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What does it mean to have a purpose?

CHAPTER 3: THE NECESSITY OF AN ETERNAL PURPOSE

*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever
you do, do all to the glory of God.
—1 Corinthians 10:31*

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo,
I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
—Matthew 28:19–20*

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: What is the purpose of life?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for creating each of us for a purpose. Please help us to know how we can serve you, and please continue to remind us to live for your eternal glory. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What does it mean to have a life of purpose?

What is necessary in order to live a life of purpose?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Is “who you become” the most important thing in life to you right now?

What is the greatest thing you would like to do for God if you knew that you would be successful at anything you wanted to do?

As you give yourself fully to the Lord, does it mean you have to change your vocation? Or do you just do your present vocation as unto the Lord?

DECISION TIME

Are there any “little things” in which you need to become more faithful?

What spiritual goal could you establish for yourself that would be your spiritual “moon shot”?

Is this something that excites and motivates you? What could you do now to begin the pursuit of that goal?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What does it look like to live a Christian life?

CHAPTER 4: EMBRACING YOUR TRUE SPIRITUAL NATURE

*For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable,
through the living and enduring word of God.
—1 Peter 1:23 (NIV)*

*For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh;
for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.
—Romans 7:18*

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: How has your salvation changed how you live?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to save us. Please forgive us for the sins we commit against you, and please help us to live lives that reflect your glory and righteousness. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What does God's forgiveness mean to you?

What is the importance of obedience to God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Is this explanation of who a Christian is new to you? Does it contradict anything you previously believed?

What difference does it make to you to understand that your inner man does not sin, but your outer man does?

Are there any changes you need to make in your life in order to be a more obedient follower of Jesus?

DECISION TIME

Have you believed in and received Jesus as your personal Savior?

If not, what do you think is the primary reason why? What could you do to bring yourself to the point that you would be willing to make this decision?

If so, what is the biggest change you have seen in your life? What is the most important thing you need to do now to be consistent with that decision?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What are some temptations Christians often battle? How can they stand strong against those temptations?

CHAPTER 5: WAGING THE INTERNAL SPIRITUAL WAR

Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
—Ephesians 4:24

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
—Philippians 2:12–13

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: How do we stand strong against sin?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we are weak and unable to stand against sin by our own strength. Please reinforce our desires to serve and obey you, and please forgive us when we fail. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be “born again”?

What are some things that tempt us to disobey God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Explain in your own words what you think it means that a Christian is not someone who has turned over a new leaf, but rather someone who has turned over a new life.

Explain in your own words what you think the inner man is, and what you think the outer man is.

What is your greatest challenge in “living like who you have become”?

DECISION TIME

Are you currently experiencing things in life because you have done something wrong that has brought negative consequences into your life? If so, have you repented of it? Is there anything else you might need to do to restore yourself?

Are there additional steps you need to take in “living like who you have become”?

Have you taken the first step in the Romans 12:1–2 process of becoming a living demonstration of the fact that God’s will is good and acceptable and perfect: presenting your body as a living sacrifice to God? If not, are you prepared to do so now?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What does it mean to be transformed and renewed in Christ?

CHAPTER 6: THE CENTRALITY OF MENTAL RENEWAL TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

—Romans 12:2

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

—Philippians 4:8

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What does it mean to renew our minds, and how does it affect how we live our lives as Christians?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for each person in this group. We are grateful for this community that you have given us to help us grow and learn more about you. Please continue to guide us and lead us here and in the world. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What is God's truth?

Why is it necessary to believe God's truth in order to live a Christian life?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Can you think of a time when you acted on something you thought was true, and it turned out not to be true? How did that turn out? Do you suspect that you have bought bad "truth" from culture around you that you need to change?

How successful do you think you have been at filling your mind with truth? How careful have you been at protecting your mind from harmful input?

Is the concept of repeating truth until it changes you new to you? How often have you heard life-changing truth, but then went on with life and a year later were unchanged by it?

DECISION TIME

How careful have you been in the past of making sure that what you believe is true? How passive have you been about simply accepting as truth what the culture around you says is true? What do you think you might need to do in the future to be more careful about believing what is actually true?

What have you been filling your mind with lately? Is it going to get you where you want to go spiritually? What do you need to change?

What truth do you think is most important now in your life to repeat until it changes you? Are you memorizing Scripture that speaks to that need? If not, are you prepared to begin?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is spiritual growth?

What is necessary in order for spiritual growth to take place?

**Tip for Leading a Group Discussion:* Ask group members to take turns sharing responsibilities in the group, such as setting up chairs, bringing food or drinks, and praying before the meeting begins.

CHAPTER 7: UNDERSTANDING THE COMPONENTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
—Philippians 2:12–13

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.
—1 Peter 2:1–3

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What is required in order to grow spiritually?

PRAYER

Lord, we come humbly before you today acknowledging that there is so much we don't know or understand. Please guide us and give us wisdom as we seek to grow closer to you. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

How do people grow spiritually?

Is spiritual growth something we are able to do under our own power? Why or why not?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Did any of these five components surprise you? Which one, and why?

Which of the five components were you least surprised about? Which one, and why?

Which one do you like the best? Which one do you like the least? Explain.

DECISION TIME

Have you given yourself as completely as you need to master the Word of God? Are there any changes you need to make?

Are you as integrated into the lives of other believers as you ought to be in order to benefit from that component of spiritual growth? Do you regularly attend church? Do you fellowship with Christian friends? Are there any changes you need to make?

What is your response to the Time and Trials component? Have you had enough time to be spiritually mature? Are you as spiritually mature as you think you ought to be, given the length of time you have been a Christian? Are there any adjustments you need to make in light of this?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What are the enemies of a Christian?

CHAPTER 8: THE THREE ENEMIES OF THE CHRISTIAN

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
—2 Corinthians 10:3–5

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.
—Romans 8:6

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What enemies do Christians face?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you see the battles we engage in daily. Please give us the strength to persevere when we feel overwhelmed or want to give up. Thank you for giving us the tools we need to guard ourselves against evil, and please give us wisdom to use those tools effectively. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What are some of the evils we face on a daily basis?

What do we need in order to protect ourselves from evil?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How careful have you been in guarding your mind against the values of the world? How significantly do you think your values have been shaped by the world?

How significantly do you think your values have been shaped by the flesh (desire of the flesh, desire of the eyes, desire of pride)?

How alert have you historically been to the fact that the devil is a constant adversary in your life, using the world and the flesh to deceive and defeat you?

DECISION TIME

What is the most important thing you think you should do to intensify your resistance to the world? Are you prepared to do it now? If so, when and how? If not, why not?

What is the most important thing you think you should do to intensify your resistance to the flesh? Are you prepared to do it now? If so, when and how? If not, why not?

What is the most important thing you think you should do to intensify your resistance to the devil? Are you prepared to do it now? If so, when and how? If not, why not?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is a protected mind?

How do we guard our minds?

CHAPTER 9: THE POWER OF A PROTECTED MIND

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.
—Colossians 3:2

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”
—John 8:32

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: How do we protect our minds from evil?

PRAYER

Lord, we want to follow you fully, but we know we fail in doing so every day. Please forgive us, and please help us to guard our minds so that we can truly focus on you. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What are some of the consistent thoughts you have—the things you focus on the most and tend to dwell on?
How have those affected your beliefs?

How can protecting your mind help you change your thoughts?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

To which of the three dangers are you the most vulnerable? How would you state, in your own words, specifically what your danger is?

Which of the three safeguards most addresses your greatest vulnerabilities? How would you state in your own words specifically what your danger is?

Which of the two mind-protecting weapons is your stronger weapon? Why do you think it is your stronger weapon?

DECISION TIME

Are you adequately guarding your mind against false teaching? Are you adequately guarding your mind against temptation? Are you adequately guarding your mind against spiritual deception? What changes must you make in each of these areas?

Are you adequately guarding what you let into your mind? Are you adequately guarding what you let your mind create? Are you adequately guarding what you let your mind dwell on? What changes must you make in each of these areas?

Are you adequately guarding your mind with Scripture? Are you adequately guarding your mind with prayer? What changes must you make in each of these areas?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

Why do Christians suffer?

CHAPTER 10: THE CHALLENGE OF PAIN, SUFFERING, AND EVIL

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!
—Psalm 34:8 (NKJV)

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
—Hebrews 4:15–16

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: If God is good, then why does he allow Christians to experience pain and suffering?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we trust in your goodness, mercy, and love. We don't always understand why you let difficult things happen, but we trust in you and your plan for us. Please give us comfort and strength when we suffer, and please be with those we lift up in our hearts. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What does it mean that God is good?

Why did Jesus give his life for us?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Has suffering, including psychological and emotional suffering, ever caused you to conclude that God doesn't exist, or isn't good? If not, what has given you stability? If so, what most helps you recover your stability?

Explain in your own words how Jesus's suffering for us helps us believe that God loves us, in spite of the fact that he doesn't make our lives go better?

What goodness have you seen in your own life, or perhaps observed in others, that helps persuade you that God is good?

DECISION TIME

Has your confidence in God's existence been shaken because of evil in the world? Do you need to recommit yourself to his existence?

What is the most important thing you think you should do to prepare yourself to share this important truth with others who may question God's existence or goodness because of evil in the world?

What changes must you make in each of these areas?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

Why do Christians still struggle despite their desire to follow God?

CHAPTER 11: UNDERSTANDING WHY THE CHRISTIAN LIFE DOESN'T WORK ANY BETTER THAN IT DOES

*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your might.*
—Deuteronomy 6:5

*But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the
Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.
The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient
toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
—2 Peter 3:8–9

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: Why do we struggle to live as Christians even when we are devoted to serving God?

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for allowing us to meet together today to worship you. Please bless each person in this group, and open our hearts and minds as we learn more about you. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

In what areas of Christian living do you struggle despite trying to grow in your faith?

What do you think God wants from us?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Can you think of times in your life when you have been frustrated by God's slow timing? How did it make you feel?

Have there been times in the past when you were puzzled by how little difference it seemed to make that the Holy Spirit lived within you? What did you conclude was the reason?

In your experience, has it been ignorance or disobedience that was the greater cause for lack of spiritual progress in your life?

DECISION TIME

In the past, have you been more inclined to give God your "best efforts" or to give God your faith and love?

What decisions do you think you need to make in order to overcome any spiritual ignorance in your life?

What decisions do you think you need to make in order to overcome any disobedience in your life?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

How can our trials help us grow in our faith?

**Tip for Leading a Group Discussion:* Make sure refreshments are available at each meeting to help group members relax and feel more comfortable. Give group members time to visit around the table as they fill their plates.

CHAPTER 12: THE ROLE OF TRIALS IN CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
—James 1:2–4

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps.
—1 Peter 2:21

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: How can our struggles help us grow in faith?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you have walked with each person in this room during our struggles. Thank you for your presence with us and for bringing us up out of the valleys. For those of us currently in the depths of the valley, please continue to give us strength and courage to wait for the work you have for us. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What do you think God is calling you to do?

How can our struggles prepare us for the work God has for us?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Is it news to you that God has good works he wants you to do? Do you have some idea of what your life dream might be?

In your experience, has there been more than one valley? How many can you think of?

What are some of the lessons you have learned in past valleys? How have they prepared you for good works?

DECISION TIME

Are you in a valley now? Are you tempted to give up? What do you think you need to do now to remain faithful if you are in a valley?

What do you think are areas in your life that might need to be transformed in order to prepare you for future good works? What can you do now to begin working on those areas so God may not have to take you through a valley for the change?

What is the greatest thing you would like to do for God, if you could do anything you wanted to and knew that you would succeed? What area of change do you think you would need to have in order to do this?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is God's game plan?

CHAPTER 13: GOD'S GAME PLAN WITH HUMANITY

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
—Galatians 5:22–23

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
—1 Thessalonians 1:5–7

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What does the Bible reveal about God's plan for humanity?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for revealing yourself to us in the Bible. Please guide us and grant us wisdom as we learn more about your plan for us. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What do you think is God's plan for humanity?

How is this plan apparent in the Old and New Testaments?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Explain what, to you, is the most helpful thing about understanding God's game plan.

Explain in your own words what it means that the blessing in the Old Testament was the fruit of the vine.

Explain in your own words what it means that the blessing in the New Testament is the fruit of the Spirit.

DECISION TIME

The great challenge of cooperating with God in executing his game plan is the necessity of obedience. How prepared are you to believe God in all things?

Have the lifestyles of other Christians been a significant encouragement to your Christian life? Do you think your lifestyle is an encouragement to others in their Christian lives? Are there changes you need to make to improve in this area?

Would you prefer God's blessings to be the fruit of the vine or the fruit of the Spirit? Since you live in New Testament times, you (of course) do not have this choice, but if you had love, joy, and peace (the first three fruits of the Spirit), would you want anything else? How fully does that motivate you to be obedient to God from the heart in all things?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is love?

What does God teach us about love?

CHAPTER 14: THE PRIMACY OF LOVE

*“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this,
‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”
—Mark 12:30–31*

*The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
—1 John 4:8*

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: What is God’s love, and what does it mean for us?

PRAYER

Lord, we are humbled by your love for us. Thank you for showing us what it means to love, and please help us to show that love to others. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

How would you describe love to someone who doesn’t know what it is?

What can we learn about love from God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How convinced are you that God loves you personally, individually? Do you take comfort and meaning in this fact?

How consistent are you in loving others (in the sense of agape’ love)? How “in tune” with this concept do you think American culture is? How in tune with this concept are you?

How has this chapter changed your understanding of what it means to love God? Describe in your own words what you think it means to love God.

DECISION TIME

Do you find it easy to accept God’s love for you, or do you struggle with feeling “unlovable”? How does reflecting on your love for others encourage you to accept God’s love for you?

How consistent are you in loving God? What areas of your life need to change to love him as he desires to be loved?

How well does 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 govern your relationships with others? What changes do you think you might need to make in this area?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is self-discipline, and why is it important?

CHAPTER 15: THE NECESSITY OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

*But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after
I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

–1 Corinthians 9:27

*Like a city that is broken into and without walls
is a man who has no control over his spirit.*

–Proverbs 25:28

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What role does self-discipline play in the Christian life?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for bringing us together today. Please guide as we study your Word, and please give us strength and self-discipline when we face temptation. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What is self-discipline?

How do you feel about self-discipline, and why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How self-disciplined do you think you are? How important to you is the message of this chapter?

Describe a time when a lack of self-discipline brought significant pain into your life.

Describe a time when strong self-discipline brought significant good into your life.

DECISION TIME

In what area of your life do you most need self-discipline? What will you do to improve in that area? What goal can you set to begin your improvement?

Do your friends and environment encourage or discourage self-discipline? What changes might you need to make in those areas?

What is the most important Bible verse for you regarding self-discipline? Commit to memorizing it deeply.

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What does it mean to be humble?

CHAPTER 16: THE SUBTLE POWER OF HUMILITY

You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
—1 Peter 5:5

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.
—Colossians 3:12–13

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What is humility, and what does it look like in the Christian life?

PRAYER

Lord, we humbly come before you to ask for your forgiveness and mercy. We acknowledge your almighty power and righteousness, and we ask you to help us walk in humility as we serve you. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be humble?

In what ways are humility and forgiveness related?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Do you think you have a balanced understanding of humility? Does this chapter's definition of humility change your perception of it?

Describe a positive example of reciprocal submission that you have seen.

Which is harder for you—repentance or forgiveness? Why?

DECISION TIME

How helpful do you think you are in your reciprocal submission relationships? Do you play your role well? Are there changes you need to make?

Are there things of which you need to repent in your relationships with others? Do you need to let them know?

Are there people you need to forgive? Will you forgive them? What has been holding you back?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is prayer, and why is it important?

**Tip for Leading a Group Discussion:* Reach out to group members between meetings to ask if anyone has had additional thoughts about the previous meeting. This is also a good time to ask for prayer requests.

CHAPTER 17: THE MYSTERY OF PRAYER

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication
with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
—Philippians 4:6*

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.
—Revelation 3:20*

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What is prayer, and what is its purpose?

PRAYER

Father, thank you for allowing us to come directly to you with our worries, needs, and confessions. Please hear our unspoken prayers today, and bless each member of this group. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Why do you think it is important for us to pray?

How do you make time for prayer?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How well do you think you understand the biblical principles of prayer? What things in this chapter surprised you or didn't you know before?

Have you struggled in the past with prayer? What do you think is the most helpful thing in this chapter to aid your prayer life?

Which is the most helpful to you of the ways we enter into partnership with God?

DECISION TIME

Have you been guilty of viewing God as a celestial vending machine in the past? How comfortable are you with the idea of leaving it up to God to determine whether or not you get an answer to prayer?

Are there things in your life that are higher than God, and that make it difficult for you to sincerely tell God "your will be done"?

Does it appeal to you to help God run the family business? What ministry would you like to be able to do for/with God if you could?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

Why is obedience to God important?

CHAPTER 18: THE POWER OF TRUST AND OBEDIENCE

*And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
—Hebrews 11:6*

*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written,
“But the righteous man shall live by faith.”
—Romans 1:17*

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: In what ways are faith and obedience related?

PRAYER

Lord, we confess that we do not always obey you, and we ask your forgiveness. Please help us to build our faith and become more obedient, and help us to be a light to others. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What is obedience, and why is it important as a Christian?

What is faith?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Explain in your own words the power of faith.

Explain in your own words why you think Adam and Eve sinned.

Explain in your own words why living by faith is so counterintuitive.

DECISION TIME

Do you believe that everything God asks of you is to give something good to you or keep something bad from you?

Of the five factors that erode our faith, which one is the most troublesome for you? In what ways?

Have you ever deliberately offered yourself as a living sacrifice to God? Are you prepared to live each day as a living sacrifice?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is gratitude, and why should Christians be grateful?

What are you grateful for?

CHAPTER 20: FOUR TRADITIONAL MODELS OF LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.
—Ephesians 4:1

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
—Colossians 3:16

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What model of Christian living should we follow?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we come before you today with humble hearts, and we ask for guidance and direction on how we can live to please you and glorify you. Please grant us wisdom, and please be with each member of this group as they seek to follow you. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Are you familiar with the four models of Christian living? If so, what do you know about them?

In what ways would having a model of Christian living be helpful in understanding how to live as a Christian?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Which of the four models for living the Christian life do you more naturally understand and gravitate toward?

What do you see as some of the similarities of the four models?

What do you see as some of the differences?

DECISION TIME

What information about the four models was new to you? What is the most helpful understanding you gained from reading the chapter?

Which of the spiritual disciplines do you think you need to focus on the most?

What do you think is the most important change you can make in your life as a result of reading this chapter?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is spiritual warfare?

What are your thoughts about spiritual warfare?

CHAPTER 21: THE REALITY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

—Ephesians 6:12

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

—1 Peter 5:8

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What is spiritual warfare, and how should Christians respond to it?

PRAYER

Lord, we recognize that we are fighting against evil forces. Be with us during our battles, and please equip us with the strength and weapons we need in order to stand strong. Thank you for being our protector and leader. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What comes to mind when you think of spiritual warfare?

What are some tools you use to protect yourself from the enemy?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Is the reality of spiritual warfare new to you? In just a few words, summarize your understanding of spiritual warfare.

Of the three types of spiritual combat, which one do you think is the most difficult to deal with?

Of the three types of spiritual defenses, which one seems easiest to use? Which one seems hardest?

DECISION TIME

How real does spiritual warfare seem to you? What do you think is the most important area of needed progress for you?

Do you think you are in a spiritual battle? If not, why do you think that is? If so, what do you think the battle is?

What do you think is the greatest weakness in your defenses for spiritual conflict? What do you think you need to do to shore up that weakness?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

Do you think it is possible to discern God's will? Why or why not?

**Tip for Leading a Group Discussion:* Facilitate discussions in the group by making sure that everyone participates. You may need to gently redirect the conversation away from some group members who talk a lot and coax quieter members to join in.

CHAPTER 22: THE CHALLENGE OF DISCERNING GOD'S WILL

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.
—Colossians 1:9

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
—James 1:5

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: What is God's will for us, and how do we discern what it is?

PRAYER

Lord, we know that you have a plan for each of us. Please give us guidance and wisdom as we make decisions so that we may walk the path you have set before us. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What do you think God's will for your life is?

How do you make sure that you are open to God's guidance as you are making decisions?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For which issue in your life are you seeking God's will right now? Which principle do you need to concentrate on in seeking it?

In your own words, summarize the role of Scripture in discerning the will of God.

Who are the people in your life to whom you feel most comfortable going for counsel?

DECISION TIME

Which principle for discerning God's will do you find easiest to apply? Which one do you find the most difficult?

Lewis Sperry Chafer said, "His leading is only for those who are already committed to do as He may choose." Is discerning God's will in your life impeded because you are not committed to doing as he may lead?

Explain whether Philip Yancey's observation in the conclusion about God's leading only being clear by looking backward encourages or discourages you.

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What role does endurance or steadfastness play in the Christian life?

CHAPTER 23: THE IMPORTANCE OF GRIT

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

—1 Corinthians 15:58

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

—Joshua 1:9

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: What is grit? Why is it necessary as a Christian?

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for allowing us to meet together today to learn more about the life you have set before us. Please guide us and grant us wisdom as we learn how to stay steadfast during difficult times. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What image comes to mind when you think of grit?

Who is someone in your life who has modeled grit?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Summarize in your own words what “grit” is.

Which of the biblical examples of grit do you find most inspiring, and why?

Which of the verses that talk about the reward of grit do you find most motivating?

DECISION TIME

On a scale of 1–10, how “gritty” do you think you are? How gritty would you like to be?

Have you ever failed at something because you did not exercise grit? Have you ever succeeded at something because you did exercise grit?

Is there an area of your life right now that demands grit from you? Are you prepared to exercise the necessary grit? Might you need help and encouragement? If so, how could you get the help/encouragement you need?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

Why is Scripture important?

How should Christians use Scripture?

CHAPTER 24: THE IMPORTANCE OF SCRIPTURE

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

—Hebrews 4:12

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

—Joshua 1:8

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: Why is it important to read and memorize Scripture?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for giving us Scripture to help us know you and how you want us to live. Please be with us as we study your Word, and please bless us with knowledge and understanding. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Do you think reading the Bible is important? Why or why not?

How often do you take time to read the Bible? What kind of impact does it have on your life?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Are these four-fold steps new to you, or have you heard of each of them before? Have you ever seen them linked together before?

In your own words, describe this four-fold process.

Which one seems easiest for you? Which one seems hardest?

DECISION TIME

How many of the steps to mastering the Bible are you currently taking? If you are not taking all four steps, why are you not?

Have you tried these steps before and failed? If so, why do you think you failed? Are you prepared to do all four steps now?

How much different do you think your life will be in five years if you do these four steps for five years, compared to if you do not?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is an inner life, and what role does it play for Christians?

CHAPTER 25: SPIRITUAL FOCUS

*“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
–John 4:24*

*But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.
–Luke 5:16*

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: What is a vital inner life, and how do we foster it?

PRAYER

Lord, please help us to keep our focus on you at all times. Please guide our thoughts and actions so that we glorify you in all we do, and please help us to make the mental shifts necessary in order to live a Christian life. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

How did Jesus model the importance of a vital inner life?

What kinds of things do you do that bring you joy and peace?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In your own words, how would you describe your understanding of a “vital inner life”?

Is neuroplasticity a new idea to you? How would you describe it in your own words?

What is the most important activity for your mind under the “Focused Attention” section?

DECISION TIME

On a scale of 1–10, how vital do you think your inner life is? Where would you like it to be? What do you think you need to do to get it there?

How convinced are you of the value of applying the principles of neuroplasticity to spiritual growth?

What is the first step you will take from the “Focused Attention” section to encourage your spiritual growth?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What role does money play in the life of a Christian?

How often do you think about or worry about money?

CHAPTER 26: THE “LITMUS TEST” OF GIVING

*“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”
—Luke 16:13*

*He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.
—Ecclesiastes 5:10*

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: How should Christians view and use their money?

PRAYER

Father, we thank you for providing so abundantly for our needs. Please help us to bless others with the resources you have given us, and please help us to be your light so they can learn more about your love. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

How do you feel when you think about money?

Why is it important for Christians to be careful about how they spend their wealth?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Which of the four principles do you find most motivating?

Which of the four principles do you find most challenging?

In your own words, what do you think it means that we only keep what we give away?

DECISION TIME

Do you view your wealth as your own or God’s? Are you struggling with this concept, or have you resolved it in your mind?

Are you currently “sending your wealth ahead”? Do you think you are sending enough?

What do you think is the most important decision you should make as a result of reading this chapter?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What gifts has God given you? How do you use those gifts?

**Tip for Leading a Group Discussion:* Always be prepared before meetings. Read through the passage and the leader’s guide so that you are comfortable with the material before facilitating discussions.

CHAPTER 27: THE CHRISTIAN'S JOB

*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another
as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

—1 Peter 4:10

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

—Ephesians 2:10

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: Why does God give us gifts, and what are those gifts?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for lovingly creating each of us for your service. Please guide us as we discuss the gifts you've given us, and please help us to know how we should use those gifts to grow your kingdom. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Are you familiar with spiritual gifts? If so, what do you know about them?

What do you think your spiritual gift might be? How do you use it to serve God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In your own words, describe what you understand a spiritual gift to be.

Was it news to you that, even before you were born, God prepared good works for you to do? Describe how this makes you feel.

In your own words, describe what it means to you to know that you cannot effect spiritual change in anyone else; that God must do it.

DECISION TIME

Do you have an idea of what your God-given job is in life? Are you doing it? If not, are you willing to do it?

Do you wish you had a bigger/better spiritual gift? Do you battle with disappointment over not having greater gifts? How content are you with your job and gift?

How faithful do you believe you are to your job and gift? 10 percent? 50 percent? 75 percent? 100 percent? What would have to be true for you to be more faithful?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is success? What does it mean for a Christian?

CHAPTER 28: THE CHRISTIAN DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.
—1 Corinthians 4:2 (NIV)

“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”
—John 17:4

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: What does it mean to be successful when living a Christian life?

PRAYER

Lord, we often struggle to meet worldly expectations and standards. Please forgive us for our earthly focus, and help us to keep our eyes on you. Please guide us as we strive to become who you have created us to be and as we do your work. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

When have you felt successful?

How might success look different for a Christian?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In your own words, describe what you understand success to be.

How might you have described success before reading this chapter?

Can you think of a time when you did not succeed, and it turned out to be for the best?

DECISION TIME

Can you think of a time when you succeeded in something that felt good but didn’t last?

How hard do you find it to be faithful to God and leave the results to him?

Do you have an example of divinely induced failure in your life? How did you handle it?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What is evangelism?

What is your favorite way to tell others about God?

CHAPTER 29: THE PRIORITY OF EVANGELISM

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

—Matthew 28:19

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

—Acts 1:8

THIS WEEK’S BIG QUESTION: Why is evangelism important, and how can Christians be involved in it?

PRAYER

Lord, thank you for letting us know you. Please help us to share your love and your Word with others so that we can grow your kingdom. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What is evangelism?

Why do you think evangelism is important?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How did you become a Christian? Did someone go out of his or her way to share the good news of the gospel with you?

Have you ever led anyone else to Christ? Do you know how?

In what ways has the internet allowed the gospel to be spread? How have you shared the gospel through social media? How have you seen other people use social media as a way to introduce people to Christ?

DECISION TIME

Do you think you are as sensitive to the responsibility to evangelize as you should be?

Are you involved in evangelism on any level (sharing your faith, praying, or financially supporting evangelistic ministries)? Are you as involved as you think you should be?

If you could do anything you wanted to in evangelism and knew that you would be successful, what would you do? Is there any way you could do it?

THOUGHTS FOR NEXT TIME

What does it mean to be humanitarian?

Why is it important for Christians to be humanitarian?

CHAPTER 30: THE PRIORITY OF HUMANITARIANISM

Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.
—Luke 6:31

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.
—James 1:27

THIS WEEK'S BIG QUESTION: Why should Christians help care for others?

PRAYER

Thank you, Lord, for bringing this group together to study your Word. Please give us wisdom and discernment as we go out to share your love with others. Please open our eyes and hearts to those who need to hear about you. Amen.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

What is humanitarianism?

Why is it important for Christians to care for those in need?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you ever directly helped someone in humanitarian need? How did this make you feel?

Have you ever been in a situation in which you needed humanitarian help? Did anyone help you? How did you feel about this?

What need in the world is the one that draws you most naturally to help meet?

DECISION TIME

Do you think you are as sensitive as you should be to the needs of others? Elaborate.

Do you currently give time and/or money to help meet humanitarian needs? Do you think you are giving enough?

What more would you like to do if you could? Do you think there is any way you could begin?