

**THE**

**DISCOVERY**

EXPLORING GOD'S CALL ON YOUR LIFE



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## INTRODUCTION

This is the beginning of a ten week journey of discovery with God. The goal of your daily time is not to discover your future vocational task on earth, the goal is to intimately connect with God and listen to His leadership. You may use this guide as a supplement to your existing daily time with God or as your primary study guide, depending on your own personal spiritual development. Make sure you read each of the verses for every study. Sometimes the guide will send you to multiple verses and sometimes the guide will send you to only one chapter or set of verses. Either way, take the time to read the scriptures, no matter how many are listed. As the weeks progress using this guide, the study requirements will increase.

## BIBLE STUDY TIPS

You will notice that there are five study guides for each week rather than seven. This is done for two reasons: some people struggle to have a time with God each day, so if you miss a day, you will not fall behind in the guide. Also, if you are using this guide as a supplement to your existing daily time with God, you will have two days when you are not doing two studies.

Each day, begin your time with Christ open to His leadership and aware of His love and faithfulness to you. Below are some tips for your private worship times:

Pick a consistent time and place to have your private worship time/Bible study each day.

Come to your Bible study time prepared. Bring your Bible, a notebook, a pencil/pen, and highlighters if you have them.

Shut out all distractions. Turn off music, the television, and anything else that could cause "static" as you listen for the Holy Spirit to speak to you.

Open your Bible study time in prayer. Confess any unconfessed sin and clear the path of communication between you and God.

Take the time to read ALL the scripture listed and to write in your journal when asked to do so or whenever you can. Your journal does not have to be perfect. No one has to read it but you.

However, it is important that you take the time to respond in your journal because it provides you a way to apply the Bible study to your own life and track your spiritual progress.

Expect God to guide you.



# WEEK ONE

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## DAY ONE

### WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

The concept of “calling,” pursuing your “call,” or being “called” by God can be an intimidating one to try and grasp. You know you have sensed the unmistakable draw of God on your life to something “more,” something “special,” but what does that mean?

If you are like many who have surrendered publicly to God’s call, you were immediately met with questions you didn’t quite know how to answer, questions such as:

“What area of ministry are you going into? What will your first move be? Do you want to be a missionary? Are you going to preach right away or are you going to try youth ministry first? Are you going to marry a minister or be a children’s minister? What about your schooling? Are you going to change your school/direction/major? Are you going to attend seminary?”

Such questions, even from people who love and support you, can be confusing and make you feel as if you should have all the answers. Watching others go through this type of questioning may even intimidate those who would like to surrender publicly to God’s call, causing them to keep their commitment quiet, robbing them of the support and accountability that comes with public surrender.

The problem with most questions that well-meaning people ask is they seem to point to a what. What area of ministry...What first move...What position...What title...What education, etc.

The initial question, instead, for those who are just beginning to explore God’s call, is Who? And the answer is Jesus Christ! **We are not called to a position, a place, a livelihood, a category or a title. We are called to Jesus!** And guess what? We don’t have to have all the answers because He does!

Read the following scripture and see if you recognize any of the names mentioned:

#### **Matthew 4:18-20**

“As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the sea, since they were fishermen. “Follow Me,” He told them, “and I will make you fish for people!” Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.”

#### **John 1:43**

“The next day He decided to leave for Galilee. Jesus found Philip and told him, “Follow Me!”

#### **Mark 2:14**

“Then, moving on, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, “Follow Me!” So he got up and followed Him.”

These are excerpts from the “calling” stories of several disciples. Notice any similarities in these stories? What is it that Jesus says to all of these men? Does He sit down with each of them and discuss the perks and drawbacks to joining His team or give them an itinerary of what it is that they will be doing over the next few years? Does He give any information at all? No. It is not necessary because Jesus is not calling them to a task or position, but to Himself!

Jesus calls people the same way today, and it is okay not to have all the answers or even to be able to explain what it is that God is doing in your heart. As you walk with Christ, He will reveal His plans for you; and, when He does, you can keep others informed so they can rejoice with you and be a support system to you. For now, simply tell them, “My call is to follow Christ.”

### **John 1:35-51**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Describe the moment you told God that your future was His. How did you feel? What were your thoughts?

Who was the first person you told about your decision? What was their response?

What thoughts did you have in response to today’s Bible study?

What did God teach you about calling?



## DAY TWO

### THE CALL OF JESUS CHRIST TO ALL BELIEVERS - REMAIN

Review:

- We are not called to a position, a place, a livelihood, a category or a title. We are called to Jesus!

You've read some excerpts of the call Jesus issued to His disciples. Let's take a look at another call Jesus issued.

#### John 15:1-17

Who is it that Jesus is calling? What is the task for those connected to Jesus?

If the simplicity of the task overwhelms you, remain. **Stay connected to Jesus in every area of your life.** This is not a statement about salvation, it is a statement about intimacy and usefulness. **If you want to be useful in the Kingdom of God, remain intimate with Christ. Apart from Him, you can do nothing.** Yesterday the heard call was to follow Jesus. This call is similar in that it asks you to also do one thing, stay focused on and connected to Jesus.

Does a branch work to stay connected to a tree? No, it is natural for a branch to stay connected. Does a tree work to make fruit? No, the normal result of a healthy fruit tree is that it bears fruit. Some Christians spend all their energy trying to bear fruit for God and trying to be better at everything. But, the first thing a Christian must do is remain in Christ, stay intimately connected to Jesus. When you are remaining in Christ, you will bear fruit. If you get the order confused and work to bear fruit, not remain, then you can and will do nothing.

Reread John 15:9-17. Here, Jesus issues a divine call.

Whom does He call / appoint to bear fruit for Him?

To whom does He call them?

Why?

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Spend some time remembering the counsel you received when you sensed God's call. How was the concept of calling explained to you? What advice were you given?





## DAY THREE

### THE THREE-FOLD CALL OF JESUS CHRIST

Review:

- We are not called to a position, a place, a livelihood, a category, or a title. We are called to Jesus!
- Every believer that wants to be used by God for something significant should prioritize staying intimate with Christ.

#### **Matthew 11:28-30**

“Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

**Here, Jesus calls all sinners to Himself. In answering that call, sinners are offered three things: Salvation, Discipleship and Purpose in Life and Ministry.**

Look at the first sentence. What does Jesus say He will give to the weary and burdened who respond to His call? He offers rest. The rest that Jesus offers is the eternal freedom of salvation.

Look at the next sentence. What does Jesus ask of those who answer His call? He tells them to take His yoke upon them and learn from Him. In other words, He promises to guide them and offers them the opportunity to become disciples.

In the last sentence, Jesus promises that His yoke is easy and His burden light. A yoke is a neck harness worn by plow animals. Jesus’ use of this term to describe a life spent with Him implies that a life of purpose through service and ministry automatically follows an answer to His call.

**The three-fold calling of Christ must be viewed as such.** Christianity is more than the assurance of heaven through salvation, more than the promise of a personal relationship with Christ, and more than a life of fulfilling servitude and surrender. It is all three. **Though we may not fully understand the magnitude of God’s gift to us through Jesus Christ and the responsibilities that come with it when we accept Christ, all of it is ours at salvation.**

In religious circles, we often talk about calling, hearing God’s call or the call of God when referring to the setting apart of a believer for some type of “special service.” “Special service” is a phrase that we often use to describe ministry or ministry leadership. Many believers who begin to fully understand God’s call on their lives do so after having been a believer for a length of time. The believer begins to understand the need for total surrender to God’s leadership and commits himself/herself fully to God for use in His Kingdom.

This is the point when many such believers feel a need to make their commitment or surrendering to God’s will for their lives public, affording them the accountability before man to remain faithful and the support of other believers to encourage them. They understand that God’s plan for them involves service and that it is indeed special, something more than they have experienced before; so, when we present them to their church congregation, we say they have surrendered to ministry or special service, both accurate descriptions of what has happened in the believer’s heart.

However, not all believers who reach this awareness of God's call on their lives choose to make their decision public, for whatever reason. Because of this, church members witness fewer public commitments to ministry or special service than they do salvation decisions, causing some to believe that a call to ministry:

- is somehow separate from the call of salvation,
- is issued at a point in time that follows salvation,
- is something that only a select few believers receive, not only setting them apart, but somehow setting them above other believers.

**Matthew 11:25-30**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What thoughts, feelings or questions come to mind when you consider Jesus' call as three-fold?

How does it feel knowing that you are awakening to all that Jesus had in mind when He called you?

What is God teaching you about calling?

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## DAY FOUR

### ASSURANCE OF A CALL TO MINISTRY

Review:

- We are not called to a position, a place, a livelihood, a category or a title. We are called to Jesus!
- Every believer that wants to be used by God for something significant should prioritize staying intimate with Christ.
- Jesus calls ALL sinners to HIMSELF, because in HIM we find ALL that we need: Salvation, Guidance and Purpose in Life and Ministry.
- The three-fold calling of Christ must be viewed as such.
- Though we may not fully understand the magnitude of God's gift to us through Jesus Christ and the responsibilities that come with it when we accept Christ, all of it is ours at salvation.

Christianity is more than the assurance of heaven through salvation, more than the promise of a personal relationship with Christ and more than a life of fulfilling servitude and surrender. It is all three. We cannot divide the calling of Jesus Christ into smaller pieces that we may pick and choose, selecting what suits us and what we feel we can commit to. Throughout scripture, all three areas of God's call are mentioned as indivisible parts, each dependent upon and necessitating the other.

Study the following examples:

#### **Romans 8:28**

God desires for us to bring glory to Him through service or ministry. In order to do that, we must constantly become more like Christ through discipleship. In order to do that, we must be justified through salvation. Salvation is not the end, it is the beginning of God bringing glory to Himself through us, a plan that He had in mind before He created us.

#### **Romans 1:5-7**

**Through Jesus and for Jesus, we received salvation and discipleship so that God can accomplish His purposes in the world through us!** God has indeed called you to ministry! He called you to ministry when Jesus called you to Himself! It was part of His plan for you before He ever created you (Psalm 139, Jeremiah 1:5). Your journey toward ministry did not begin the day you chose to surrender to it. It began the day you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior; and through discipleship, you have now discovered part of your purpose! What an exciting time in your life!

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

How does it make you feel to know that God's call on your life has always existed?

Think of your personal spiritual journey to this point. What clues can you see now that prove God has been leading you to this point all along?





## DAY FIVE

### ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE CALL OF JESUS

Review:

- We are not called to a position, a place, a livelihood, a category or a title. We are called to Jesus!
- Every believer that wants to be used by God for something significant should prioritize staying intimate with Christ.
- Jesus calls ALL sinners to HIMSELF, because in HIM we find ALL that we need: Salvation, Guidance and Purpose in Life and Ministry.
- The three-fold calling of Christ must be viewed as such.
- Though we may not fully understand the magnitude of God's gift to us through Jesus Christ and the responsibilities that come with it when we accept Christ, all of it is ours at salvation.
- Through Jesus and for Jesus, we received salvation and discipleship so that God can accomplish His purposes in the world through us!

It's so exciting to watch God work in our lives, to know that He is leading and guiding us and to know He will use us in an eternal way if we surrender to Him. There are times in our lives that we are keenly aware of His activity and then there are times that we, for whatever reason, may feel as though we have lost a bit of the "spiritual electricity" that kept us going before. It's so important during those times of waning emotion or energy to rely not on what we feel, as it can be so fragile, but **to rely on what we know in our hearts and minds to be true: that we belong to God (John 10:27-30), that He chose us (2 Thessalonians 2:13), that He loves us (John 3:16), that He will never leave us (Matthew 28:20) and that He will accomplish His purposes in us (Philippians 1:6).**

Over the last few days, you have taken a closer look at "the call" of God and what it entails. Hopefully, you have gained a clearer vision of how God has been working in your life and are excited to see what lies ahead of you as you continue to **enjoy your salvation, grow in discipleship and minister according to God's purpose.** Hopefully, you have been surrounded by supportive people who want only to encourage you and confirm God's activity in your life; however, it is very unlikely that this is the only type of feed-back you have received following your surrender to God's will for your life.

If you have experienced discouragement, take heart! What a compliment to you! Do not allow Satan to rob you of your joy. Instead, recognize his attacks as what they are, the feeble attempts of a defeated enemy to discourage one to whom victory has been promised. (John 10:10). Look back at what God has done for you and study to prepare for the future.

One of the best ways to prepare yourself for times of spiritual attack is to keep a journal of God's activity in your life, thoughts, feelings, questions, emotions, etc. as you walk with Christ. This is exactly what you have been doing over the past week in response to your daily Bible study. Keeping such a journal will encourage you when you are feeling defeated, redirect you when you have lost your way and help you interpret God's activity in your life over time as you revisit lessons learned, scripture that has helped you and experiences that you have had.

In the future, there may be times that you doubt your call, that you have questions or that you feel discouraged. During times like those, it will be helpful to be able to look back at the fresh emotions, thoughts, insights and experiences that you are having right now at this time of surrender to God's will for your life. Make sure you are keeping careful track of such things. If you haven't put much time, energy or thought into your responses up to this point, begin now. Someday you will be thankful you did.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Taking Paul's advice, "...think of what you were when you were called (**1 Corinthians 1:26**)."  
Briefly describe your life before Christ.

How did you come to understand you needed Jesus?

Describe the events surrounding the moment you accepted Jesus into your heart and gave your life to Him.

What became yours at the moment of salvation? (Explore this question. Consider things that you may have even been unaware of at the time of your salvation.)

Describe the days immediately following your decision.

Read **2 Corinthians 5:17**. How did this occur in your life?

What is God teaching you about calling?

# WEEK TWO

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## DAY ONE FAITH AND MINISTRY

What does it mean to “surrender to ministry”? If you are like most people, then for you the word ministry brings with it images of pulpits and baptisteries, libraries and seminary, mission trips and offerings, weddings and funerals. Why? Because those who move most visibly in and around such places and events are those whom we have formally named “ministers.” We categorize them according to their duties: Minister of Music, Minister to Students, Minister of Education, Minister of Administration, Children’s Minister and of course, Pastor, which we know means Minister of Everything. Our consistent use of such titles, while certainly appropriate and generally accurate, may be what encourages questions such as, “What ministry are you going into?” when we really mean to ask, “Where is it that you are going to carry out ministry?” It may also lead some to believe that ministry is something only a select few believers are called to carry out.

Read all of **Hebrews 11**.

Write in your journal the names listed and any words or phrases that are repeated throughout.

Hebrews 11 records the stories of men and women who were used by God for His purposes. Their submission to God influenced eternity. Go back through and mentally list the best you can the occupations and/or titles held by these people. How many of them would hold the title “minister” in today’s society?

If not a title, what enabled the ministry these men and women had been given by God?

Faith.

In our churches today, we refer to the ministers on our church staffs collectively as “clergy” and to all other church members as “laymen.” The word “laymen” comes from the Greek word “Laos.” One denotation, or definition, of the word “Laos” is “a people...who are of the same stock.” The “Laos” of the church, then, are the “people of God,” making the term “layman” an affirming and empowering name that all believers should be pleased to be known by. However, most believers have never heard this definition, and, over time, for whatever reason, the word “laymen” has taken on a slightly less encouraging connotation, or implied meaning, hinting that “laymen” are, in fact, somehow less qualified to carry out ministry or they are of a lesser station than “clergy.”

By the same token, the use of the word “clergy” to describe paid ministerial church staff, to us may connote, or imply, that the person being described is somehow more qualified to carry out ministry or of a more important station than “laymen.” However, one denotation, or definition, of the word “kleros,” the Greek word from which we derive the word “clergy,” is actually “a portion of the ministry common to the apostles.” “Clergy,” then, are those who oversee a portion of the ministry that is ours as believers such as the apostles did.

So, we see the original terminology for grouping members of the body of Christ actually suggests that “clergy” are a subset of “laymen,” or a group within a group, not necessarily more qualified to carry out the ministry of all believers or more important than other believers, but instead unique in their assignment to oversee and equip the people of God, or “laymen,” for that ministry. Because of this specialization, members of the “clergy” carry a load of responsibility on their shoulders that many of us would not desire on our own, earning them respect and admiration that is certainly justifiable.

**Whether carrying out the ministry of the "clergy" or "laymen," all believers are called to the ministry of Jesus Christ, their faith enabling them to be used by Him.**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What ministerial titles exist within your church or churches? How have these titles influenced the way you view your calling?

Describe your thoughts and feelings as you read the explanation of the terms "clergy" and "laymen."

How is God speaking to you today?

What is God teaching you about ministry?

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## DAY TWO

### THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

Review:

- Whether carrying out the ministry of the “clergy” or “laymen,” all believers are called to the ministry of Jesus Christ, their faith enabling them to be used by Him.

So, what is the ministry of Jesus Christ?

#### **Luke 19:10**

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”

What was the ministry of Jesus Christ? How did He accomplish it?

#### **Hebrews 10:9-10**

#### **Hebrews 10:14**

If our ministry is the ministry of Jesus Christ, and He has already become the sacrifice for sin so that man can be reconciled to God, then what is left for us?

#### **2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

Following the event of Jesus Christ’s obedience, God has passed the torch to us, so to speak. He accomplished the means for man to be reconciled to Him, and it is ours to become His ambassadors. An ambassador has at least two major responsibilities; to communicate effectively in the stead of the party whom he/she represents and to embody the ideals and principles of the party whom he/she represents in such a way that important matters can be discussed, dealt with, and decided with clarity and confidence. An ambassador is sent with all the authority of that party, making the position of ambassador one of high honor and responsibility.

This is the ministry of every believer, given at salvation (2 Corinthians 4:1). **Though the daily tasks that each of us carry out may differ, we are all ambassadors, sent to point others to Jesus Christ and the reconciliation that He made possible.**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What are your thoughts and feelings about being a part of a ministry shared by all believers?

Reread the description of an ambassador and his/her responsibilities, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Does that describe you?

Explore your thoughts, feelings, and questions.

What is God teaching you about ministry?





## DAY THREE

### JESUS' EXAMPLE IN MINISTRY

Review:

- Whether carrying out the ministry of the “clergy” or “laymen,” all believers are called to the ministry of Jesus Christ, their faith enabling them to be used by Him.
- Though the daily tasks that each of us carry out may differ, we are all ambassadors, sent to point others to Jesus Christ and the reconciliation that He made possible.

**If we are to be Christ’s ambassadors and represent Him well in whatever daily tasks God has given us as individuals, we must follow the example He lived for all of us, in action, in word and in attitude.**

#### Philippians 2:1-11

It’s so easy to get caught up in the persona of ministry and miss the attitude of ministry that Jesus demonstrated. Sometimes, the respect and admiration we express to those whom we formally recognize as ministers, our church staff, missionaries, and a few others, can be distracting to those just beginning to explore the ministry aspect of God’s call.

Often the ministry of Jesus Christ will not earn you pats on the back and encouraging words. In fact, you may meet the same type of response Jesus did. His life was not all clamoring throngs and grateful hearts. Most often, it consisted of persecution, abuse, and betrayal. His majesty, grace, and mercy were lost on most people of His time, especially those who had known Him the longest. Yet, He continued in His ministry, setting an example of humility. He could have set Himself up to be worshipped during His lifetime, and it would not have been arrogance for Him to do so. After all, it is not arrogance to enjoy what you rightly deserve, and Jesus is God. Yet, He not only forfeited His rights as God, but made the extra effort to lower Himself even further to the position of servant and a humiliating death.

*Be careful that you never allow yourself to be motivated by the response of man, but instead focus on imitating Christ in humility, being content to be received as He was, and pleasing your Heavenly Father (Galatians 1:10).* As your church staff and others in ministry will tell you, the adoration and affections of people are fickle and fleeting, while the joy that comes from knowing that you have been obedient to God in any given matter or task is satisfying and eternal.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Reread Philippians 2:1-11. What words, phrases, or ideas stand out to you? Why?

As Christ’s ambassador, are you reflecting His attitude to those around you? To those who know you best?

To this point, what have you envisioned a life of ministry to be like? How did you expect others to respond to you? Has that changed?

What is God teaching you about ministry?





## DAY FOUR

### POWER IN MINISTRY

Review:

- Whether carrying out the ministry of the “clergy” or “laymen,” all believers are called to the ministry of Jesus Christ, their faith enabling them to be used by Him.
- Though the daily tasks that each of us carry out may differ, we are all ambassadors, sent to point others to Jesus Christ and the reconciliation that He made possible.
- If we are to be Christ’s ambassadors and represent Him well in whatever daily tasks God has given us as individuals, we must follow the example of humility He lived for all of us, in action, in word, and in attitude.

Jesus was an example to us not only in attitude, but also in action and speech.

### John 13:1-17

The power in ministry is not in title, position, or authority, but in love.

Love compels (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Love draws men toward God (John 12:32).

**If your sincere objective in ministry is to lead men to reconciliation with God, love will be your method of operation, and you will demonstrate that love in humble servitude to others as Jesus did.** There are many ways to reach goals and bring about results within the arena where God places you to carry out ministry; but powerful, effective ministry occurs when you do as Jesus did and serve others in love, perhaps “getting your hands dirty” and/or inconveniencing yourself in the process.

### Galatians 5:13

“For you are called to freedom, brothers; only don’t use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.”

Also, notice that Jesus did more than simply wash the disciples’ feet and expect them to understand the significance of what had been done for them. Although the disciples were those closest to Jesus, they were only human and, therefore, had limited knowledge of Jesus’ ministry. After all, it had not been completed yet. Jesus had to take time to explain what was happening. As Christ’s ambassadors, then, we cannot simply stop at service and expect those we serve to understand what it is that we do. The human mind cannot comprehend the things of God without help (1 Corinthians 1:18). We, as believers, have the Holy Spirit to help us understand the things of God; but those who have not yet accepted Christ are depending on us to help them understand God’s plan for them (Romans 10:14). **We must point them toward Christ verbally, taking every opportunity to explain to them the love that compels us.** If we serve without acknowledging Him who sent us, then we have possibly brought glory only to ourselves and not to God.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

As you read this account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, how willing do you think you would have been to do something like that, even if no one but you knew that God had told you to do it?

How would you have felt having Jesus wash your feet? How do you feel knowing that, figuratively speaking, He has washed your feet?

How do Jesus' actions in situations such as these challenge you? Are you a good ambassador?

What is God teaching you about ministry?

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Review:

- Whether carrying out the ministry of the “clergy” or “laymen,” all believers are called to the ministry of Jesus Christ, their faith enabling them to be used by Him.
- Though the daily tasks that each of us carry out may differ, we are all ambassadors, sent to point others to Jesus Christ and the reconciliation that He made possible.
- If we are to be Christ’s ambassadors and represent Him well in whatever daily tasks that God has given us as individuals, we must follow the example that He lived for all of us, in action, in word, and in attitude.
- If your sincere objective in ministry is to lead people to reconciliation with God, love will be your method of operation, and you will demonstrate that love in humble servitude to others as Jesus did.
- We must point people toward Christ verbally, taking every opportunity to explain to them the love that compels us.

**Being an ambassador for Christ is a full-time job.** As Christians, we are to live as Christ not only in moments of intentional ministry to others, but even in our most private moments. Sometimes, the way that we think, act, and speak in front of others when we aren’t even aware that we are being evaluated accomplishes more for or against the cause of Christ than the things that we do intentionally. Moments like these reveal our hearts to others and, for them, either confirm or deny that Jesus is who we say He is. The moments “off the stage” are moments in which profound ministry can take place. This thought should both encourage and challenge each of us.

**2 Corinthians 3:12-4:6** (Notice especially verses 3:18-4:1)

When Moses had been with God, he had to veil his face in front of his people because God’s glory had caused it to glow. Because Jesus had not yet come and the Holy Spirit was not dwelling in the hearts of all Christians, people could not interact with God on an individual level. It was a privilege reserved for a few, and those few would do business with God on behalf of others. Now that Jesus has come, there is no more “veil,” or separation from God, for believers.

When someone accepts Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives within that person’s heart. God begins to transform that person, making them more like Christ. The change God brings about proves who He is to others who witness the change, and it brings glory to Him. **Freely allowing others to witness the change that God has made in us by simply being who we ought to be as Christians all the time is as much a part of ministry as the words and deeds we schedule into our lives.** When we begin to understand this aspect of ministry, pressure that we put on ourselves to constantly “do” something for God begins to dissipate. Although you must continue to serve and direct others to Jesus with your words, you don’t have to create a sacrifice of “busyness”; you are the sacrifice when you let Christ live through you (Romans 12:1).

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Are you a full-time ambassador for Jesus? Would those who know you agree?

How does it feel to know that concentrating on becoming like Jesus is the ministry as much as it is doing "ministerial" things?

Does your intentional ministry reflect your heart? Explain.

What is God teaching you about ministry?

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# WEEK THREE

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## DAY ONE FINDING YOUR NICHE

As we've already discussed, Jesus' call to Himself is three-fold, setting those who respond apart for salvation, discipleship, and ministry. The call of Jesus is for all sinners. The ministry of Jesus Christ is to reconcile sinners to God, and the ministry of all believers is to act as ambassadors for Christ, pointing others to Christ and spreading the message of salvation. If the call is the same for all believers and the ministry is the same for all believers, what sets one believer apart from the next? The assignment!

God has uniquely created each individual with His ultimate purpose of reconciling the lost to Himself in mind, giving each a specific set of gifts, talents, abilities, passions, experiences, circumstances, and opportunities to be used for His glory. When a person becomes a believer and surrenders completely to God's will for his/her life, God begins to use those gifts, talents, abilities, passions, experiences, circumstances, and opportunities together to accomplish His purpose through that believer. When the believer begins to understand the specifics of his make-up and begins to sense God using him, he will experience a sense of fulfillment and purpose. He will begin to understand that no one else can do exactly what he was designed to do in the way that God equipped him to do it and will discover that he has been assigned a "niche" by God in which to live out the call and ministry that all believers share.

Rather than constantly differentiating between the call and ministry that all believers share and a believer's individual specific assignment, people often refer to a believer's niche, or assignment, as being his/her ministry or calling. For example, if John carries out the ministry of Jesus Christ while working as a missionary, most would say that mission work is John's "calling." If Jennifer spreads the gospel through her school campus club, most would say that the campus club is Jennifer's "ministry." **To borrow this terminology, there are as many ministries/callings as there are believers and ministries all work together to accomplish God's will and bring glory to Him. Whatever your assignment, God has equipped you to carry out your calling and ministry, and it is He who will bring about the results that He desires. Remember, your calling is not your assignment or task, your calling is to follow Jesus. Jesus will give you a task, but you focus on following Christ.**

### Psalm 139:13-16

Write it out in your journal, underlining the words or phrases that touch your heart.

### Romans 8:28-30

Write verse 29 in your journal.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

How does it feel to know that God has equipped you for a specific assignment and that you have what you need to be an effective minister for Him?





## DAY TWO

### GIVING IS A PART OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE BODY

Review:

- There are as many ministries/callings (assignments) as there are believers, and all work together to accomplish God's will and bring glory to Him.
- Whatever your assignment, God has equipped you to carry out your calling and ministry, and it is He who will bring about the results that He desires.

The assignment that God has given you does not stand alone. You are a part of a team. God has not told you to do everything to reach the world for Christ and equip other believers; He has given you a specific set of responsibilities in the world wide task. Like a large stained glass window in a historic church that has many pieces of glass to make one picture, you are one piece of the picture that God is using in the world and through your church. Every person has a task and the body functions best when each part is doing their part. Part of your mission is to serve and give faithfully to the work of the ministry. Anyone called to ministry understands that at times you may be the recipient of an offering or some financial help for a ministry that you are involved in. You should understand more than most that each dollar given to a ministry is precious and important. You should also understand that financial giving is a mandate of God to every child of God. (Malachi 3:6-12) Giving affects you, your church and the ability of the world-wide mission to continue.

#### Philippians 4:14-20

Paul was traveling and sharing the love of Christ. He worked to earn a living in some places, but in other places was supported by the churches so he could continue to establish more churches and share the love of Christ. It has always been a part of the calling of believers to financially support ministry efforts. 2 Corinthians 8:8-15 describes multiple churches working together to share in a single offering. This is the picture of the mission giving and coordination Southern Baptists have had since 1925.

Baptists participate in a method of giving to missions called the **Cooperative Program (CP)**. Each church decides what percentage of their offering each week will go toward CP missions and what part the church will keep at home. When the church sends their mission money to the Cooperative Program, the money is divided among missionaries around the world, mission work in North America, seminaries, disaster relief ministries, evangelistic efforts, church planting and much more. The Cooperative Program supports mission work in your state, around the nation and in many countries around the world. Every week when you give financially to your church, you are giving to reach and minister to people around the world.

Christians want to help with issues like world hunger, clothing, medical help, church planting and outreach ministries. But, there are so many needs, which ministries will you support? The genius of the Cooperative Program is that you can give to all of those missions each week and your offering will be combined with other people's offerings to make the gift large enough to raise up new missionaries, support existing missionaries, provide clean water for poverty stricken countries, get Bibles to the lost, start new churches and much more.

**As a part of the team that is the body of Christ, you have certain responsibilities; to carry out your assignment and to encourage the other members of your team. You have a responsibility to serve, to give, to pray and to go.**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

How does it make you feel to realize that your assignment does not stand alone and that you are a member of a larger team?

How does it make you feel to know that you are not only an ambassador of Christ, but a member of His body here on earth?

In your experience, do the members of the body of Christ behave as a team? Explain. What is your role in making sure that they do?

What is God teaching you about your assignment?

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## DAY THREE

### CONSIDERING THE SOURCE

Review:

- There are as many ministries/callings (assignments) as there are believers, and all work together to accomplish God's will and bring glory to Him.
- Whatever your assignment, God has equipped you to carry out your calling and ministry, and it is He who will bring about the results that He desires.
- As a part of the team that is the body of Christ, you have certain responsibilities; to carry out your assignment and to encourage the other members of your team.

#### 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

As you discover your assignment, you may be tempted to compare it with someone else's, estimating your place, or rank, on the spiritual ladder. Be very careful when comparing your assignment to other's assignments. Ranking assignments into some type of hierarchy takes the focus off of Christ and puts it on the assignment itself. **If Christ is at the heart of each assignment, working through each believer, then no assignment is any more/less important or essential than any other.** All assignments are a part of His plan, whether or not some carry more responsibility or naturally seem to gain more respect or honor from other believers.

#### Galatians 2:8

Back in Paul's day, ministering among the Jews, to other Jews, would seem to be a more important assignment than ministering among the Gentiles. However, Paul points out that the ministries are equal because it was God at work in both.

As human beings, we have a very bad habit of comparing ourselves to one another. This would be an acceptable practice if our ultimate goal (as believers) was to become like another believer, but it isn't. We are to become like Christ, and should compare ourselves only to Him, allowing Him to judge our progress and work and the progress and work of others. Comparing ourselves to one another is counterproductive. It causes us to become proud, judgmental, envious, and/or discouraged. It causes division in the body that hinders the ministry of Jesus Christ.

#### 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 and 1 Corinthians 3:3-9

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Are you someone that is continuously comparing yourself to others or people that you know to one another? Explain or give examples.

Are there any unimportant assignments? Explain. How does that make you feel?





## DAY FOUR

### GUARDING AGAINST PRIDE

Review:

- There are as many ministries/callings (assignments) as there are believers, and all work together to accomplish God's will and bring glory to Him.
- Whatever your assignment, God has equipped you to carry out your calling and ministry, and it is He who will bring about the results that He desires.
- As a part of the team that is the body of Christ, you have certain responsibilities; to carry out your assignment and to encourage the other members of your team.
- If Christ is at the heart of each assignment, working through each believer, then no assignment is any more/less important or essential than any other.

As you begin to discover your assignment, remember the attitude of ministry Jesus modeled. It is fine to be excited about your assignment. In fact, God wants you to be passionate about it. Paul felt that way about his assignment.

#### **1 Corinthians 9:16**

God designed your assignment just for you and you for your assignment. **It's only natural you would feel excited and confident in your assignment, but you must guard against the tendency to allow your confidence and enthusiasm to grow into pride and arrogance.**

#### **Romans 12:3**

Be careful to always carry out ministry with the goal of pointing the lost toward Christ and bringing glory to God.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Are arrogance and pride things that you tend to struggle with? Explain and/or give examples.

Does it help you to realize there are others who feel as passionate about the way that God has designed them as you do about the way that God has designed you? Explain.

How can you guard against arrogance and pride in your assignment?

What is God teaching you about your assignment?





## DAY FIVE

### GUARDING AGAINST JEALOUSY

Review:

- There are as many ministries/callings (assignments) as there are believers, and all work together to accomplish God's will and bring glory to Him.
- Whatever your assignment, God has equipped you to carry out your calling and ministry, and it is He who will bring about the results that He desires.
- As a part of the team that is the body of Christ, you have certain responsibilities; to carry out your assignment and to encourage the other members of your team.
- If Christ is at the heart of each assignment, working through each believer, then no assignment is any more/less important or essential than any other.
- It's only natural that you would feel confident in your assignment, but you must guard against the tendency to allow your confidence and enthusiasm to grow into pride and arrogance.

#### Mark 10:32-45

People who are not Christians live their life striving for power, stepping on people to get to the top and hurting others so they will look good. But, that is not the way of the follower of Christ. Christians understand that God will move and shape their life's calling and God has called each person first to serve.

As you discover your assignment, be careful also to guard against jealousy. As we've discussed, you were designed with your assignment in mind and vice versa, and there are no assignments any more/less important than any other because Christ is at the center of each, ministering through each believer. However, there are some assignments that are more visible and/or may elicit more respect and honor from the body than others.

Our human nature desires recognition and acceptance. We have already received love and acceptance from God and the opportunity for a fulfilling relationship with Him. That should be enough. **To desire more than what God gives is selfishness, and it must be overcome if we are each to be content in our own assignment. If we cannot be content in our own assignment, then our discontent could impair the overall work of the body.**

Remember the servant's attitude that Jesus demonstrated? Remember the humiliating death He died?

Reread **Philippians 2:8-9**.

How did God bring honor to Jesus? How much greater is honor given by God than honor given by man!

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Are you someone who struggles with jealousy? What desire is at the root of jealousy?

What does jealousy do to the body of Christ? Have you ever witnessed this?



# WEEK FOUR

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## DAY ONE

### FINDING YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT(S)

When you accepted Christ, God gave you at least one spiritual gift to help you carry out your assignment. **Knowing what your spiritual gift(s) is(are) will enable you to discover your assignment, understand your place in the body of Christ, and focus your energies in the days to come.**

#### 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Today, spend time filling out the **Spiritual Gifts Survey** ([www.skopos.org/the-discovery/spiritual-growth](http://www.skopos.org/the-discovery/spiritual-growth)). It will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What did you discover today? How do you feel about what you discovered?

Which of last week's lessons is going to help you the most?

What is God teaching you about yourself and about Him?

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## DAY TWO

### YOUR PERSONALITY AS A GIFT GOD WANTS TO USE

Review:

- Knowing what your spiritual gift(s) is(are) will enable you to discover your assignment, understand your place in the body of Christ, and focus your energies in the days to come.

#### Psalm 139:13-16

This is a familiar passage. However, most people think of this verse in reference to their physical make-up. Notice verse 13. It talks about God's creating our inmost being. The passage doesn't mention the physical until verse 15. Every part of you was designed by God, not just your body.

#### Ephesians 4:1-6

**Your personality is one of God's good gifts to you, and He intends for you to use it for His purposes just as He intends for you to use your physical strength and energy or your spiritual gifts.** Although we all may have our own ideas about what makes a personality "good" or "bad," there are no good or bad personalities. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, and each is useful and necessary for carrying out God's purposes. Instead of wishing for a different personality or scrutinizing the personality traits of others, we should be focused on overcoming our own inherent weaknesses and maximizing our strengths, bearing with one another in love. We have to work toward unity because we are so different from each other.

Visit [www.skopos.org/the-discovery/spiritual-growth](http://www.skopos.org/the-discovery/spiritual-growth) to view **Personality Profiles**. You may want to read this document to see if you can identify your personality traits. This Personality Profile is provided to give you an idea of how unique God makes each person.

Which personality type most fits you? Are you a combination of two or more personality types? Go back through and list in your journal the strengths and weaknesses that seem to describe you.

The personalities of the people that we read about in the Bible are as diverse as we see in the church, today. Consider the following people, taking time to look them up if necessary. Where do you think that each would fit in the Personality Profiles? Which ones do you identify most with?

- Abraham
- Moses
- Deborah
- Hannah
- David
- Solomon
- Job
- John the Baptist
- Mary and Martha
- Paul
- Barnabas
- Peter

While it is important to understand your personality and how God wired you, it's counterproductive to overanalyze your findings, use your personality as an excuse, or to rely on your personality rather than on God. Simply see your personality as a gift, take encouragement from those with your personality type in the Bible, and ask God to show you what He had in mind when He created you.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What did you discover about yourself today?

Have you ever considered your personality to be a gift? Why or why not?

Were you encouraged or discouraged as you took a closer look at your personality?

Why? What do you think that God wants you to know about your personality?

From the list above, which biblical person do you most closely resemble? How does it feel to know that someone like you is in the Bible and that God is still using their testimony to touch lives thousands of years later?

What is God teaching you?



## DAY THREE

### YOUR PASSION AS IT RELATES TO YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Review:

- Knowing what your spiritual gift(s) is(are) will enable you to discover your assignment, understand your place in the body of Christ, and focus your energies in the days to come.
- Your personality is one of God's good gifts to you, and He intends for you to use it for His purposes.

#### Matthew 28:16-20

We call this verse "The Great Commission" because it sums up what it is that we as believers are to be about. Usually, the word that we seem to place the most emphasis on is the word "go," using it as a battle cry when promoting mission opportunities or encouraging believers to be intentional in evangelism. Both are appropriate; however, we must be careful not to ignore other words in this passage that may be even more indicative of the approach believers should take in ministry.

Grammatically speaking, the active verb in this verse is "make." The phrase "therefore go" in the original text, if literally translated, means "as you go" or "going." Go, baptizing, and teaching are all participles, meaning that they tell where and how to make disciples. Making disciples is the imperative, or command, in this passage and verses. All this considered, **the message of the Great Commission is that we are to make disciples as we go by baptizing and teaching those with whom we come in contact.** We ought to take opportunities to share the love of God with the whole world, but we should also be making disciples everywhere we go each day.

A "nation" is not just a country, but a people group, whether that is a cultural group, an industrial group, a language group, a socio-economic group, etc. God wants to reconcile the world, "all nations," to Himself. To do that, God created an army of specialized believers to reach into each and every nook and cranny of the world in which we live.

What does that mean for you? Answer this question. If you could spend the rest of your life doing one thing and time and money were no object, what would you do? (Remember to put aside any obligation that you may feel to fit into a traditional ministerial role.) The answer to this question is your passion.

When you consider your call, is this passion something that you feel you must give up? Why is that? If the passion is God-honoring, it may play a key role in the assignment God has for you. In fact, it is very likely. God did not intend for all of us to line up for the same job. **There are as many specialized ministry assignments as there are believers, and each of us has been carefully created by God to fill one of those assignments.** If we ignore the way God created us, making our own modifications so that we fit into someone else's space, then we interfere with God's plan.

You may be afraid that God is calling you to preach, when you don't like to stand in front of other people. God may be calling you to preach and teaching you that God is sufficient to help you through your fear of people or God may be calling you to a completely different type of ministry that will not be in front of people. Most individuals called to ministry will not be serving on a church staff. Most people called to ministry will be serving in "typical" jobs and then also serving as a volunteer in a ministry or they will be working two jobs, one for a ministry and another in a "secular" job. Some people are called to help new churches start and their task is to continue to work in their job and spend their time outside of their job helping the new church get started. No one can tell you what your assignment will be, but you can be certain that it will involve telling others about God's love and helping Christians continue to follow Christ.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What is(are) your passion(s)?

Have you ever considered that your assignment may have much to do with your passion area? Why or why not?

How are some ways that God may be able to use your passion area to accomplish His purpose of reconciling the world to Himself? How can your passion facilitate ministry opportunities to make disciples?

What is God teaching you?

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## DAY FOUR

### WHERE TO START?

Review:

- Knowing what your spiritual gift(s) is(are) will enable you to discover your assignment, understand your place in the body of Christ, and focus your energies in the days to come.
- Your personality is one of God's good gifts to you, and He intends for you to use it for His purposes.
- The message of the Great Commission is that we are to make disciples as we go by baptizing and teaching all those with whom we come in contact.
- There are as many specialized ministry assignments as there are believers, and each of us has been carefully created by God to fill one of those assignments.

So, now what? Where to start? Right where you are!

When we began our study a few weeks ago, we took a look at the "calling" stories of a few of the disciples. There are many such stories in the Bible, and it seems that they all involve a person leaving what they know and following Jesus. In a sense, this is something we all must do, to lay aside our old ways and begin to seek Jesus above all, answering His call. However, this does not always necessitate our physically leaving our surroundings, activities, and relationships to find our niche in ministry. As a matter of fact, those believers whom Jesus asked to do so were in the minority. Those that answered Jesus' call by the thousands, at the end of the day, returned to their homes with a greater sense of purpose within their life.

#### Luke 8:26-39

When we fully understand the grace and mercy that is ours in Jesus, we may be overcome with love for Him. That love may inspire zeal that can be easily misdirected, causing us to make impulsive radical changes or rash decisions in our lives in an effort to prove our loyalty to Christ or to demonstrate the level of sacrifice we are willing to make. God doesn't necessarily require we make such changes, especially when they are the result of impulsive human logic or human wisdom. Instead, God asks for obedience and intends for us to minister right where He has placed us. Of course, if He asks you to make radical changes in your direction or environment, you are to obey; but that is not always the case, at least not at first.

**For most of us, our assignment, at least for now, involves the location, occupation, social circle, etc. that we were in when we began to sense God's call.** Over time, God may redirect, changing your assignment as you mature and your circumstances evolve. Maybe the specific future assignment that God has laid upon your heart is something that requires preparation, education, or experience that can only be obtained with the passing of time, in which case, **God will use your current assignment to prepare you for your future assignment.** But, whatever the case, do not overlook the possibility that the only drastic changes God may require of you for the moment are a drastic change of heart and an attitude of surrender regarding your future.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What changes have you made in response to God's call? Were those changes your idea or God's?

Have you been looking at God’s assignment for you as something that you will fulfill only in the future? What is God’s assignment for you right now?

How could God be using your current circumstances to prepare you for the future?

What is God teaching you?

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## DAY FIVE

### WHEN TO START?

Review:

- Knowing what your spiritual gift(s) is(are) will enable you to discover your assignment, understand your place in the body of Christ, and focus your energies in the days to come.
- Your personality is one of God's good gifts to you, and He intends for you to use it for His purposes.
- The message of the Great Commission is that we are to make disciples as we go by baptizing and teaching those with whom we come in contact.
- There are as many specialized ministry assignments as there are believers, and each of us has been carefully created by God to fill one of those assignments.
- For most of us, our assignment, at least for now, involves the location, occupation, social circle, etc. that we were in when we began to sense God's call.
- God will use your current assignment to prepare you for your future assignment.

When to start? Right now!

Some people who answer God's call believe they must complete high school, college, or even seminary before they can begin carrying out an assignment from God. This is not necessarily true. Some assignments require a certain level of education and training in order to be done properly, and some do not. And, even if a believer does need education and training to eventually carry out his/her future assignment, a call to the ministry of Jesus Christ must never be put on hold. **Take every opportunity to advance the Gospel. Even if you find yourself in transition, you must take advantage of every opportunity God gives you to be used by Him.** That's not to say that every opportunity is from God, but those that God lays on your heart and seem to line up with your make up and direction must not be pushed aside in anticipation of something that may be years yet to come.

### Acts 9:17-22

After Paul's calling and conversion, the Bible says that he began to preach immediately. Now, the idea of someone preaching immediately following a salvation experience might make some people nervous. New Christians have much to learn and should assume roles of weighty responsibility with caution and much prayer. In fact, the Bible warns believers about new converts assuming leadership roles within the body (1 Timothy 3:6). After all, no one can lead others where he/she has never been.

But, notice what Paul preached. He preached that Jesus is the Son of God. He preached only what he knew to be true by experience and allowed himself to be used of God as an example of the change that Jesus can make in a person's life. He did not assume more responsibility than what he was ready to handle, but did make himself available to be used by God as he matured. Paul did take time to be trained and equipped for ministry. He was already well trained in the scriptures as a Jewish leader, but he spent three years learning and being equipped for ministry (Galatians 1:13-24).

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What assignment has God given you? Is it an immediate assignment or something to work toward? What does He have for you right now?



# WEEK FIVE

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## DAY ONE

### PULLING YOUR OWN WEIGHT WITHIN THE BODY

As you begin the ministry of Jesus Christ in your current assignment, it is vital that you understand your responsibility not only to your call, but to the body of Christ as a whole.

**Romans 12:4-8 , 1 Corinthians 12:17-20**

**God created the church, both locally and globally, to function as a single unit with a single purpose.** There is no room for competition, jealousy, stubbornness, laziness, or arrogance within the body. Any time a human organ ceases to function in the way that it was designed to function, it affects the rest of the body. It may kill or damage other organs, put added strain on other organs, or kill the body all together. Organ malfunction is serious business within the human body. The malfunctioning of a believer within the body is just as serious.

During the course of your life, you will be tempted to malfunction as a member of the body of Christ. You may become competitive, hurting yourself and others out of a desire for recognition that can only be satisfied by God. You may become jealous, slanderous or steal the joy of fellow believers, forgetting that you have everything that you need in Christ and that His grace is sufficient for you. You may become stubborn, paralyzing the rhythm of God within the body and preventing the lost from seeing Jesus accurately, essentially attempting to replace Jesus as the head of the body. You may become lazy, forgetting the cross that is yours to carry; or arrogant, forgetting the grace that saved you when you did not deserve it. Whatever your tendency, you must guard against it, humbly assuming your place within the body, replacing your own desires with God's desires, and finding contentment in your own assignment.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Are you a team player? Explain. How do you feel when you consider your role within the larger interdependent body of Christ?

Because of our sinful natures, we are all tempted to malfunction. How do you predict that you will be tempted to do so? Explain.

How can you guard against malfunction?





## DAY TWO

### ENCOURAGING THE BODY

Review:

- God created the church, both locally and globally, to function as a single unit with a single purpose.

Your responsibility to the body of Christ goes beyond your ability to carry out your assignment without malfunction. **You are also responsible for serving and lifting up other members of the body, putting them before yourself.**

Read the following passages, paying special attention to the verbs:

**Romans 12:3**

**Romans 12:10**

**Romans 12:16**

**1 Corinthians 12:7**

**1 Corinthians 12:21-27**

**Ephesians 5:19-21**

**Galatians 5:13**

**Colossians 3:5-17**

You cannot carry out fully your responsibility to the body of Christ if you remove yourself from the church. Your assignment may require you to carry out much of your ministry outside the walls of the church. If so, be careful that you do not allow yourself to drift away from relationships within the church. If you do, you will not only deny others the support that God intends for them to receive from you, but you will also deny yourself the same support, the kind that can only be given by other believers who are simultaneously carrying out their own assignments and earnestly seeking God's direction in their lives.

Some might argue that it is more important to build relationships with the lost. Building relationships with the lost is very important, but doing so creates spiritual tension in the life of a believer. We all struggle with our sin nature, doing our best to keep it in check. The spiritual pull toward the desires of our sin nature that comes from contact with the secular world must be counteracted with a "life-line" relationship with other believers much like that described in Ecclesiastes 4:12 if we are to survive and carry out our assignments successfully and without malfunction. If there are seasons that you are not "getting much out of church," remember that often times it is not about what you get out of church, but what you can give to it.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Do you ever struggle to maintain relationships within the body? Why or why not?

As you read through the scripture passages, what instructions stood out to you as areas that you needed to work on?

Have you ever watched a believer distance themselves from the church in the name of ministry? What happened? If not, what dangers do you imagine would be associated with doing so?

Are you a life-line to other believers? How can you improve?

What is God teaching you about your responsibility to the body of Christ?

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## DAY THREE

### ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Review:

- God created the church, both locally and globally, to function as a single unit with a single purpose.
- You are responsible for serving and lifting up other members of the body, putting them before yourself.

As a member of the body of Christ, you are responsible for carrying out your assignment without malfunction and for supporting and encouraging other members of the body, receiving the same support in return. Even more than support of other believers, however, **the accountability found through relationships within the church is vitally important to a believer.** Paul thought so. Much of the New Testament is made up of letters written by Paul to young churches, encouraging them, but also correcting them when necessary, reminding them that they must answer to God and to him, as God's representative, for their actions.

#### 1 Corinthians 1:10-15

#### 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

#### 1 Corinthians 4:18-21

#### 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

If you are accountable to someone, then that person has the right to hold you responsible for your words, actions, and even your thoughts. Accountability is not comfortable, but is extremely beneficial. In theory, none of us should have trouble living as Christ. After all, God Himself knows us better than we know ourselves. He sees all, and it is He who will judge us. Such knowledge should cause us to quake at the thought of the sin that we allow into our lives, but sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes, God uses our Christian brothers and sisters to confront us about sin in our lives either through their words or in their living a Christ-like example in front of us. For some reason, the thought of answering to a "flesh and bone" representative of God can elicit a greater response from us than the mental and/or emotional awareness of God's constant presence.

**Mature believers seek accountability.** They understand their human limitations and the value of answering to another believer or believers. Because they value God and His purposes above their own, they are willing to sacrifice their pride and ask others to help them improve in various areas of their lives.

#### Proverbs 12:1

As you seek to be obedient to God's call on your life, it is important that you have a source of accountability. First, you must be accountable to a local body of believers. If you are not a member of a local church, be about the business of finding the local body of believers that God wants you to join.

Second, assume an attitude of submission toward the appointed spiritual leadership within your church. That is not to say that you are to rely on them first and foremost for your spiritual growth, but that you decide right now to receive future direction and/or words of constructive criticism without responding defensively, allowing the Holy Spirit to help you discern whether or not the direction and/or words of constructive criticism that you receive are from God.

Third, among your Christian peers, find an accountability partner or group and meet with them on a consistent, regular basis. (See the "Peer Accountability Guide" at [www.skopos.org/the-discovery/spiritual-growth](http://www.skopos.org/the-discovery/spiritual-growth) for ideas of finding and planning a consistent accountability time.)

Never allow an accountability relationship to become a crutch or a replacement for the Holy Spirit in your life. People are not perfect; God is. Always maintain your personal relationship with Him in such a way that the Holy Spirit can speak clearly to you.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

To whom are you currently accountable? Describe that relationship. Does it need to improve in any way?

How do you feel about being confronted by another believer? Why? Are there any changes in attitude that you need to make?

What steps do you believe God wants you to take in the area of accountability?

What is God teaching you?

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## DAY FOUR

### RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Review:

- God created the church, both locally and globally, to function as a single unit with a single purpose.
- You are responsible for serving and lifting up other members of the body, putting them before yourself.
- The accountability found through relationships within the body is vitally important to a believer.
- Mature believers seek accountability.

#### Philippians 3:1-14

Although Paul felt confident enough in his assignment to oversee and equip the churches that God had put in his charge, Paul was careful not to become arrogant. Although he had attained a higher level of spiritual maturity than many, he was careful not to become satisfied and complacent. Though he had lived a Christ-like example, he did not consider himself ever to have reached perfection. Paul was always striving to improve, grow, learn, and master his sinful nature.

As you discover your assignment and begin to carry it out, you will experience a fulfillment like you've never experienced before, a fulfillment that will feed your passion for God and cause you to crave Him all the more. As you look around at other believers who have not yet discovered this kind of fulfillment and passion, you may be tempted to become judgmental, not understanding why they don't seem to understand or share your enthusiasm. **While it may be that God has allowed you to mature, be careful not to become arrogant, satisfied, or complacent. Instead, like Paul, continue to compare yourself to Christ, striving to reach the standard that He set, and you will be made painfully aware each day of how far you still have to go.**

#### Acts 18:23-28

Apollos was an impressive man in his day, a believer with enthusiasm and the gift of preaching. He carried out his assignment with boldness and skill. However, he still had more to learn. He was approached by two believers with the knowledge that he needed to become an even more effective ambassador for Christ. When approached, he could have bristled, taking their instruction as an insult, hardening his heart against the information that they gave him, but he didn't. He listened, received the instruction, and became "a great help" to other believers.

As you follow the path God has laid out for you and you alone, look for those whom God may use to help you grow and mature spiritually. Their input is a gift, not an insult. God is glorified by the careful giving and humble receiving of sound spiritual doctrine, correction, and encouragement. Because it defies human nature and kills the spirit of competition that we all struggle with, such a relationship is a triumph of God because it only happens when two believers share a genuine desire to please Him. Paul had such a relationship with Timothy, calling him a "son" in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2). **Every believer needs a Paul/Timothy relationship.** Read 2 Timothy 1:3-14 to get a taste of how Paul mentored Timothy.

If you do not have a mentor, you should begin looking for a spiritual mentor, a "mother" or "father" in the faith, someone who has walked with God longer and more intimately than you. Make sure to select someone of the same gender. Spend time with them, learn from them, and open yourself up to their correction and encouragement. If you have not already established a mentoring relationship with someone, see the "**Mentoring Guide**" ([www.skopos.org/the-discovery/mentor-guides](http://www.skopos.org/the-discovery/mentor-guides)) for ideas and help establishing a mentoring relationship.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Have you ever found yourself judging those around you because they didn't seem to be experiencing God the way that you do? What's wrong with that kind of attitude?

What can you learn from Paul's attitude and approach to spiritual maturity?

When other believers give you advice, how do you respond to them? How does your heart respond? Is there anything there that you need to work on?

Do you have a Paul in your life? A Timothy? If so, are those relationships functioning the way God intended, pushing you both toward Christ?

What is God teaching you about your responsibility as a believer?

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## DAY FIVE

### CONTENTMENT IN THE JOURNEY

Review:

- God created the church, both locally and globally, to function as a single unit with a single purpose.
- You are responsible for serving and lifting up other members of the body, putting them before yourself.
- The accountability found through relationships within the body is vitally important to a believer.
- Mature believers seek accountability.
- While it may be that God has allowed you to mature, you must be careful not to become arrogant, satisfied, or complacent. Like Paul, continue to compare yourself to Christ, striving to reach the standard that He set.
- Every believer needs a Paul/Timothy relationship.

#### Luke 4:14-22

This event was early in Jesus' time of public ministry. What had Jesus been doing just a few years earlier? Carpentry. Jesus had been a carpenter.

We can read about Jesus' birth, the events that immediately followed His birth and about an incident in the temple when Jesus was a pre-teen. But we can discover relatively little about the events of His life between his birth and the time of Jesus' formal public ministry. We know only that "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke 2:52)." Most of us ignore this period of Jesus' life altogether, assuming that it is unimportant simply because we know nothing about it. However, Jesus' years as a carpenter were just as important as any others that Jesus spent on earth.

Carpentry isn't as awe-inspiring as the performance of miracles or the raising of the dead, but it was just as much a God-given assignment as His formal ministry, and Jesus remained obedient and faithful throughout, taking advantage of the opportunity to mature and grow. Had Jesus not carried out His assignment as a carpenter, but instead tried to rush God's plan, allowing Himself to become jealous of those who held important positions in the synagogue, He would probably have disqualified Himself for the assignment that makes our salvation possible. Each day Jesus was responsible to follow the Father's leadership and to fulfill the calling of that day. Some days were private preparation and some days public proclamation, but each day was important to God.

**No matter what your current assignment, it is just as important that you remain faithful, obedient, and enthusiastic in your spiritual growth now as it will be during any future assignment that God gives you.** You must remain open to God's guidance, even when you perceive His direction to be a detour from where you think you are going. Remember, you are called to Jesus, not a position, responsibility, or a title, and the rhythm of God is different in the life of each believer. **Be content and flexible enough to follow wherever He leads, taking advantage of every opportunity to grow, learn, and build relationships, trusting Him enough not to depend on what you know, but on who He is. Being faithful to study and prepare now will be very important in the years to come.**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

How easy is it for you to trust God? Give examples from your life.



# WEEK SIX

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## DAY ONE GIVING IT YOUR ALL

In religious circles, we talk a lot about letting God work through us, and He does. (Remember John 15:5-8) We talk about waiting on the Lord, and we should. We talk about spiritual growth as a process, and it is. However, we must be very careful not to use these ideas as excuses to become passive, lazy, or complacent about our own spiritual condition or our usefulness within the body. **While it is certainly true that Christ works through us to accomplish the will of God, obedience to Him does require effort on our part.** It is not always easy to follow Him, stay motivated to grow, or to continually press for the level of excellence in service that He deserves. Yet, we must do these things or the body of Christ will atrophy.

### Colossians 3:17

You may have heard this verse one hundred times, but take a closer look. It calls us to do more than “a good job for Jesus.” It calls us to do everything as Christ’s ambassadors, performing our daily tasks just as He would if they had been assigned to Him. It also calls us to view our daily activities and the details of our assignments as opportunities to demonstrate our gratitude to God for what He has done for us. Does that raise the stakes and expectation of excellence in our work? Absolutely.

### 2 Corinthians 5:1-16

In every task in any location, we should be compelled by the love of God to serve and love. We should never lack motivation to live for God.

### John 15:9-14

As you begin your assignment, guard against the tendency to simply do a better job than the next person or last person. Give it your all! Not for yourself, but for God. You may be speaking, cleaning carpet, stacking chairs, running a sound board, leading worship, painting, updating a website or thousands of other things. But with each task, serve in such a way that others would know, without question, that you belong to Jesus. Serve in such a way that Jesus would be well-represented and God sufficiently thanked for the salvation you have because of Him. Let the love of God compel you. Just as His love is excellent, strive for excellence in every area of your life.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

What excuses have you used in the past for doing or being less than God called you to do or be? Are those legitimate excuses? Explain.





## DAY TWO

### TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

Review:

- While it is certainly true that Christ works through us to accomplish the will of God, obedience to Him does require effort on our part.

**As you carry out the assignments that God gives you, it is very important that you continue to mature in every way.** The passing of time will ensure physical maturity, but it does not ensure any other kind of maturity. **There is a discipline to following Jesus and being His servant. There is study involved, self-discipline, servanthood and much more.**

#### 2 Timothy 2:14-26

**Jesus calls us to salvation and to ministry as His ambassadors, but He also calls us to become His disciples, to learn from Him.** According to Webster, “to learn” means “to acquire by study.” This definition suggests that the act of learning requires effort on the part of the student. Learning is actively taking in knowledge and making it a part of your life in such a way that it becomes yours, not watching and hoping to catch a glimpse of obvious truth here and there.

#### Philippians 2:12

This verse isn’t talking about “nailing down” your salvation and making sure that you are a Christian. Instead it questions what it is that you will do with your salvation, a gift so great and coupled with so much responsibility that you should constantly consider what it is you must be doing with that gift in order to be a good steward with what you’ve been given. **To become a disciple is to take responsibility for your own growth and maturity.**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Have you ever made excuses for lack of progress in your spiritual growth?

Do you feel the responsibility that is yours as a believer to learn from Jesus? To the point of “fear and trembling”?

On a scale from 1 to 10, rate the amount of personal effort you put forth to grow and mature personally. Explain.

What is God teaching you?





## DAY THREE

### INTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH - SOLITUDE WITH GOD

Review:

- While it is certainly true that Christ works through us to accomplish the will of God, obedience to Him does require effort on our part.
- As you carry out the assignments that God gives you, it is very important that you continue to mature in every way.
- Jesus calls us to salvation and to ministry as His ambassadors, but He also calls us to become His disciples, to learn from Him.
- To become a disciple is to take responsibility for your own growth and maturity.

**To grow and mature personally, you must actively seek God and His direction for your life.**

#### **Galatians 1:11-17**

Why did Paul disappear to Arabia? He wanted to get alone with God. He knew that surrounding himself with Christians was important, but that an intimate relationship with God was even more important. Only God can reveal Himself to us. A Christian who only learns about God through others is like a doctor who reads only textbooks, but never examines a human body. Medicine, to him is theory, not reality. Likewise, a faith filtered through the mouths of preachers and teachers is just theory until a Christian learns to put into practice the words spoken to him personally through prayer or scripture.

It is tempting sometimes to blame others for our own lack of growth or maturity. When our hearts lack the zeal that we once had for serving God, we tend to point our fingers outward instead of taking responsibility ourselves for the stagnation we are experiencing. Preachers, teachers, parents, and friends often take the brunt of our frustration, labeled in our own minds as ineffective, when the real source of our frustration lies within the choices we ourselves make concerning our obedience to Christ. We cannot expect a sermon, Bible study, retreat, camp, or program to grow us spiritually. They are man-made. They are texts to aid us in our pursuit of the Holy and Living God who deserves our personal examination. We must get alone with God and His word. Jesus saw time alone with His Father as important, we should see this as important.

#### **Luke 5:16**

#### **Luke 6:12**

#### **Luke 9:18**

#### **Luke 9:28**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Are you in the habit of leaning on people or on God to help you grow and mature? Give examples.





## DAY FOUR

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES AND PRAYER

Review:

- While it is certainly true that Christ works through us to accomplish the will of God, obedience to Him does require effort on our part.
- As you carry out the assignments that God gives you, it is very important that you continue to mature in every way.
- Jesus calls us to salvation and to ministry as His ambassadors, but He also calls us to become His disciples, to learn from Him.
- To become a disciple is to take responsibility for your own growth and maturity.
- To grow and mature personally, you must actively seek God and His direction for your life. Create times of solitude with God.

If you ever intend to lead others toward a deeper relationship with Christ, you must first make the journey yourself. After all, you cannot take others where you have never been.

If you truly intend to become intentional about your own spiritual growth and to take responsibility for it, there are tools you can use to help you along your way, tools that will help you to deepen your relationship with Christ and lead others in the same direction. We call those tools spiritual disciplines. Discipline means training. As believers, we make spiritual disciplines a permanent part of our lives to allow God to train us to become more effective ambassadors for Christ, something that doesn't always come naturally, but requires constant effort and practice.

Perhaps the most important of all spiritual disciplines is prayer. To pray is to communicate with God, submitting to His response, and it is our lifeline as believers. Prayer is a privilege and an honor.

#### **Deuteronomy 4:7**

Prayer is effective, when your heart is right.

#### **James 5:13-18**

Prayer allows us to experience Christ at work through us and to know God more intimately.

#### **John 14:8-21**

Prayer is not only a good idea. It is a vital discipline in the life of a believer. Without it, you disconnect yourself from the source of power behind your ministry. But, prayer is not a formula or a spell. Prayer is not a means to gain your own power. If you pray so you will get more, you have missed the meaning of prayer. Prayer is another way that God can speak to you, guide you and empower you, so you will be useful in ministry. If your goal is to get more for your own fame and fortune, you do not understand prayer. If your goal is to know God and be blessed, so that you can bless others, you are beginning to understand prayer. God does care for His children and He loves to bless them, but your calling is to make God famous, not for Him to make you famous.

#### **James 4:1-10**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Are you consciously aware of the fact that you are constantly in training to become an effective ambassador of Christ? Why or why not?

How do you approach prayer? What kind of attitude have you had towards it?

Did you learn anything new about prayer today or were you reminded of anything important about prayer? Explain.

Has your life up to this point demonstrated a true understanding of the importance of prayer? Does anything need to change?

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## DAY FIVE

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERCESSORY OF PRAYER

Review:

- While it is certainly true that Christ works through us to accomplish the will of God, obedience to Him does require effort on our part.
- As you carry out the assignments that God gives you, it is very important that you continue to mature in every way.
- Jesus calls us to salvation and to ministry as His ambassadors, but He also calls us to become His disciples, to learn from Him.
- To become a disciple is to take responsibility for your own growth and maturity.
- To grow and mature personally, you must actively seek God and His direction for your life.
- Prayer is not only a good idea. It is a vital discipline in the life of a believer. Without it, you disconnect yourself from the source of power behind your ministry.

Intercessory prayer is the prayer of a believer for God's will to be done in the life of another person. It is vital to the survival and successful functioning of the body of Christ. Jesus understood this. He prayed for us.

Take your time reading John 17.

Paul understood the power of intercessory prayer. He constantly requested prayer from the many churches with whom he worked. In Ephesians, he writes:

#### **Ephesians 6:18-20**

As you develop the Spiritual Discipline of prayer, make sure to make intercessory prayer a priority. In this way, you are enabling the body even when you have no physical role in a particular function. Also, make sure that you have someone praying intercessory prayer for you. God may perform a miracle for or through you because of the prayer of another believer. For example, read Acts 12:5-17.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

How do you feel knowing that Jesus prays for you?

Have you been taking intercessory prayer seriously? Why or why not?

Have you ever witnessed the power of intercessory prayer first hand? Record the instance(s).



# WEEK SEVEN

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## DAY ONE

### THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE STUDY

#### Psalm 119:1-112

Another essential Spiritual Discipline is Bible study, not just the kind that you get by attending a Bible study class or listening to a sermon, but the kind that you conduct on your own. Learning how to study your Bible on your own is a major step in taking responsibility for your own spiritual growth and a significant mark of maturity for a Christian, and it is more than simply reading a devotional verse and then reading someone else's insight on that verse. **True Bible study is seeking the heart of God for yourself within the pages of the Bible, going first to the Bible itself, reading and listening and taking in what the Holy Spirit has to say to you as an individual rather than to the masses.**

Personal Bible study is essential for several reasons:

Because the rhythm of God is different in each person's life, there will be times that God has something to say specifically to you in a way that cannot be said through another person. **Only by studying the Bible on your own will you be able to search out God's individualized plan for your life.**

As an ambassador for Christ, you are to direct others to the truth of God. **If you do not have a working knowledge of the truth and are not working toward attaining that knowledge, then you limit your own ability to connect others with God's truth.** As a person called to ministry, much of your task is pointing people to where they can find truth and answers for their life. The more you understand scripture, the more you will be able to help people.

As you grow and mature spiritually, you will become an increasing threat to the enemy. You will face trials and temptations. **Knowing your Bible and knowing how to find the answers to difficult questions in the Bible even when no one is available to help you, will help you to defend yourself against the enemy.**

It may be the thought of studying your Bible is intimidating to you. Maybe studying in general is not your thing. That's okay. The act of studying itself is not the focus of this discipline. You don't study just to say that you studied. Instead, you must learn to look at Bible study as a means of getting to know the God you love in an even more intimate way. **God can create in you the desire to study His Word.** As a matter of fact, He can teach you to love it. All you have to do is ask...over and over again, if necessary (Philippians 2:12-13).

Don't know how to study the Bible on your own? Good news. The last three weeks of this Bible study are designed to teach you how to study the Bible for yourself.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal about Psalm 119. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

As you read Psalm 119, could you identify with David? Have you ever felt the way that he felt? Explain. If not, what would it take to change the way you feel about God's Word and studying it?





## DAY TWO

### SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Review:

- True Bible study is seeking the heart of God for yourself within the pages of the Bible, going first to the Bible itself, reading and listening and taking in what the Holy Spirit has to say to you as an individual rather than to the masses.
- Only by studying the Bible on your own will you be able to search out God's individualized plan for your life.
- If you do not have a working knowledge of the truth and are not working toward attaining that knowledge, then you limit your own ability to connect others with God's truth.
- Knowing your Bible and knowing how to find the answers to difficult questions in the Bible even when no one is available to help you will help you to defend yourself against the enemy.
- God can create in you the desire to study His Word.

Scripture memory is another very important spiritual discipline. **Scripture memory is important to the life of a believer because we don't always have our Bibles handy, and the enemy doesn't take a break.** We need to be consistently "downloading" the Word of God onto our mental and spiritual "hard drives" so that the Word of God becomes a part of our own "operating system." Only by doing so can we expect to be obedient to this command that God has given us:

#### **2 Timothy 4:2**

"Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching."

Only by memorizing scripture can we expect to be able to make God-honoring choices when we are in a split-second moment of decision.

#### **Psalm 119:11**

"I have treasured Your word in my heart so that I may not sin against You."

#### **Matthew 4:1-11**

If Jesus used scripture memory to battle the enemy, it would be ridiculous for us to ignore this weapon that we have at our disposal as we fight our individual battles.

See the "**Scripture Memory Starter Pack**" ([www.skopos.org/the-discovery/spiritual-growth](http://www.skopos.org/the-discovery/spiritual-growth)) for a list of verses essential to your progress as you carry out the ministry of Jesus Christ. Use the tips for scripture memory included to begin memorizing them today. Make realistic goals for your scripture memory. You may begin memorizing one verse a month and then progress to one every two weeks. You may memorize from the **Scripture Memory Starter Pack** or select key verses that God is showing you through your private worship times or a sermon that you hear.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Do you memorize scripture? Why or why not? If not, what are some reasons for your habits to change?

Can you think of a time that you were able to use memorized scripture to help a friend or to fight off temptation? Write it down.

Can you think of a time that you needed scripture and didn't have it? What were the results of not having it?

What can you do today to begin making scripture memory a part of the Spiritual Disciplines that you practice?

What is God teaching you?

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## DAY THREE

### SHARING YOUR FAITH

Review:

- True Bible study is seeking the heart of God for yourself within the pages of the Bible, going first to the Bible itself, reading and listening and taking in what the Holy Spirit has to say to you as an individual rather than to the masses.
- Only by studying the Bible on your own will you be able to search out God's individualized plan for your life.
- If you do not have a working knowledge of the truth and are not working toward attaining that knowledge, then you limit your own ability to connect others with God's truth.
- Knowing your Bible and knowing how to find the answers to difficult questions in the Bible even when no one is available to help you, will help you to defend yourself against the enemy.
- God can create in you the desire to study His Word.
- Scripture memory is important to the life of a believer because we don't always have our Bibles handy, and the enemy doesn't take a break.

**As ambassadors for Jesus Christ, we are to spread the message of salvation to the world so that the lost can be reconciled to God.** This ministry, given to us by God, by its own definition, requires that believers consciously communicate the love of God with the world around them. Ours is not a "carrier pigeon" ministry where we never see or relate to people directly. We must be direct and intentional in communicating God's message. The Bible says that we are to do the work of an evangelist. **Advance the Gospel!**

**2 Timothy 4:5**

**Romans 10:14**

**Titus 3:1-8**

Many religions teach good works. There are many lost people in the world "serving" each other. Doing "good" to others is not, in itself, worth much in eternity, nor is it extraordinarily rare. It becomes eternally significant only when it points others toward Christ.

If you do not know how to share your faith, you must find someone to teach you. Every person called to ministry must know how to pray, how to study their Bible and how to share their faith. God has called you as an Ambassador. How can you help others experience the love and forgiveness of God, if you do not learn how to share that love?

Begin by writing out your testimony and practicing telling people how you accepted Christ. Then find someone to train you in sharing some key verses or scripture with a person that does not know Christ. No two people are exactly alike and no two people share their faith exactly alike. Find the way that fit your personality and gifts, then get busy sharing. The most effective method of evangelism is the method you actually use. Make sure you also learn how to pray with them to lead them into a relationship with Christ. Inviting someone to church is good, but inviting them into a relationship with Christ is better. If you do not know how to pray with another person and lead them into a relationship with Christ, learn it. You are going to spend the rest of your life leading others to Christ. Now is a great time to get started.

Some people feel that their call to ministry begins sometime after school, seminary or some other training. No, a call to ministry begins right now and a call to share your faith is right now.

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

How often did you share the gospel this week? This month? This year?

Are you one to become content in ministering to others rather than carrying out fully the ministry of Jesus Christ? Explain.

What are some of the reasons that you might overlook an opportunity to share your faith? How can you overcome those obstacles?

What is God teaching you?

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## DAY FOUR

### MAINTAINING RELATIONAL BALANCE

Review:

- True Bible study is seeking the heart of God for yourself within the pages of the Bible, going first to the Bible itself, reading and listening and taking in what the Holy Spirit has to say to you as an individual rather than to the masses.
- Only by studying the Bible on your own will you be able to search out God's individualized plan for your life completely.
- If you do not have a working knowledge of the truth and are not working toward attaining that knowledge, then you limit your own ability to connect others with God's truth.
- Knowing your Bible and knowing how to find the answers to difficult questions in the Bible even when no one is available to help you will help you to defend yourself against the enemy.
- God can create in you the desire to study His Word.
- Scripture memory is important to the life of a believer because we don't always have our Bibles handy, and the enemy doesn't take a break.
- As ambassadors for Jesus Christ, we are to spread the message of salvation to the world so that the lost can be reconciled to God.

**As you carry out the assignments God gives you, you must maintain a relational balance, making sure the people in your life hold the places of importance they deserve, no more, no less.** This "hierarchy" of relationship is laid out for us in the Bible.

God must remain number one in your life. He will accept no less.

#### **Matthew 10:37-39**

**It's important to remember that your assignment is not a substitute for your relationship with God.**

If God chooses that you marry, your spouse must remain second in your life.

#### **Genesis 2:22-24**

Your husband or wife will be an incredible gift from God, but they are not actually God. God is the one who meets all our needs, not our spouse. No person can ever love you, meet your needs, understand you and forgive you like God can. When you expect your spouse to meet all your needs, you are expecting them to be God.

If God chooses that you have children, they must come third in your life. Your ministry to others is nothing, if you do not minister to those whom God has given into your personal, daily charge, your family (1 Timothy 3:1-12). Your children may have many friends but, they will only have one set of parents.

#### **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

#### **Ephesians 5:21-6:4**

Other relationships must come after your relationship with God and your immediate family.

#### **Mark 12:30-31**

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

Are the relationships in your life what God wants them to be? Explain.

Are your priorities in order? How can you ensure that they remain intact in the days/years to come?

What do you think the benefit of keeping your priorities straight while carrying out your assignment might be?

What is God teaching you?

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## DAY FIVE

### INTENTIONAL PROFESSIONAL/EXPERIENTIAL GROWTH

Review:

- True Bible study is seeking the heart of God for yourself within the pages of the Bible, going first to the Bible itself, reading and listening and taking in what the Holy Spirit has to say to you as an individual rather than to the masses.
- Only by studying the Bible on your own will you be able to search out God's individualized plan for your life completely.
- If you do not have a working knowledge of the truth and are not working toward attaining that knowledge, then you limit your own ability to connect others with God's truth.
- Knowing your Bible and knowing how to find the answers to difficult questions in the Bible even when no one is available to help you will help you to defend yourself against the enemy.
- God can create in you the desire to study His Word.
- Scripture memory is important to the life of a believer because we don't always have our Bibles handy, and the enemy doesn't take a break.
- As ambassadors for Jesus Christ, we are to spread the message of salvation to the world so that the lost can be reconciled to God.
- As you carry out the assignments that God gives you, you must maintain a relational balance, making sure God remains number one in your life and that the people in your life hold the places of importance that they deserve.
- Your assignment is not a substitute for your relationship with God.

#### **Colossians 3:17 and 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12**

As we have already discussed, each of us has been given a specific assignment, an assignment that evolves as God directs. Wherever we find ourselves within that assignment, we must make sure we are good stewards of what we have been given, making the most of every opportunity that comes our way to improve the skills that enable us to carry out our individual assignments. When we take the opportunity to grow professionally and/or experientially, we equip ourselves to become even more effective ambassadors where we have been placed. When we do our best to carry out our assignment with excellence, we bring glory to God, who is excellent in everything He does.

#### **Psalm 18:30-36**

As you continue to grow and mature spiritually, be sure not to overlook opportunities to grow professionally or experientially. **Become a life-long learner who sees opportunities to grow as opportunities to enhance the gifts you are able to lay at your Savior's feet.** Some people called to ministry serve full time in a church or Christian ministry. Most people who are called to ministry serve as a volunteer in a ministry or in a bi-vocational role (you have more than one job or task, one with a church or ministry and another in a secular work environment). It does not matter if you are paid, volunteer or part-time in your vocation, your calling is full time. So, whatever the vocation God has placed you into, make sure you are working with all your might to serve God and serve people. Colossians 1:24-2:3

Take a few moments and write your thoughts, concerns, and questions in your journal. Allow the following thought suggestions to guide you.

As you consider your assignment, what professional/educational/experiential opportunities are available to you that might help you to grow and learn more about your assignment?



# WEEK EIGHT

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## DAY ONE

### A NEW PHASE OF THE JOURNEY

Today, you will begin the final three week section of this Bible study guide. You are to be commended for staying with your study so long. In all likelihood some of your peers have stopped reading and going through this guide, but you have not. Well done and keep going.

The remaining three weeks of this study will focus on teaching you specific Bible study skills and help you form your own study process. In the previous seven weeks, we have skipped around in the scripture each day. In the final three weeks you will begin to learn how to “systematically” go through a book of the Bible and study it as a unit. There is a danger to skipping around each day and not getting the context (verses around the verses that you are studying). When you are reading scripture, you should, as often as possible, read through a book or section, rather than just read one or two verses.

Over the next three weeks, you should use a paper copy of the scripture as well as this guide. You will also need to continue journaling. In fact, over the next few weeks you will be learning some additional ways to journal. Find a way that fits your personality best and do that method. At this point, make sure that any time a response is required, you record it in your journal. Try to rewrite the question to help you remember what you studied. Also, make sure to date your entries and record the scripture references.

#### 1 John 1

What stands out to you about this passage (words, phrases, ideas, anything)? Underline or highlight those things in your Bible.

**Underlining and Highlighting:** Anytime you read the Bible, you are giving the Holy Spirit an opportunity to teach you more about God, show you God’s will for your life, and help you become more like Christ. When the Holy Spirit speaks through scripture, He may cause you to notice certain parts more than others, help you remember truths you have learned or bring to your mind things in your life that relate to what you are reading. Pay close attention when this happens and note what the Holy Spirit “highlights” for you. This will help you study and keep track of what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.

Highlighting will also help you find a passage more easily in days to come. It is always a good idea to highlight verses that you might need to find quickly in the future and verses that God uses frequently and/or powerfully in your life.

#### STUDY

When reporters want to get “the whole story,” they ask questions. The six questions they always ask are; WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? WHY? and HOW? If you really want to understand the Bible, asking these same questions can help you, too.

Look back at 1 John 1. Try answering the following “digging question.”

## WHO?

What group of people is John speaking to? If you have a study Bible you can read the introduction to 1 John to get more information. This will be important to know as you read all of 1 John.

Looking for “You”: Whenever you are reading scripture, be careful not to dismiss God’s Word as being “for someone else.” The Bible is also God’s letter to you. Be sure to always read the Bible listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

## MEDITATE

Understanding scripture takes more than asking questions. It also takes meditation.

**Meditation:** To meditate on scripture means to think it over for a while, exploring your thoughts and feelings and letting the Holy Spirit speak to you. Some religions teach that meditation means that you empty your mind of any thought, but that is not Christian meditation. Christian meditation is thinking about truth, the Bible, and how that applies to your life rather than trying to think about nothing.

Try this: For a moment, think about what it would have been like to receive this letter from John the Apostle and read it for the first time. What is John trying to say to you about life with Christ?

## EVALUATE

When you study your Bible, resist the temptation to “get it done and over with.” If you don’t take a moment to reflect and evaluate, you may lose any insight that you gained.

What new thoughts did you have today during your Bible study?

Did you, at any point, think that you were connecting with or hearing from God in a special way (even the “tiniest” thing counts)? Explain. It’s always good to record these moments to look back on later.

## PRAY

Spend a few moments thanking God for loving you enough to give you His Bible. Thank Him for giving you the intelligence to study it and apply it to your life. Ask Him to continue to challenge you in the area of Bible study. Write down anything that you want to remember from this prayer time.

Think of a title for today’s Bible study that reflects what you learned personally and write the title in your journal. Previous weeks have had a title, for the next three weeks you will be creating the title. Titling your Bible study helps you evaluate what you have learned in a Bible study. It also helps you find a journal entry later when you are looking for it.



## DAY TWO

Take a moment to look back over your Bible study from yesterday. Pray and ask God to speak to you in today's Bible study, building on what you learned yesterday. As you approach your Bible study today, pray this simple request: "God teach me today more about you and how I can follow you." That simple request should be asked of God everyday for the next three weeks. Approach your study of God's word assuming that God is going to teach you about Himself and about how you can follow Him.

### 1 John 2

#### STUDY

Try answering the following "digging questions." Keep in mind that, just like yesterday, each question may have more than one answer or set of answers. Your answers can be brief (even one or two words) but make sure that you can make sense of them later.

WHO? WHAT? HOW? WHERE? WHEN? WHY?

Were any of these more difficult than others? Why?

When asking "digging questions" of scripture, it's important to remember that you will not always find obvious answers to all of them in the text. Sometimes the foundation of truth already laid in your heart and mind by previous Bible study may help you fill in the blanks. Sometimes, you will find that one or more of the questions simply do not apply to the passage you are reading. That is fine. Don't ask more of scripture than God intended. Simply use the questions as a guide.

#### MEDITATE

Take a moment to meditate on 1 John 2 again. Sometimes people read scripture too fast and don't take enough time to think about what it means and what it could mean for their life.

Write down your thoughts and concerns as they occur to you. Be honest. No one has to read your journal but you.

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what it is God wants you to learn and how you can apply it to your life. Then listen for the Holy Spirit's response.

**Listening to (and hearing) the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit may respond by bringing scripture or sermons that you have heard to your mind. He may bring words, phrases, or names to your mind. He may simply remind you of what you just read or show you areas of your life that you need to give to God. He may be completely and frustratingly silent for now. The ways that He may respond are too numerous to write here, but God does know how to speak to His children and He desires to lead us. It would be absurd to say that our main task is to follow God, but know that God is not interested in leading us. We follow, He leads.

For now, listen the best you know how and write down ANYTHING that occurs to you as you listen. Don't be afraid to write down things that may not make a lot of sense at first. Learning to discern the Holy Spirit's voice takes practice and patience. You learn God's voice like you learn other voices, by listening and spending time with them. John 10:27

**EVALUATE**

Look back over what you have written. Check what you heard against the truth you know.

**Checking against truth:** If you ever feel unsure about whether what you hear during your quiet time (or from someone else) is really from God, compare what you heard against scripture. God doesn't contradict Himself. So, when you hear something that contradicts (goes against) scripture, you can assume that it did not come from God. As you grow and mature, it will be easier to check this on your own. For now, you may need to run your questions by a GOD-SEEKING adult to see if you are on the right track.

Can you think of any verses that would contradict what you believe you heard God saying to you through the Holy Spirit? If so, write down as much as you can.

Can you think of any verses that reinforce what you heard? If so, write them down.

**PRAY**

Hearing from God is amazing! However, the relationship that you have with Him is a two-way relationship. He is waiting for your response, in words and in your actions. You must let God do more than talk, you have to let Him change you or else you have only had a brief moment of spiritual "feel good."

Pray and thank God for speaking/guiding you in your Bible study. Tell Him what it is you heard Him saying to you. Openly and honestly, respond to what He has told you. Tell Him the positive and the negative. He can take it, and besides, He already knows. Make any commitments that you need to make. Ask God to help you keep those commitments and to show you when you have a chance to use what He has taught you. Write down anything you want to remember from this prayer time.

Title today's Bible study.

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## DAY THREE

Take a moment and look back over what you have written and learned over the past couple of days. Think of what it is that you hope to get out of today's Bible study and ask God to give you that. Don't forget to pray this simple request: "God teach me today more about you and how I can follow you."

### 1 John 3

#### STUDY

WHO? WHAT? HOW? WHERE? WHEN? WHY?

Underline and/or highlight in your Bible any words or phrases that are particularly meaningful to you right now.

#### MEDITATE

Take a moment to meditate on 1 John 3.

Record your thoughts. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you. Listen for the response (Don't be afraid to wait for it.) and record it the best that you can.

Circle key words in the scripture.

**Circling:** After you have studied a passage of scripture, it's a good idea to circle words that you have found to be meaningful in your study. Some people like to circle word groups (the action words, nouns, etc.). Then, when you look back on scripture that you have studied, you will be reminded at a glance of your study, and you will be able to compare what you learned last time to what God teaches you the next time you study it.

#### EVALUATE

What did you get from your Bible study today?

How does it check out against the truth of scripture?

#### PRAY

Spend some time in open, honest prayer with God. Tell Him what you heard Him say and respond to Him. Ask for His help in making commitments and/or changes that you need to make. Spend time loving God with your words. Write down anything that you want to remember from your prayer time today.

Title your Bible study.





## DAY FOUR

Spend a moment praying about this Bible study. Pray this simple request: "God teach me today more about you and how I can follow you."

### 1 John 4

Highlight and/or underline the passage that you chose in a way that will help you study and follow what the Holy Spirit brought to your attention as you read.

### STUDY

Look for the answers to the six "digging questions" and record them below. Remember that each question may have more than one answer or set of answers.

WHO? WHAT? HOW? WHERE? WHEN? WHY?

Did what you read raise any questions in your mind? If so, write them down.

**Questioning scripture:** It is okay to ask questions, even difficult questions, about what you read in the Bible or hear taught. God doesn't want you to have a lazy mind. If you did, you might follow anything that anyone teaches you, right or wrong. Instead, research, ask hard questions and study. Acts 17:10-11 and 2 Timothy 2:15.

Write down your questions for a later time. Sometimes, when we question scripture, we find the answers right away. Sometimes we have to wait a while and come back to them as we grow, learn and seek godly counsel.

### MEDITATE

Meditate on 1 John 4 and the questions that it may have raised. If you need a review of what to include in your meditation time, look over the Bible studies from the last few days.

Explore your thoughts and feelings and record them.

### EVALUATE

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much did you put into your Bible study today?

What did you get out of it?

What do you make of that?





## DAY FIVE

Pray this simple request: "God teach me today more about you and how I can follow you."

### 1 John 5

Highlight and/or underline this passage. Review the reading skills during earlier days, if necessary.

#### STUDY

Write down any questions that you may have.

#### MEDITATE

Go back and circle the words/phrases that were important to you in your study of this passage of scripture.

#### EVALUATE

Evaluate your Bible study today. Did you rush or take the time to study?

How did it go? Why?

Does what you heard from the Holy Spirit check out against scripture?

#### PRAY

Using what you wrote down today as a guide, spend some time in open, honest prayer with God. If you need to, look at past Bible studies for instruction on how to pray. Write down what you want to remember from this prayer time.

Title your Bible study.



# WEEK NINE

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## DAY ONE

If you have not already noticed, there will be fewer and fewer instructions and plans for your study over the next two weeks. You have all the basic skills for Bible study from the previous eight weeks, it is time that you put them into practice. For the next two weeks you will be studying the book of Jeremiah. It would be a really good idea to find out some information about the time period, author and recipients of this book. Jeremiah is important to you because it is a picture of a faithful servant that lived in a time when not many people followed God. Jeremiah had many great blessings from God, but also many difficulties with some of the people around him. As you read Jeremiah, learn all you can about what God requires of those called to ministry and what it means to follow God in your calling.

Pray this simple request: "God teach me today more about you and how I can follow you."

### Jeremiah 1

Read carefully, listening to the Holy Spirit.

### STUDY

Highlight and/or underline your Bible. Write questions that you may have in your journal.

### MEDITATE

Spend time listening to the Holy Spirit. Record what you hear.

### EVALUATE

You can learn from continuing to journal that you have experiences, victories, and struggles like Jeremiah. Spend some time looking back over your journal from the past week. What do you see happening in your spiritual life?

What does God seem to be teaching you? What other patterns, trends, etc. do you notice?

### PRAY

Spend some time in open, honest prayer with God, talking with Him, responding to Him, and loving Him.

Title your Bible study.





## DAY TWO

God teach me today more about you and how I can follow you.

### Jeremiah 2

#### STUDY

Highlight and/or underline in your Bible. Record your thoughts in your journal. Write out any questions you may have.

#### MEDITATE

Meditate on today's passage, recording your thoughts.

Circle key words. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Record your thoughts in your journal.

#### EVALUATE

Evaluate today's Bible study. Do your findings check out against scripture?

#### PRAY

Spend some time in open, honest prayer. Look back at the prayer instructions from the first few days to make sure you haven't slacked off in any area of prayer over the last few days. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Title your Bible study.

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## DAY THREE

### Jeremiah 3

#### STUDY

Study your Bible the same way you did yesterday. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Here are some other study techniques to help you better understand the scripture you read: Try two of them.

1. *Read the margins/footnotes.* If you have a study Bible (a Bible that has notes and study helps), you may find some of the scripture that you read is explained either in the margins or footnotes (at the bottom of the page).
2. *Cross-reference.* Some Bibles provide cross-references for the passage you are reading. Cross-references are suggested verses for additional reading. For example, if you are reading a quote from Paul, you may read a “cross-reference” for another verse that sounds like or has the same topic as the verse you are reading. Cross-reference Bibles mark their notes in different ways. Typically there is a number or a letter near a verse and that number or letter matches the same symbol somewhere else on the page where the cross-reference verse is marked. You can check the front of your Bible to see if cross-references are included in your Bible. If so, practice using them.
3. *Use your concordance.* Many Bibles have concordances, reference sections where you can look up key words and find a list of verses dealing with that subject. Reading those verses may give you additional insight into what you are reading.
4. *Read the same passage of scripture in another translation or version.* Different versions of the Bible (i.e. Holman Christian Standard Bible, King James, New American Standard, New International Version, Contemporary English Version, The Message, etc.) use different words to express the same message. Reading several versions of the same scripture may help you think about the scripture that you read in a different way.

Journal any questions that your Bible study raises.

#### MEDITATE

Using previous Bible studies as a guide, meditate on **Jeremiah 3**. Record your thoughts in your journal.

Circle key words. Spend time listening to the Holy Spirit and record your thoughts in your journal.

#### EVALUATE

Evaluate your Bible study today. Review previous Bible studies to remind yourself of ideas for evaluation.

#### PRAY

Spend some time in open, honest prayer.

Title your Bible study.





## DAY FOUR

### Jeremiah 4

Mark your Bible.

### STUDY

Study your Bible, using all the methods that you have learned. Journal.

### MEDITATE

Meditate on your Bible study and spend time listening quietly to the Holy Spirit. Journal.

Finish marking your Bible.

### EVALUATE

Evaluate today's Bible study. Journal.

### PRAY

Spend some time in open, honest prayer. Journal.

Title your Bible study.

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## DAY FIVE

### Jeremiah 5

Mark your Bible.

#### STUDY

Study your Bible using all the methods that you have learned. Journal.

#### MEDITATE

Meditate on your Bible study and spend time listening quietly to the Holy Spirit. Journal.

Finish marking your Bible.

#### EVALUATE

Evaluate and check today's Bible study. Journal.

How are you doing studying on your own? Where do you need to improve and/or review?

#### PRAY

Spend some time in open, honest prayer. Journal.

Title your Bible study.

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# WEEK TEN

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## DAY ONE

### Jeremiah 6

Mark your Bible.

#### STUDY

Study your Bible using all the methods that you have learned.

Journal.

#### MEDITATE

Meditate on your Bible study and spend time listening quietly to the Holy Spirit. Journal.

Finish marking your Bible.

#### EVALUATE

Evaluate today's Bible study. Journal.

Review God's activity in your heart and mind. Journal.

#### PRAY

Spend some time in open, honest prayer. Journal.

Title your Bible study.

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## DAY TWO

Jeremiah 7

STUDY

MEDITATE

EVALUATE

PRAY





## DAY THREE

Jeremiah 8

STUDY

MEDITATE

EVALUATE

PRAY





## DAY FOUR

Jeremiah 9

STUDY

MEDITATE

EVALUATE

PRAY





## DAY FIVE

Before you start the last day of this Bible study, you should think about what happens tomorrow. Will you keep on studying God's word? Hopefully you are saying a loud, "yes." Continue reading through Jeremiah one chapter a day. You will find many truths about ministry and leadership as you read through some of the chapters coming up.

After you finish Jeremiah, consider starting your reading in one of these great books of the New Testament: 1 & 2 Timothy (written to a young person just beginning his ministry), any of Paul's letters, or Proverbs. Find a book to start reading and keep going. Don't skip around. Learn the context and what God was saying to that generation and what He is saying to you. Keep writing in your journal. Enjoy the journey of knowing more and more about Christ.

### Jeremiah 10

#### STUDY

#### MEDITATE

#### EVALUATE

#### PRAY





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