

PERSPECTIVES
A
SPIRITUAL
LIFE
GUIDE
FOR
TWENTYSOMETHINGS
BY COLIN CREEL
BIBLE STUDY

[RELEVANTBOOKS]

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WEEK ONE

READ CHAPTER 1: HOW'S YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

Verse to Remember: *“In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps” (Prov. 16:9).*

Begin this week by looking at an object in the room from the sitting level, from standing above it, and looking up at it. Keep these three vantage points in mind as you continue through this Bible study. Ask yourself continually: *How do my surroundings affect my perspective?*

RESPONDING TO CHAPTER 1:

As a child what did you expect your life to be like at this stage?

How is your life different than what you expected?

How would you classify the quality of your life?

Write down two or three sentences of gratitude to the Lord for the differences.

Write down two or three sentences about how you would like to change your life.

In His Word:

READ EXODUS 2-3

In reading through the beginning of Moses' story, what valuable character traits does he possess that begin to surface?



In looking at the text, we recognize Moses is a man with feet of clay just like us. Moses had dreams of becoming the next Pharaoh and ruling over all the land. Yet the Lord's plans differed greatly from his plans. When the Lord called upon him, he had many doubts. **What events in his life prepared him for what the Lord had in store for him?**

Looking back over your life, what events have helped prepare you to minister to others?

In Scripture it is painfully apparent that the Lord has a plan for our lives to bolster the kingdom of God. The Lord allows us to choose on our own path, but inevitably He'll pull us back in the right direction. Jonah did not desire to go and preach at Nineveh, but in the end, the Lord called him to Himself using an unlikely mode of transportation. Jonah failed to be obedient because he had a different vision for his life. **Do you feel God owes you a "certain" life? Why or why not?**

Question 1 in the Westminster Catechism states, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever."

What's keeping you from enjoying God in your life?

What can you do differently?

READ PSALM 139

“O Lord, you have _____ me and you _____ me.”(v. 1)

“Before a _____ is on my _____ you _____ it completely, O Lord.”(v. 4)

“Where can I _____ from your Spirit? Where can I _____ from your presence?”(v. 7)

“For you _____ my inmost being; you _____ me together in my mother’s womb.”(v. 13)

“I _____ you because I am _____ and _____ made.”(v. 14)

“_____ me, O God, and _____ my heart; _____ me and know my _____ thoughts.”(v. 23)

The Lord knows us completely. He knows our thoughts, our desires, our hopes, and our dreams. He also knows our doubts, our disappointments, and the pain we often feel. In the midst of the peaks and the valleys, the Lord calls us to “Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding;



in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6).

Prayer:

If you don't have one already, start a prayer journal. The Lord continually answers prayers, yet too often we forget to praise the Lord for answering our requests. My prayer journal is extremely simplistic and costs 89 cents at the local supermarket. Many years ago I read *Too Busy Not to Pray* by Bill Hybels. In the book he introduced the A-Adoration, C-Confession, T-Thanksgiving, S-Supplication model to me. Below is an example:

A – Oh Lord in heaven, you are the creator of all the earth. You know me before I know myself. When I walk outside and see the beauty of Your creation, how can I deny You are real?

C – Oh Father, I confess that I am fallible. Daily I recognize the depth of my sin. Pride continues to gnaw away at my soul; it's my sin that so easily entangles. Help me be the man you created me to be.

T – Thank you, Father, for not giving up on me. Thank you for choosing to use an imperfect vessel like me. Thank you for a wonderful Bible study last night. It is apparent you are at work in the lives of these young men.

S – May my heart be in line with Yours. May my words be Your words. May my thoughts be Your thoughts. Continue to shave away me so that You may be glorified all the more. Oh Father, if it is Your will, hear my requests:

Colleague — cancer

Fiancée — point her more toward You, relish final weeks with girls

Bible Study — discipline, desire for the abundant life
(John 10:10)

I've set up a system where there are certain things I pray for weekly in a pre-arranged schedule, while there are a few things I pray for daily, and then I also leave room for the Spirit to prompt me to other items as they come to mind. Every few weeks I'll go back and star those things the Lord has answered. This serves as a tangible reminder of how the Lord is working in my life and the lives of others. This practice has been an amazing blessing to me through the years. The key for me has always been to keep it to one page and keep it simple. Aligning your heart with the Lord's is a key vehicle in making sure you maintain the right perspective.



WEEK TWO

READ CHAPTER 2: WHAT MAKES YOU POUND THE TABLE?

READ CHAPTER 14: WHAT IS SUCCESS IN PRACTICAL TERMS?

READ CHAPTER 21: HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?

Verse to Remember: *“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48).*

Begin this week by thinking about those areas in your life where you receive the most praise from others. Are you a good listener? Are you a great encourager? Are you incredibly handy? Do you love to cook? Jot down a few of those areas of praise.

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

What is the greatest risk you have ever taken?

Write down three words that describe your personality.

Write down three tasks that stir your soul. What could you do for hours for free?

What vocation would you choose if you could make \$1 million doing anything?

What are the obstacles surrounding your dream job?

In His Word:

READ GENESIS 3: 17- 19

Very early in Scripture the Lord introduces the idea of work. Since the Fall of Man, we are destined to toil in order to see the fruits of our labor. The majority of our time here on earth will be consumed by work, so it's important to align yourself in a field where you derive enjoyment. **How long will we work?**

READ GENESIS 25: 19-34

What does Rebekah learn about her sons in verse 23?

Why did Esau sell his birthright? Was it his to sell?

Patience is not a virtue our generation has mastered. The media continues to inundate us with new technology, pop-up advertising, and cellular phone ads. Everywhere we turn, the world screams that we need something immediately, resulting in an instantaneous society covered in a mountain of debt.

READ MATTHEW 25: 14-30

What is a talent in the context of this passage?

Who did the Lord bless the most and why?

In reading this passage, how did you feel about those skills/gifts the Lord has entrusted to you? What have you done with the talents He has entrusted to you?

“For everyone who _____ will be given _____, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does _____, even what he has _____ be _____ from him.”(v. 29)

What can you do differently in order to better align your vocational life in a way the Lord will say, “Well done my good and faithful servant”?

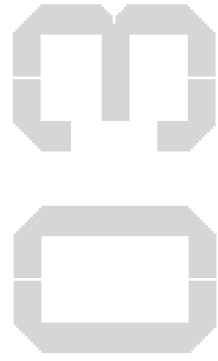
Prayer:

Turn off your phone. Write in your prayer journal. Compose a weekly schedule if you have not done so already. Pray your written prayer. At the conclusion, take a few minutes to sit before the Lord in a quiet, solitary place. Sit, and just listen.

What is the Lord calling you to do?

Meditate on the following scriptures: Joshua 1:9 and Psalm 27:14

Sit and listen some more. Walk around if you need to keep yourself from falling asleep. Write down the impressions the Lord has placed upon your heart. **Where does your hope reside? What fear seizes your soul?**



↘ WEEK THREE

READ CHAPTER 3: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR ME TO HAVE A PAUL, A BARNABAS, AND A TIMOTHY?
READ CHAPTER 15: WHO IS YOUR BARNABAS?

Verse to Remember: *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”*(Prov. 27:17).

Begin this week by thinking about those individuals who have had a positive impact in your life. These individuals could be peers, mentors, or younger individuals. **Why are these people important to you? What mannerisms of these individuals have you acquired?**

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

Who has challenged you the most in your life?

How did this person challenge you?

In the midst of a tragedy or challenging situation, who would stand beside you regardless of the situation? What do you value in that relationship?

How do you impart what you have learned to others? Who are you providing opportunities for growth?

Write a thank you note to your Paul, a thank you note to your Barnabas, and a challenging note to your Timothy.

In His Word:

READ PHILIPPIANS 1:21-26

Bill Hybels relates a story about the day before his wedding. His father had just bought a new plane, and they were testing its various capacities. After a while, they decided to see how it performed on the turf (off-road). As they approached the projected target for take-off, Hybels noticed they were not at the appropriate speed. After checking all the gauges, he caught a glimpse of the wheels, which each had about 8-10 inches of grass wedged in them. Hybels pleaded with his father to shut her down—"No problem," his dad replied. Just as Hybels saw his

life flash before him, his dad adjusted some notches, raised the flaps, and the plane just cleared the tree line. “Just like a homesick angel,” Hybels’ father commented with a smirk. **Would you describe yourself as a “homesick angel”? Why or why not?**

Why would Paul long to be in heaven?

What does Paul say?

2 Corinthians 11:28-29—

2 Corinthians 11:24—

Romans 7:15—

Romans 8:23—

Do you believe, like Paul, that regardless of his decision, it is a win to go or a win to stay and encourage others? Why or why not?

What are some possible reasons for not longing for heaven?

We all fall short of his glory (Rom. 3:23). If we're honest, the pulls of this world often draw our gaze away from Christ. Rarely do we feel as though we love Christ enough or have done enough to feel "ready" for heaven. In addition, regardless of what scripture says, there is always the fear of the unknown. If you have not already done so, clearly identify a Paul, a Barnabas, and a Timothy in order to help you in your journey.

Prayer:

Take a minute to look back in your prayer journal for the past few weeks. Place a star next to the prayer requests that have been answered. Take a moment to thank the Lord for His ability to answer your prayers even if you are not content with the answers.

Continue praising the Lord by singing your favorite hymn or praise and worship song. Do not be fearful of how you sound, merely make a joyful song (Ps. 100:2).

Write in your prayer journal. Pray your written prayer. Ask the Lord to lead you in your new relationships.



WEEK FOUR

**READ CHAPTER 4: WHAT ARE YOUR STANDARDS?
READ CHAPTER 10: WILL GOD REALLY BRING ME
A SPOUSE?**

Verse to Remember: *“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Cor. 6:18-20).*

This study will focus primarily on single individuals. Begin this week by thinking about what sort of relationship you desire to have. Think back to your first kiss or the first time someone held your hand. **How did you feel?**

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

How has your view of sex changed over the years?

What is your biggest regret in regard to sexual activity?

Where does your biggest struggle reside?

Would you say you build your house in the land of “if it feels good, go for it,” “how far is too far,” or “how pure is too pure”?

How do you allow your friends to affect your sexual standards?

In His Word:

READ SONG OF SOLOMON.

As you read the text, what struck you?

How does the beloved view her lover (1:2-4)?

How does the beloved view herself (1:5-7)?

How does her view of herself change (2:1, 3-6)?

It is amazing how love can affect individuals. Love can make men desire to slay the dragon or women to only see the good in a sleazeball. Love often blinds us to the reality of the situation. A friend's mother used to always say, "Every date is a potential mate." I would laugh. Over time though as I saw friends clinging to a relationship because of a premature physical intimacy, I began to see the wisdom in that statement.

What does the beloved say in the following verses (2:7, 3:5)?

List three ways this verse can apply to you personally.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What's occurring in verse 4:16? How does her reaction affect you?

How does her lover view her now (7:1-9)?

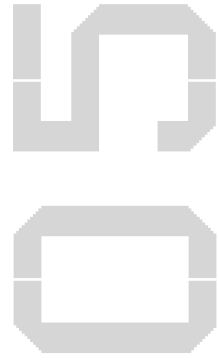
“May the wine go straight to my _____, _____
gently over lips and teeth. I _____ to my lover, and
his _____ is for me. _____, my lover, let us
_____ to the countryside, let us spend the night in
the villages.” (v. 7:9-11)

Prayer:

Whenever I read the Song of Solomon, it paints such a beautiful picture of attraction, romance, and sex. The media stunts our view of how God desires us to view sex. Thankfully, the Lord has given us clear parameters for us to enjoy sex to its fullest. We need to continue to fall back on these standards set before us. We all have fallen short of the Lord’s amazingly high standards. Sit a moment and bask in the beauty of this verse, “Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires” (3:5). Repeat this verse over and over again in your mind.

Take a moment to write down your favorite verses from the Song of Solomon.

Write in your prayer journal. Pray your written prayer. Ask the Lord to restore what the locusts have eaten and renew your body, heart, and mind so that you might give Him even more glory.



WEEK FIVE

READ CHAPTER 5: WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR IDENTITY?

READ CHAPTER 19: DO YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE IN THE AMBIGUOUS GRAY?

Verse to Remember: *“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt. 10:39).*

Begin this week by thinking about your favorite childhood memories. **What sort of family would you like to have someday?** Write down some of the characteristics you feel are needed to have a strong family unit.

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

What provisions do you add to the statement “God is enough plus ...”?

If someone were to ask who are you, what words come to mind when describing yourself?

How has your identity changed from adolescence to teenage years to your twenties?

In His Word:

READ JOHN 21:15-23

I recently finished the book *Through Gates of Splendor* by Elisabeth Elliot. In her own words, she retells the story of five young twentysomething missionaries who gave their lives in hopes of sharing the Gospel with the Aucas, a warrior Indian tribe in South America. One of the young missionaries was her first husband, Jim Elliot. These five young men sacrificed everything, including leaving their wives to raise their children for the soul purpose of feeding His sheep. **What would be the hardest thing for you to sacrifice if called into a similar situation?**

Why do you think Jesus repeats Himself in asking, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

What parallel do you see with these three questions and John 18:15-18 and 18:25-27?

In comparing those passages, it is painfully apparent the Lord is drawing a parallel to Peter's denial of Christ three times. In many ways it appears the Lord is giving Peter a second life, a new birth, and the confidence to serve as the rock in the Church. **What event in your life is hardest for you to forgive yourself?**

In reading Elliot's story, I wasn't as struck by the men's willingness to blaze their adventurous trail because in many ways the world glorifies martyrs. Granted, these men had no intention of being martyrs, nor did they seek personal fame, but I was amazed at the faith demonstrated by their widows. It seems as though it would be much harder to be left behind with only the memory of the man you once so passionately loved. Yet in the book they all resigned themselves in the beginning that this might be the end result, and after confirming their loss, they were reassured by the following verse: Matthew 10:39. **How do you feel you would react in a similar situation?**

Where does your identity reside?

Prayer:

Meditate on the following verse: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt. 10:39). **What measures do you need to take to die to self?** Write them down in your confession section of your prayer journal.

In the adoration section, write down the many magnificent attributes of God.

In the thanksgiving section, write down the multitude of reasons you are thankful to the Lord for your family. Even if your family is not “ideal,” try to highlight your blessings.

Finally, ask the Lord to help you decrease, so that He might increase.

Pray your written prayer.



WEEK SIX

READ CHAPTER 6: WHAT CLAMORS FOR YOUR ATTENTION?

READ CHAPTER 12: HOW DO YOU COMBAT EMPATHY?

READ CHAPTER 28: HOW DOES ONE WAIT ON GODS TIMING?

Verse to Remember: *“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:2-3).*

Begin this week by thinking back to the holidays when you were a child. At my house, my sister and I would fight over who would place the next day on the Advent calendar. Back in those days, the days preceding Christmas went by so slowly. As I’ve matured, time certainly goes by much more quickly. My theory is that each year is a smaller percentage of your life, thus each year seems to go by incrementally faster. **How has the aspect of time changed for you through your lifetime?**

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

Write down a rough estimate of how you spend your time over a span of a week.

What are the non-negotiables in your schedule?

What makes those items so important?

Does the allotted time for each activity match the importance to you? Why or why not?

Would God say you are a good steward of your time? Why or why not?

In His Word:

READ GENESIS 1-2:3

What did God create on each of the days?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

What was God's response after each of His creations (v. 4, 10)?

In verse 26, who is "us"?

REREAD VERSE 27.

What strikes you about the second half of that verse?

Why do you think God does that?

After creating man, God's response was a little different than the others because He added the word _____ (v. 31).

In rereading verse 2:2, you see God offers interesting insight to His view of those items that clamor for His attention. In Scripture it says, “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” The Lord implies from this statement that even though He finished one of His projects, He was going to rest “from all his work.” He didn’t choose to rest only after all of His work was complete. There was still work to do.

When do you feel content to rest? What’s your biggest struggle in that department?

Prayer:

Spend a few minutes writing down the attributes of God in relation to creating the heavens and the earth in your adoration section.

Confess those areas of your life where you have taken the Lord off His throne. What areas of your time have you claimed as your own?

Thank the Lord that His wisdom infinitely exceeds ours. Thank the Lord for those aspects of nature that bring you joy. Thank the Lord for the blessing of your time here on earth.

Ask the Lord to realign your time according to His ultimate plan.



WEEK SEVEN

READ CHAPTER 7: HOW DO YOU HANDLE ADVERSITY?

Verse to Remember: *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).*

Begin by defining the word “adversity.” **What does something need to contain in order to qualify as an adversity?**

RESPONDING TO CHAPTER 7:

What has been the biggest adversity in your life?

What did you learn about yourself through that experience?

How has your experience helped others?

Was there anything about managing that adversity that you had wished you had done differently?

How has your adversity helped shaped who you are?

In His Word:

READ JOB 38

In all of scripture, the story that typically comes to mind when one mentions the word “adversity” is Job: the one to whom God allowed Satan to administer a series of tests that would test his devotion to God. Satan strips away all of Job’s blessings to see whether he would still praise the Lord. Job endured more tragedy than most of us will experience in a lifetime, yet he refused to turn from God. In Job 38, 90 percent through the book of Job, the Lord finally breaks his silence.

How would you describe the Lord's reaction to Job's request for an explanation?

List the verses where God uses sarcasm. **Does it surprise you that God is using sarcasm? Why or why not?**

Which of God's statements or questions proved particularly poignant for you?

Scan over Job 39-41. As you can see, the Lord continues His rebuke and finally allows Job to speak briefly in Chapter 40. **How does the Lord immediately respond?**

“_____ yourself like a man; I will _____ you, and you shall _____ me. Would you discredit my justice? Would you _____ me to _____ yourself? Do you have an _____ like _____, and can your _____ thunder like his?” (v. 40:7-9)

What do we learn about God from this encounter?

What do we learn about man in comparison to God?

How does Job end up responding to God in Job 42:1-6?

Read:

Take a minute to look back in your prayer journal for the past few weeks. Place a star next to the requests that have been answered. Take a moment to thank God for His ability to answer your prayers even if you are not content with the answers.

Meditate on the following verse: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

Continue to praise the Lord by writing down the first things that come to your mind that at first seemed tragic, but now you rejoice in God’s mighty plan.

Write in your prayer journal. Pray your written prayer. Ask the Lord to continually bring Psalms 23:4 to the forefront of your mind whenever tragedy occurs in your life and in the lives of others.



WEEK EIGHT

READ CHAPTER 8: WHAT IS THE SECRET TO DETERMINING GOD'S WILL?

READ CHAPTER 26: HOW MUCH DO YOU TRUST GOD?

Verse to Remember: *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Col. 3:23).*

Begin this week by asking yourself to pinpoint times in your life that you were very confident you were in God’s will.

What made you confident?

If you cannot recall any times that you were confident you were in God's will, why is that?

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

Who has been the most faithful friend to you through your life? How did you know he/she was faithful to you?

In what areas of your life are you most challenged to remain obedient to God's Word?

Have there been any circumstances in your life, much like Joseph (Gen. 45:5), that retrospectively you understand why you had to endure hardships?

In His Word:

READ DANIEL 3

What did Nebuchadnezzar build (v. 1)?

What were his subjects commanded to do (v. 4-6)?

Who were the three individuals who did not obey the command? Why didn't they obey?

How did the three amigos reply to King Nebuchadnezzar when he asked, "Is it true, _____, _____ and _____, that you do not _____ my _____ or _____ the image of gold I have set up?" (v. 14)

Regardless of the Lord's decision to save them from the blazing furnace, their wills were resigned to His (v. 17-18).

What provisions do you place on God's will for your life?

What was the king's response (v. 19-20)?

What happened to the soldier who escorted the three amigos to the furnace (v. 22)?

What did the king see when he looked into the furnace (v. 25)?

How did the king respond (v. 28)?

“_____ be to the _____ of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his _____ and _____ his _____! They _____ in _____ and _____ the king’s command and were _____ to _____ up their _____ rather than serve or worship _____ god except their own God.”

What do we learn about God’s will from this story?

Prayer:

Take a minute to look back in your prayer journal over the past seven weeks. **How has God answered your prayers? How has God moved in your heart?** Take a moment to jot down your thoughts about how the Lord is moving in your heart.

What might He be telling you?

Write down some goals to challenge yourself in the area of obedience.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PRAY ALOUD THE FOLLOWING VERSES:

Adoration: Amos 4:13, Psalm 33:4-5, add additional praises

Confession: Psalm 51:7-13, Nehemiah 9:33, add additional confessions

Thanksgiving: Ephesians 1:19-21, Isaiah 42:5, add additional thanksgivings

Supplication: James 4:13-16, 2 Corinthians 4:4, add additional prayer requests



WEEK NINE

READ CHAPTER 20: WHAT DOES A GOOD PURSUIT
LOOK LIKE?

READ CHAPTER 29: HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE
FOUND THE RIGHT PERSON?

Verse to Remember: *“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Prov. 4:23).*

Begin this week by thinking about your favorite marital couple.

What sort of characteristics does that couple embody that you desire to emulate someday? Write down some of the characteristics.

RESPONDING TO THE CHAPTERS:

Describe how you desire to be pursued or recall a time when you were pursued well.

What is your greatest strength and challenge while in a dating relationship?

Write down a few important qualities for your future mate as well as why these qualities are important to you.

In His Word:

READ GENESIS 24

Why was it imperative for Abraham's son not to wed a woman from Canaan?

Would you feel comfortable allowing your parents to choose your future spouse? How would their desired qualities in a mate for you differ from your own? What are the pros and cons of arranged marriages?

In verses 10-13, we see Abraham's servant seeking the Lord's counsel in whom he should choose. Why do you think it was important for the servant that the chosen woman offers water to his camels too?

What do you notice about the servant's demeanor in verse 21? How would you characterize his behavior?

In reading verses 34-51, what strikes you about Laban's response to the servant's story? How might society today respond to a similar story?

Despite Laban's hospitality, the servant awoke the next morning and said, "Send me on my way to my master...Do not detain me, now that the Lord has granted success to my journey." When have you felt the Lord's leading so confidently that you spoke this boldly? How does one attain such confidence?

What did Isaac do before he married Rebekah (v. 67)? Why?

Prayer:

Take a minute to be still before the Lord. Quiet your soul. Try to block all of the ambient sounds from your ears. Meditate on the following verse, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov 3:5-6).

What areas in your life are most difficult to hand over to the Lord? Write them down in your confession section of your prayer journal.

Pray aloud the following verses:

Adoration: 1 Corinthians 8:6, add additional adoring statements about God

Confession: Deuteronomy 8:5, add additional confessions

Thanksgiving: 1 Timothy 1:15-16, add additional thanksgivings

Supplication: Psalm 69:16, add additional prayer requests



WEEK TEN

READ CHAPTER 18: DO YOU TAKE TIME TO FILL YOUR CUP?

CHAPTER 24 ANY ROOM LEFT IN YOUR MARGINS?

Verse to Remember: *“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35).*

Take a moment to jot down the greatest demands on your time as well as appropriate percentages (i.e. work 50 %, friends 10%, etc). How have these demands changed through the years? Now, write down those activities you enjoy the most and assign appropriate percentages.

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

Do you enjoy spending time alone? Why or why not?

Does spending excessive time with others infuse life into you or suck the life out of you?

Is solitude difficult to build into your schedule?

Do you have boundaries in your life to keep you from bowing before the altar of the “tyranny of the urgent?”

In His Word:

READ LUKE 10: 38-42

Which of these two sisters do you most closely identify? Why?

Notice the language in the NIV version in verse 40, “But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made”(emphasis added). **What are the “good” things in your life which distract you?**

Whenever I read this story, I find it very convicting. Too often we work for things with the wrong heart or motives. Instead of sitting at the feet of the Savior, Martha was more concerned about tidying up the external. Jesus isn't as concerned with the window dressing as He is with the state of your heart. Martha almost missed a God moment because she was too concerned about her agenda over the Lord's agenda. Take a moment to think about areas of your life where you may fall short of the Lord's agenda.

READ PSALM 127

Fill in the blanks

“Unless the Lord _____ the house, its builder labor in _____ . Unless the Lord _____ over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you _____ early and stay _____ , toiling for food to eat – for he _____ sleep to those he _____ . Sons are a _____ from the Lord, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. _____ is the man whose _____ is full of them. They will not be put to _____ when they contend with enemies in the gate.

Prayer:

Recount all of the times you've missed God appointments because you were too busy. Write an apology letter to the Lord and ask for His forgiveness.

Write down a few short rules that will keep you accountable in the future, for example “people before agenda.”

Thank the Lord for all of the people in your life that took time out of their schedule for you.

Write in your prayer journal. Pray your written prayer. Ask the Lord to give you an open heart and “to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom. 12:1-2).



WEEK ELEVEN

READ CHAPTER 17: DO YOU BELIEVE IN GODS SOVEREIGNTY?

READ CHAPTER 22: ARE YOU A GOOD STEWARD OF THE RESOURCES ENTRUSTED TO YOU?

Verse to Remember: *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).*

As a high school teacher, many questions inevitably come up, like “How could a good God allow so many bad things to happen?” or “What about the tribes that have never heard of God, how can they be sent hell?” These questions are difficult to answer for anyone regardless of how many degrees you may have next to your name. It’s challenging to explain to them that sin entered the earth thousands of years ago through their ancestors, Adam and Eve, as well as explaining that the Lord in his wisdom gave us free will. There are many consequences of our free will that are not pleasant. The questions continue about if God is omniscient and omnipotent then how (fill in your question

here)... eventually it all boils down to there are things of God we will not fully understand this side of eternity. In Christianity there is a leap, a leap of trust. All of our questions, doubts, and fears will never be answered to our complete satisfaction and thus we must trust in a Father who works for our good according to his purpose.

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

What is one question you would love to ask God?

What is the hardest thing for you to accept about Christianity?

Log your activities for one week, allotting the appropriate time for each activity. Does the allotted time reflect your priorities?

What is your greatest challenge in being a good steward of your resources?

In His Word:

READ MALACHI 3:6-12

In verse 6, God mentions his character. **What do you appreciate about this attribute of God?**

In what ways had Malachi's forefathers turned away from the Lord's decrees?

How does the Lord challenge these people in verse ten?

What are humans' fears in accepting the Lord's challenge?

What does the Lord say he will do if the people accept his challenge, "and see if I will _____ open the _____ of _____ and pour out so much _____ that you not have room enough for it" (Mal. 3:10).

Do you feel as though you trust the Lord with your whole storehouse? Why or why not?

Prayer:

Write down all the wonderful blessings the Lord has poured upon you in your prayer journal.

List all of the times you were upset about something in your life and then God in His great provision worked it out for your good.

Confess all of the areas in which you do not trust the Lord with your whole storehouse.

Read the following verses aloud reminding us of God's faithfulness:

Matthew 6:28-30

1 Corinthians 1:8-9

Psalm 89:1-2

Ask God to give you a greater understanding of how to use his resources that he has entrusted to you.



WEEK TWELVE

READ CHAPTER 13: FROZEN BY FEAR?

READ CHAPTER 16: WHATS YOUR THORN?

Verse to Remember: *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:9).*

When I was a child, one of my babysitters snuck outside my window and scared the living pants off of me. For many years following, I was always nervous around windows at night. What sort of fears emerged during your childhood? Have you overcome those fears or do those fears still seize your soul?

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

What is your biggest fear in life? What makes this particular task or situation so fearful for you?

What opportunities in life have you passed by due to fear?

Do you have a “thorn” in your life?

What blessings have emerged from this “thorn” in your life?

How has your view of your “thorn” changed through the years?

What do you think the Lord in His wisdom has tried to teach you through your “thorn?”

In His Word:

READ MATTHEW 14:22-34

This story occurs directly after the feeding of the five thousand.
Why do you think these two stories are juxtaposed?

When is the fourth watch of the night?

Why do you think the disciples were so afraid?

What did the Lord do in order to appease their fears?

Why did Peter begin to sink?

In this passage three times we see the Lord use the word “immediately.” **Why do you think this word is so important in this passage? What does it show us about Christ?**

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 12: 1- 10

Do you ever receive “visions” from the Lord?

How do you think the Lord speaks to us most commonly today? What factors keep us from hearing God’s voice?

What factors in your life keep you humbled?

How does the Lord respond to Paul when he pleaded with Him to remove his thorn? How does Paul respond?

How have you allowed the Lord to work through your weaknesses?

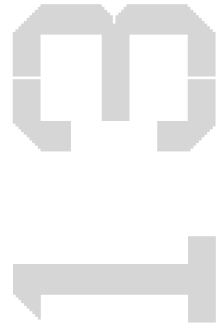
Prayer:

Look back over the verses and write down in your prayer journal all the ways in which you adore your Father in heaven.

Next confess all the ways in which you resemble the characters in these passages.

Thank the Lord for the ways in which He has blessed you, cared for you, and used you through your weaknesses.

Ask the Lord to take the blinders off, so that you may see the world through His eyes and come before the altar with a willing and obedient heart.



WEEK THIRTEEN

READ CHAPTER 9: IS FELLOWSHIP A PRIORITY FOR YOU?

READ CHAPTER 27: HOW DO YOU HANDLE LONELINESS?

Verse to Remember: *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25).*

We are not designed to live in a vacuum. Fellowship with believers enriches our souls. Bible studies have played an integral part of my spiritual development. Mike Eden’s Bible study taught me the importance of integrity – do what you say. Paul Barclay’s Bible study taught me that love knows no boundaries – open door policy. The Bonhoeffer Boys taught me the importance of accountability. For the last four years, Jason Couch and I have led a Bible study of ten to fifteen now senior boys at our school. Watching these young men grow in their relationships with Christ has been the most rewarding commitment in my

life. Investing in others will reap eternal dividends.

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

Who are your closest friends? Why?

How can you transform your experiences of loneliness to benefit others?

In His Word:

READ ACTS 2: 42-47

Many consider Pentecost the birthday of the church because the Holy Spirit was given to the believers. Soon after the Holy Spirit arrives, there is a marked difference in the believers and how they approach one another. **What are some of the attributes in these new creations?**

What drew these people together?

Have you ever felt like this in your church?

Do you think this type of community is feasible in the world today?

What might be hindrances in achieving this type of community?

Can you think of any examples that most closely mirror this type of community?

If you were to experience an Acts 2:42 community today, what would be your initial response?

What steps can you make to create this type of inviting and encouraging community?

READ 2 TIMOTHY 4: 16- 18

How does Paul respond to everyone deserting him?

What propelled Paul to continue?

While writing this letter, Paul is imprisoned awaiting his death. Paul's experiencing potentially the loneliest situation imaginable and yet his eyes are fixed on Christ. **When do you feel most lonely and how do you respond?**

Prayer:

Write a letter or two to individuals you care about thanking them for the impact they have had on your life. Use pertinent Scriptures to reinforce your point.

Write out Acts 2:42-47 on a 3 X 5 index card. Read over it many times and place it on your mirror or a place where you will see it often. Commit it to memory and pray that the Lord will give you a vision how you can create your own Acts 2:42 community.

Write in your prayer journal. Pray your written prayer.



WEEK FOURTEEN

READ CHAPTER 23: DO YOU HAVE A WHATEVER IT TAKES ATTITUDE?

READ CHAPTER 25: CRAZY TO WHOM?

Verse to Remember: *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).*

Running does not come easy to most people. Never is that as apparent as when one watches any sort of foot race, especially high school cross country races. I am always amazed at the young men and women who give their best even when their best might only mean coming in near the end of the pack. And yet, on numerous occasions I have heard from some of the “slower” kids on the team that cross country has been the most memorable experience of their high school careers because they persevered through the pain in order to achieve a goal.

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

What’s the most important thing you own?

Would you be willing to give it up if you had to? For what?

What's the hardest thing you have ever had to do? What made it so difficult?

In His Word:

READ MATTHEW 19:16-30

Why do you think Jesus told him to obey the commandments?

What was his profession?

How do you feel about the ruler's response?

Read Matthew 5:17-20. What does the Sermon on the Mount say about the commandments?

What does the ruler's response in verse 20 suggest about his understanding of the commandments?

I was taught that the word "perfect" in Scripture often means "mature and complete." **Why do you think Christ responded the way he did in verse 21?**

Why does the young man go away sad?

In verse 23 what do you make of Christ's analogy?

Would your thinking change at all if you believed an “eye of the needle” was an external door in walls surrounding ancient cities? Apparently at night, the main gates were closed and these small passage ways were used for night visitors.

What’s the hardest thing for you to give up for Jesus?

Fill in the Blanks for Philippians 4:10-13

I _____ greatly in the Lord that at last you have _____
_ your concern for me. Indeed you have been concerned, but
you had not _____ to show it. I am not saying this
because I am in _____, for I have learned to be _____
_ whatever the _____. I know what it is to be in
need, and I know what it is to have _____. I have learned
the _____ of being content in any and every situation,
whether well _____ or _____, whether _____
_ in _____ or in want. I can do _____ through
him who gives me _____.

Prayer:

Take a minute to look back in your prayer journal over the past fourteen weeks. Place a star next to the prayer requests that have been answered. How has God answered your prayers? Write in your prayer journal. Pray your written prayer. Ask the Lord to lead you in how to live a content life, neither in need nor in want.



WEEK FIFTEEN

READ CHAPTER 11: WHATS ON YOUR BOOK-SHELF?

READ CHAPTER 30: WHATS YOUR STORY?

Verse to Remember: *“Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name” (Ps. 86:10).*

To begin this week, think about the greatest storyteller you have ever known. What was it about his or her stories that was so compelling?

RESPONDING TO CHAPTERS:

Look at your bookshelf. **Do the books and magazine accurately reflect the state of your heart?**

Start keeping a list of books you would like to read or purchase that might be more in line with the state of your heart.

What's your favorite childhood story? What is it about that story that speaks to you?

If you had the opportunity to write your own obituary forty years from now, what would you like to say?

In His Word:

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2: 1-16

Why does Paul feel the need to justify his reasoning for sharing the gospel (v. 3)?

What are some of the characteristics of Paul's evangelism style (vv 4-6)?

Who do you know that models similar characteristics?

In verse 8, Paul shares that “we loved you so much that we were delighted to share you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.” He goes on in verse 9 to recount the toils they endured together. **What do we learn from Paul about evangelism?**

This passage is so compelling because Paul paints a clear picture of getting dirty in other’s lives. In Young Life I have often heard staff people say, “you need to earn the right to be heard.” Paul models that principle vividly here. He lives the old saying, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Caring for people is hard, but ultimately in order to be effective ministers of the gospel, people need to see it lived out in your daily life. **Is embracing Christ’s story the greatest longing of your heart?**

Prayer:

Take a moment to glance over your prayer journal these past fifteen weeks. **What have you learned about yourself over these weeks? What ways or patterns have you seen God move?**

Write down your goals for this next year in your journal. Not merely “spiritual” goals, but everything that your heart holds dear.

Pray aloud the following verses:

Adoration: Isaiah 45:21-22, add additional praises

Confession: Ezra 9:6, add additional confessions

Thanksgiving: Psalm 118:1, add additional thanksgivings

Supplication: 2 Chronicles 7:14, add additional prayer requests