

GRIP GUIDE

FALL 2026



A SEASON OF DISCIPLESHIP

GRIP Discipleship

Fall 2026



When my heart is gripped by God's hands...

"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." (Luke 23:46)

then my hands will do what's on God's heart!

"I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." (John 8:29)

———— DATES ————

Aug 31 (SG)*

Sep 14

Oct 5 (SG)*

Oct 26

Nov 16 (SG)*

Dec 7

*** SG = Meet with your GRIP small group off-site**

My Grip Team

My GRIP Commitment

I am willing to take ownership of my spiritual growth by

- ☐ watching the 'Introduction to GRIP' video. I understand and agree with the commitment
- ☐ pursuing God with unhurried times alone with Him in His Word, including journaling & prayer, at least 5 days/week
- ☐ deliberately pursuing the action points God puts on my heart
- ☐ attending the 6 GRIP gatherings (~once every 3 weeks)
8/31(SG) 9/14 10/5(SG) 10/26 11/16(SG) 12/7
- ☐ setting aside 4 hours for a personal retreat to listen to God about some life action points

I am ready to commit myself to the spiritual success of one other man by

- ☐ meeting with my GRIP partner at least once between each gathering (large group or small group) for the purpose of encouragement, challenge, accountability, and prayer
- ☐ doing my part to build up the men in my small group

My sharing during small group times will be

Real (authentic, “no bologna zone”)

Focused (on topic)

Brief (so others can share too)

Come to the Cross

“Come to the Cross” is Focused Living’s way of saying, “Let’s align our hearts with the gospel.” Usually, the “Come to the Cross” devotion focuses on a gospel-rich truth. Through reflection, we give the Holy Spirit room to “hit the gospel refresh button” in our hearts so we are once again in awe of the wonders of our salvation. Then we respond through a time of heartfelt prayer.

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25

1. **What one aspect of this gospel summary grabs my heart?**
 - *What do I learn here about Jesus? Who He is and what He’s done for me?*
 - *What do I learn here about myself? Who am I and what am I being called to?*
2. **Why am I here? What’s motivating me to lean in to this season of discipleship?**

GRIP is discipleship and discipleship is relational.

We see the relational nature of discipleship throughout the New Testament. Paul is often seen expressing his affection for a brother who has walked through seasons of life with him.



The *relational qualities* Paul esteems in these men are the qualities we are praying will be experienced in your grip relationships this season.

To have genuine concern for one another

Phil 2:20 (**Timothy**) For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

Faithfully serving one another in Christ

Col 1:7 (**Epaphras**) our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf

Earnestly praying for one another

Col 4:12 (**Epaphras**) He is always wrestling for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature and fully assured in everything God wills.

Unashamed commitment to one another

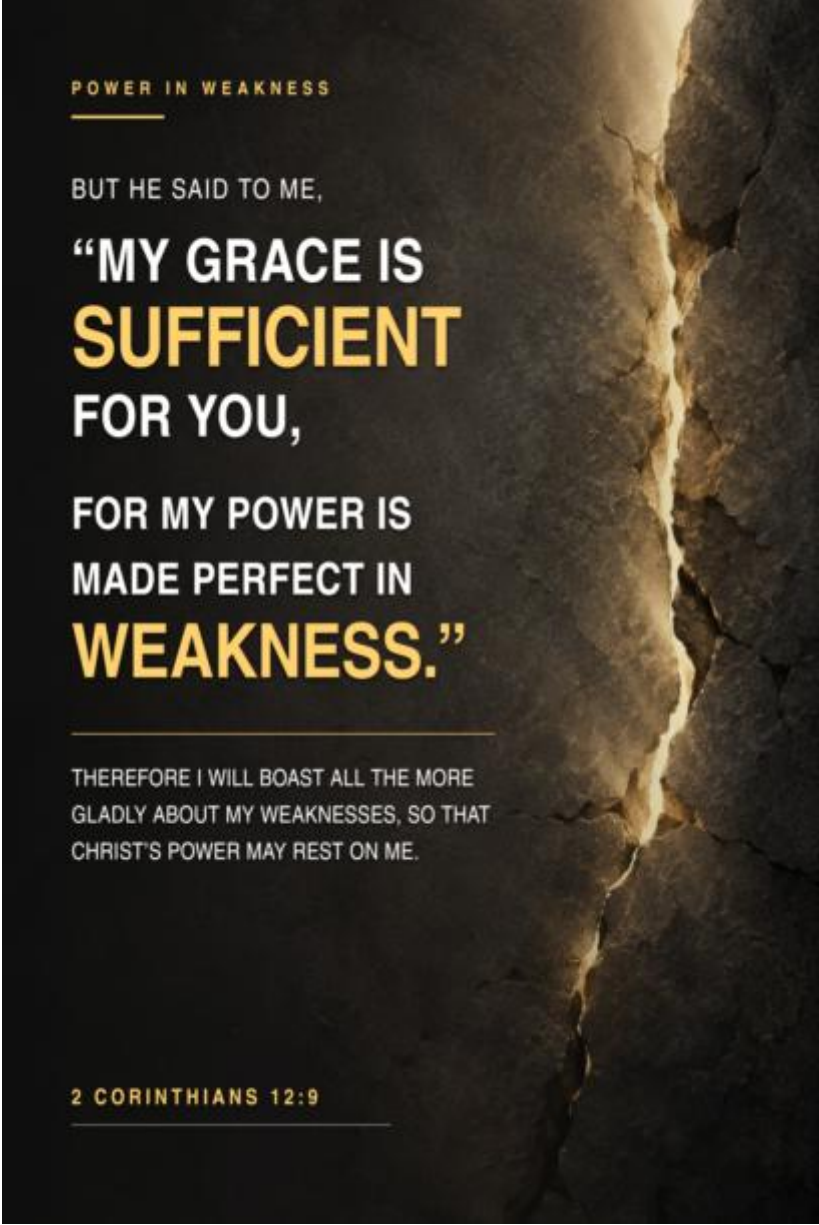
2Tim 1:16-17 (**Onesiphorus**) because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains...he diligently searched for me and found me.

Devoted Battle Buddy for one another

Phil 2:25 (**Epaphroditus**) my brother, coworker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need.

***From:** The Grip Planning Team
(David, German, Jason, Karl, Samad)*





POWER IN WEAKNESS

BUT HE SAID TO ME,

**“MY GRACE IS
SUFFICIENT
FOR YOU,**

**FOR MY POWER IS
MADE PERFECT IN
WEAKNESS.”**

THEREFORE I WILL BOAST ALL THE MORE
GLADLY ABOUT MY WEAKNESSES, SO THAT
CHRIST'S POWER MAY REST ON ME.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

Details of the Bible Reading Plan Fall 2026

SECTION 1

Galatians
(2 weeks)

Week 1 8/31

Day 1 Galatians 1:1-10

Day 2 Galatians 1:11-2:10

Day 3 Galatians 2:11-2:21

Day 4 Galatians 3:1-29

Day 5 Galatians 4:1-31

Week 2 9/7

Day 1 Galatians 5:1-15

Day 2 Galatians 5:16-26

Day 3 Galatians 6:1-18

Day 4 Digging Deeper

Day 5 Drawing Near

-
- Met with GRIP partner since last GRIP gathering
 - Ready to attend GRIP Gathering #2 on Sep. 14, 2026



SECTION 2

The Hand: Key Relationships and Key Resources (3 weeks)

Week 3 9/14 Listening to God about my Key Relationships

Day 1	God	Psalm 16 (esp:2,8-11)
Day 2	Wife (Family)	Ephesians 5:15-33 (esp:25-33)
Day 3	Children (Family)	Psalm 78:1-8
Day 4	Disciple	1Thessalonians 2:5-12
Day 5	Friend	Colossians 4:2-6

Week 4 9/21 Listening to God about my Key Resources

Day 1	Heart	Psalm 15
Day 2	Time	Ecclesiastes 3:1-11
Day 3	Health	Mark 6:30-32; Exodus 31:12-18
Day 4	Wealth	Luke 12:13-21; Hebrews 13:5-6
Day 5	Vocation	Ex 31:1-6; Col. 3:22-25; 1Peter 4:7-11

***PERSONAL RETREAT (~4 Hours)**

Week 5 9/28 Gospel Focus

Day 1	New Morning Mercies Devotion, 2 Peter 3:1-13
Day 2	Puritan Prayer: Confidence – Valley of Vision
Day 3	Worship Song: 1Tim 1:15-16; Rom 8:15; Jn 10:27-29
Day 4	Refresh
Day 5	Retreat Summary - Key 3 Action Points

- Completed my personal retreat
- Identified my Key 3 Action Points and have shared these with my GRIP partner (grip.focusedliving.com WebApp)
- Met with GRIP partner since last GRIP gathering
- Ready to attend GRIP Gathering #3 on Oct. 5, 2026

SECTION 3

Six Men, Six Journeys, One God
(3 weeks)

Week 6 10/5 Jacob

- Day 1** Genesis 28:10-22
Day 2 Genesis 29:15-30
Day 3 Genesis 32:1-21
Day 4 Genesis 32:22-32
Day 5 Genesis 35:1-15
-

Week 7 10/12 Joseph

- Day 1** Genesis 37:1-11
Day 2 Genesis 39:1-23
Day 3 Genesis 40:1-23
Day 4 Genesis 41:14-40
Day 5 Genesis 50:15-21
-

Week 8 10/19 David

- Day 1** 1Samuel 16:1-13
Day 2 1Samuel 17:32-50
Day 3 1Samuel 24:1-12
Day 4 Psalm 51
Day 5 1Chronicles 29:10-20
-

- Met with GRIP partner since last GRIP gathering
- Made progress on Action Points
- Ready to attend GRIP Gathering #4 on Oct. 26, 2026

SECTION 4

Acts
(3 weeks)

Week 9 10/26 Nehemiah

- Day 1** Nehemiah 1:1-2:10
Day 2 Nehemiah 2:11-3:32
Day 3 Nehemiah 4:1-23; 6:1-7:3
Day 4 Nehemiah 9:1-38; 10:28-39
Day 5 Nehemiah 13:1-31
-

Week 10 11/2 Peter

- Day 1** John 1:40-42; Mark 1:16-18; Luke 5:1-11
Day 2 John 1:40-42; Mark 1:16-18; Luke 5:1-11
Day 3 John 18:15-16; Mk 14:66-72; Lk 22:61; Jn 21:15-19
Day 4 Acts 2:14-47
Day 5 2Peter 1:1-15; 3:8-18
-

Week 11 11/9 Paul

- Day 1** Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1-2; Acts 22:4-5; 26:9-11;
Galatians 1:13-14; 1Timothy 1:12-17
Day 2 2Corinthians 1:3-11; 2Corinthians 11:23-12:10
Day 3 Romans 9:1-5; 1Thessalonians 1:1-10; 2:7-20
Day 4 2Timothy 3:1-4:8
Day 5 Drawing Near

- Met with GRIP partner since last GRIP gathering
- Made progress on my Key 3 Action Points
- Ready to attend GRIP Gathering #5 on Nov. 16, 2026

SECTION 5

My Diet in God's Word (3 weeks)

Week 12 11/16 My Diet in God's Word

Day 1 The Word of God in My Life

Day 2 Choosing My Diet in God's Word

Day 3 _____

Day 4 _____

Day 5 _____

Week 13 11/23 My Diet in God's Word

Day 1 _____

Day 2 _____

Day 3 Scripture Memory

Day 4 _____

Day 5 _____

Week 14 11/30 My Diet in God's Word

Day 1 _____

Day 2 _____

Day 3 _____

Day 4 Reflecting Back

Day 5 Reflecting Back & Looking Ahead

- Met with GRIP partner since last GRIP gathering
- Made progress on my Key 3 Action Points
- Ready to attend GRIP Gathering #6 on Dec. 7, 2026

Men Need a Plan

GRIP is a word that brings to mind a tight hold. God is in the business of getting a tight hold on our heart – transforming it and conforming it – so it becomes more and more like Jesus’ heart. As God grips our heart, we increasingly value the things that God values. Loving Him and loving others is at the Core of God’s heart.

As He grips our heart, God calls each of us to leverage our lives for His Kingdom. We at Focused Living believe that each Christ-following man can be leveraging his life towards at least one other man on an ongoing basis. For many of us, it’s the start of making Christ’s last command - make disciples - our first concern. So, ***who is your man and what is your plan?***

Who might God be calling you to walk alongside in this next season of your life? What potentially FATR man (Faithful, Available, Teachable, Reproducible) has God sovereignly placed in your circle (Church, Small Group, Ministry Team, Focused Living Men’s Forum, etc.)? Can you envision making yourself accessible to him, and finding a way to intentionally spur one another on toward maturity in Christ?

Figure A on the next page illustrates the variety of GRIP partnerships. Some GRIP pairings are between a spiritually more mature man (“Paul”) and a younger believer (“Timothy”). Other pairings are characterized by a mutual spiritual relationship like the Biblical example of “Barnabas and Paul” or “Onesiphorus & Paul” as they mutually strengthened each other’s hands. As a man progresses in his walk with Jesus, we strongly encourage the whole spectrum of intentional spiritual relationships in his life:

- 👉 **Timothy** – a man you are intentionally leading in discipleship
- 👉 **Barnabas / Onesiphorus** - a mutual relationship of intentionally spurring each other on
- 👉 **Paul** – a man who is intentionally discipling, mentoring, or coaching you.

The key word in all of these kinds of relationships is **intentionality**. Disciplers are intentional!

Figure B on the following page reflects the mindset of intentionally “moving a man to the right.” Followers become Disciplers and Disciplers become Leaders and Leaders grow in their domain of influence and become Kingdom Builders. In all these stages, spiritual maturity is marked by bringing others along with us.



Figure A

Moving Men to the Right



Our mission is to help each man become so **FOCUSED** on the Person of Christ that he is passionately **LIVING** out the priorities of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Figure B

Once I have a man, now what? How do I actually 'walk alongside' him in his spiritual journey? Without a plan, discipleship rarely moves from intention to reality. There are so many other things, often good things, vying for our time and energy. It's so easy to get distracted from that pursuit of investing in another man for spiritual growth and maturity. So, having some set of tracks is essential to not only starting the discipleship relationship, but fueling it forward.

GRIP is one set of tracks to assist you in your disciple-making efforts. It's not the only way. We don't even claim it's the best way. But, our way of doing it is better than your way of not doing it ☺. So, if you haven't landed on a way to intentionally relate to other men for the purpose of spiritual maturity and see them, in turn, multiply into other men, then we invite you to experience GRIP.

Bottom line: We know you have a lot of moving parts in your life. We feel called by God to champion you as a discipler and help you prioritize your obedience to the Great Commission reflected by investing in one other man!

The purpose of these pages that follow is to summarize GRIP discipleship. We want each man to enter in with his eyes wide open.



Will you catch the vision of
investing in one man each year
for the rest of your life?

The Big Picture of GRIP

*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. **Ephesians 1:7-8***

*“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **John 15:5***

*discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness... in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe... Take pains with these things... so that your progress will be evident to all. **1Timothy 4:7-15***

As we soak in the reality of God’s love and grace lavished on us, our love and affection for Him grows. We increasingly desire to put ourselves in a position, through abiding and through discipline, to let God GRIP our heart and conform us to Jesus.

Each season of GRIP discipleship emphasizes 3 core rhythms that position us for growth:

Meeting with God - Regular unhurried time alone with God in His Word and in prayer, abiding in His love and cultivating a heart that delights in obedience.

Brother to Brother – Regularly meet with at least one other brother where encouragement, challenge, and prayer can happen.

Action Points - Identify and pursue a few personal growth action points to align myself with God’s desire for the Key Relationships and Key Resources in my life.

Some men participating in GRIP are a long way down the road to owning these three core rhythms. Others have been exposed to them and perhaps have practiced them for short seasons in their past, but their lives are not currently characterized by them. For several men, these will be brand new practices. We have found that it takes three seasons of GRIP before a man personally owns the rhythms for himself AND has the motivation and confidence to actively invest in another man. Our prayer is that this GRIP season will help you gain traction in these three rhythms, and you will catch the vision of investing in one man each year for the rest of your life. Here’s a brief overview of these core rhythms.

Rhythm #1 → Meeting with God

Apart from daily reading God's Word with a posture to know Him, love Him and obey Him, it's highly unlikely that a man will ever be a vibrant disciple, let alone a disciple maker (Ps 86:11; Ps 9:10; Jn 14:21).

God has graciously given us His special revelation in the Bible (2Tim 3:16). It's the **ONLY** source where you can learn God's character, learn God's Gospel, and learn who you are in Christ. As we read the Scriptures, they read us (Heb 4:12). The Holy Spirit ministers the Word to us as we read and reflect. He corrects our wrong thinking; He convicts us of sin; He reminds us of God's promises; He speaks courage to our heart; He makes our heart happy in the Lord! Why not make this season of GRIP discipleship your "stake in the ground" for personally owning the practice of regular unhurried time alone with God in His Word every day?

Bible Reading Plan Every Christ-following man needs to "feed himself" from God's Word. This GRIP guide will help you be in God's Word at least 5 X per week.

Warning: If you already have a robust daily Bible reading plan, don't attempt to "add" the GRIP reading plan on top of that. You're missing the point! Either set aside your plan for this season, **OR** journal from your plan and journal **1 day per week** from the GRIP reading plan.

Journaling Reading God's Word is a necessary start. But reading is not the same as meeting with God. Our goal in reading is communion with God and application of what He presses into our hearts. So, we will encourage you to **process** and **respond** to what you read by journaling. This looks different for each man. If you are new to journaling, try writing out a prayer of response after your time in the Word. On the next page you'll find templates that may help guide your journaling. We'll also provide some "prime the pump" questions for each Bible passage. The point is not to answer each question, but to generate in you a curiosity about what you are reading.

Passing On To seal in God's Word, it's wise to regularly "pass on" one aspect of your time in God's Word with your family, GRIP partner, or someone else in your life. **EXPRESS** what God has **IMPRESSED** on your heart and mind.

Ways to Process the Word

Below are a few approaches to help guide your times alone with God. Experiment with these and find a way that is most meaningful to you. Remember, the goal is to commune with Him. Ask, *“Lord, I’m listening. How do You want to grip my heart today?”*

Approach 1

WHO, WHAT, SO WHAT, NOW WHAT

WHO are you addressing?

Always start your time in prayer with a reverent recognition that you are coming into the presence of your Eternal Father and Gracious Lord!

WHAT is God saying?

Slowly read the passage 2X as if you were there. Feel the emotions; sense the relationships; smell the surroundings; hear the crowds. What did this mean to the original audience? Record insights, phrases, commands & promises that stand out.

SO WHAT is God saying to you?

Stop to reflect and listen. What does it mean to you? What most grabbed your attention, stirred your mind or gripped your heart? Why?

NOW WHAT is God asking you to do?

What will you do with the truth God has illumined to you? Write out a short, heartfelt prayer to the Lord in response to this time with Him.

Approach 2

God and Me

God - As I read your Word today, what is it that You want me to learn and appreciate about You? (i.e., your character, your works, your ways)

Me - And what is it that You want me to learn today about myself and living as Your disciple?

Sacred Reading

(Lectio Divina)

Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)

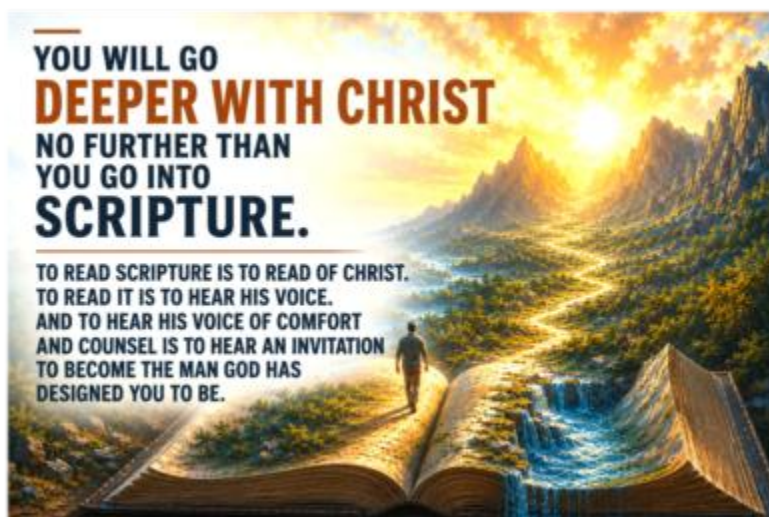
This method of processing God's Word is especially useful when reading a shorter passage of scripture. You will be reading the same passage four times and entering into a time of silence between each reading. In the beginning of practicing lectio, you may want to give yourself 4 or 5 minutes between readings.

READ (lectio) the passage slowly and pay special attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you or that you stir you emotionally in any way.

REFLECT (meditatio) by slowly rereading the passage. This time lingering over the words or phrases that feel highlighted to you. As you turn them over slowly in your mind, ask God, "What do you want me to learn from this today?" Ask, "Why this word, why here, why now?"

RESPOND (oratio) Read the passage a third time and savor it. Let it move you to place yourself before the One who has invited you to intimate dialogue. "Lord, how are you inviting me to respond?" Speak from your heart.

REST (contemplatio) Sit quietly and simply look at God, looking at you, in love. Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart. Let go of the text (mentally) and simply rest in God. Yield to His love and rest in His love.



From "Deeper" by Dane Ortlund

GRIP Scripture Memory

*My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments
within you...write them on the tablet of your heart.”*

Proverbs 7:1, 3b

*“You shall impress these words of mine on your heart and
on your soul... You shall teach them to your sons...”*

Deuteronomy 11:18,19

*“Your word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin
against You.”*

Psalms 119:11

Though we will not have any assigned scripture memory this season, hiding God’s word in your heart is a useful discipline in the life of a disciple. Some GRIP men will choose scripture memory as one of their action points for the season, choosing passages that are especially meaningful to them.

For many of us, it has been a long time since we committed anything to memory! We get it. GRIP is fueled by grace. Give yourself fully to the task, and God will be glorified and you will see growth. Use the Bible version with which you feel most comfortable. (In this guide, we will present the verses in the New American Standard version (NASB 1995) unless otherwise noted.



Rhythm #2 → Brother to Brother

So, our first GRIP rhythm is “meeting with God”. The second GRIP rhythm is “brother to brother”. In many facets of men’s lives, community is a given. Men hunt together, play & watch sports together, work out together, do home improvement projects together, serve together, etc. However, when it comes to the Christian journey, many men have never learned how to do this **together**. It’s clear from the Bible that the life God calls us to is a life in community (2Tim 2:22; 1Thes 2:8). There’s the assumption that we will be walking this journey together. Christianity is a team sport. No contact, no impact. We must give at least a few men access to our everyday lives (2Tim 3:10).

And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him (Mk 3:14)...that I may be encouraged together with you...each of us by the other’s faith (Rom 1:12)...my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier (Phil 2:25)...Bear one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)...Encourage one another day after day (Heb 3:13)...Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ (1Cor 11:1)...walk according to the pattern you have in us (Phil 3:17) ...pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (2Tim 2:22).

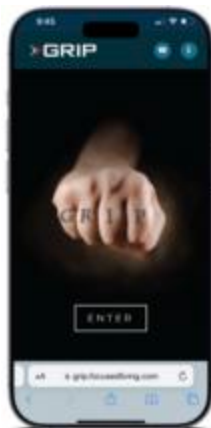
Meet between GRIP gatherings The backbone of GRIP is the face-to-face meeting of GRIP partners where they encourage, challenge, and pray for each other. Since the rhythm of GRIP gatherings is every three weeks, we expect that each GRIP partnership (pairing/triad) will meet face to face at least once between large gatherings. **The most successful GRIP partnerships find a way to connect every week.** Weekly phone calls also go a long way.

Share Action Points During the first month or so of GRIP you will have chosen “3 Key” action points. Here’s the sense behind action points: “God’s calling me to get traction in these areas and with His help I expect to make progress over the course of this season of discipleship.” It’s vital that you **share your action points** (i.e. steps of obedience) with your GRIP partner. In fact, discussing them may help you further refine them. Our WebApp makes sharing these easy: grip.focusedliving.com. Once shared, you and your partner can strengthen each other’s hands to follow through. Each action point becomes an accountability question that your GRIP partner can ask you.

Pray With your GRIP partner’s action points in hand, now you have specific ways to lift each other up in prayer. Make it a habit of praying for each other every time you meet.

What To Do When We Meet as GRIP Partners?

No contact, no impact! There is no substitute for meeting nose to nose at least every other week to assess God's current grip on our heart. Weekly is best. This face-to-face time could be while working on a project together, driving to a ministry appointment, doing an errand together, enjoying some recreation, taking a prayer walk, sharing a meal together, etc. How you get together is totally up to you. It will probably be dictated by convenience and the rhythm of your lives. Just think of how many different situations, places, and times Jesus met His disciples! For those first disciples, class was always in session!



A conversation is an organic process. Most of the time it's natural to start a conversation with some small talk. Frequently there is a "hot off the press" situation or event that begs some attention. Any meaningful conversation between friends includes these facets. As GRIP partners, we want you to deliberately **add a few more elements to the typical conversation.**

- ✎ **Pass On Word** – Make it a habit to pass on one truth or insight that God has recently impressed on your heart. *What's God been impressing on you from His Word?* Having your GRIP Guide journal handy when you meet will be helpful.
- ✎ **Accountability** – Since the main purpose of GRIP is to help each other make progress in our spiritual journey **so we can love others better**, it's wise to give each other permission to poke to see how we are really doing. With your partner's Action Point list ("Key 3") at hand, ask questions like, *In what tangible way have you prioritized this action step? What progress did you make on this action step? What's going well? What else is going well? What can you improve? Where do you need help?* Listen, encourage, challenge, celebrate, and remind each other of the gospel.
- ✎ **Pray** – No prayer...no power! Always set aside some minutes to pray for each other in both successes and failures. If you meet for lunch, why not take a short prayer walk around the block and "pray in" what you have just discussed?

Rhythm #3 → Action Points

The third GRIP rhythm is identifying and pursuing a few “Action Points” that God will use to get an even better grip on our hearts. Early on in this GRIP discipleship season, we are asking you to set aside a four (4) hour block of time for a **personal retreat to hear from God**.

For some, this extended time with God will be new and unfamiliar. No worries! We’ll help. We have a whole section in the GRIP Guide to assist you. One result of this extended time of listening to God will be a short list of “Action Points” that God has put on your heart.

Listen and Reflect As you slow down in God’s presence to consider your life, we will provide a grid to help you think through the **KEY RELATIONSHIPS** and the **KEY RESOURCES** God has given you.

Key Relationships



Key Resources



We use the 5 fingers of a hand to represent these Key Relationships and Key Resources. An action point is the answer to this question: *As I abide in Christ, what action can I pursue to better align myself with God’s desire for this Key Relationship or this Key Resource?*

It won’t take much pondering before you are aware of areas that need growth: attitudes, character areas, disciplines, sin habits, intentions never acted upon, etc.

Write Down Your “Key 3” Action Points As a result of this reflective time, you will write down a few action points. These actions points represent specific ways to obey God in this season of your life. Each action point pursued will, directly or indirectly, lead you to better love God and better love others in your life. We suggest that you choose no more than 3 action points to focus on during the season.

My HAND: Key Relationships

We have chosen the 'Hand' graphic because it is a useful way to visualize God's grip on our heart in order to live out His priorities as God's hands. In Matthew 22:34-40 Jesus teaches that the two greatest commands are to **love God** and **love others**. The thumb pointing upward represents our vertical love relationship with the Father. Likewise, the other four fingers pointing horizontally represent the priority relationships in which the Lord has called us to invest His love. The fingers on the HAND become a simple way to bring focus to our living and to bring our hearts more in line with what God values. Discipleship, then, is helping each other grow to become disciplined in living the relationships God values in the power of the Holy Spirit.



Depending on your season of life, God will call you to prioritize slightly different relationships. The Thumb (**God**), Ring (**Believer**) and Pinky (**Unbeliever**) fingers are non-negotiable relationships central to your life as a Christ-follower. The Pointer and Middle fingers represent family or family-like relationships. These vary from person to person and even vary in different seasons of life. If you are married, the Pointer finger (**Wife**) is non-negotiable, as is the Middle finger (**Children**) if you have children still living under your roof. Again, these are starting points for focusing your relational investments in this season of your life. Other examples of Key Relationships might be girlfriend, fiancé, siblings, aging parents, nieces, nephews, grandkids, roommate, etc.

One way to get a jump on GRIP is to answer this question: *In this season of my life, who are my Key HAND Relationships?*

Write their names on the graphic below.



**My HAND Relationships
in this season of my life**

My HAND: Key Resources

Most of us don't need convincing that these Hand relationships are Biblical, non-negotiable priorities of the Father. Though relationships are primary on God's heart, He has also given us stewardship over some key resources as well. Specifically, he wants us to manage our **heart**, our **time**, our **health**, our **wealth**, and our **vocation**. God's design is that our good stewardship of these resources will help us keep a good grip on our key relationships.

However, we have an enemy who longs to see us fail (2Cor 2:11). When one or more of these resource areas is out of alignment or neglected as to become unhealthy, then we start losing our grip on one or more of our key relationships. Wise GRIP partners will periodically help each other to examine these stewardship areas, especially if any key relationships seem to be stalled.



Here are a few examples of how poor stewardship of our Key Resources can have an adverse effect on our Key Relationships.

- If I am giving in to the temptation of porn (HEART) then the authenticity of my relationship with GOD and with my WIFE will suffer.
- If I am serving my church in 4 different ministries (TIME /VOCATION) then my relationship with my CHILDREN may suffer.
- If maintaining my material stuff (WEALTH) takes up my weekends, then I will probably miss opportunities to relate with my FRIENDS who are far from God.
- If my diet and exercise habits are sloppy (HEALTH), then I will lack energy to apply to the relationship areas.
- If my family is in debt and not living on a budget (WEALTH), then the stress level will go through the roof and hamper all my FAMILY relationships.
- If I hate my job (VOCATION), then I have little emotional margin to DISCIPLE another man until I figure out my job satisfaction issue.

Our stewardship of our Key Resources impacts, positively or negatively, the health of our Key Relationships. Each of our growth Action Points will somehow relate to the Key Relationship Hand or the Key Resource Hand.



Evaluating the Season –

100 days is a long enough period to expect to see some changes in your life. When a man finishes a season of discipleship, how does he know if it was a success?

Success in discipleship is measured in love.

The man who loves his Lord better **and** loves the people in his circle better had a successful season!



Yes, we hope that you...

- feel closer to God
- establish your rhythm of meeting with God in His Word
- make progress in your action steps
- experience your faith in Christ truly strengthened
- catch the vision, *“one man, each year, for the rest of your life”*

But here is a scary fact. It is possible to experience all of these without growing in your love for God and others! Jesus was very clear that love is our measuring stick for growth and maturity.

*“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your **heart**, and with all your **soul**, [and with all your **might**] and with all your **mind**. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your **neighbor** as yourself.’” (Mt 22:37-40; Dt 6:5-6)*

In Jesus’ economy, **loving and serving others - out of a heart which is overwhelmed with God’s love - is the goal of discipleship**. How do I know if I’m loving God and loving others better than when I started? Well, here are two questions to ponder throughout this season:

- Am I quicker to obey God and do life His way? (John 14:21-24)
- Am I more active in taking the initiative, acting sacrificially, and meeting the real needs of others? (Lk 10:33-37; 1Jn 4:10)

Heavenly Father, would You grant me, according to the riches of Your glory, to come to a fuller realization of who I am in Christ – chosen, redeemed, forgiven, adopted, holy, and beloved! May You occupy the first place in my life. And overwhelmed with Your grace and love lavished on me in Christ, may I increasingly put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love. May those closest to me see the difference! May I truly live a life worth imitating.

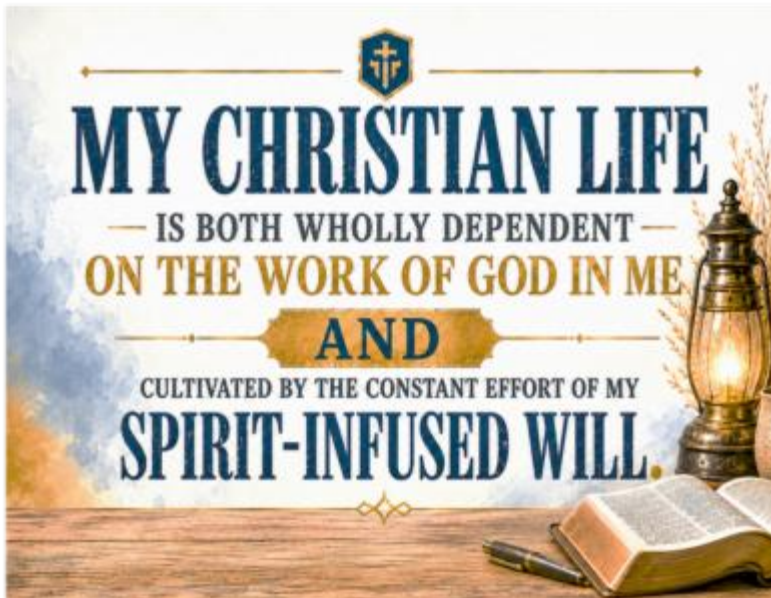
Ready?

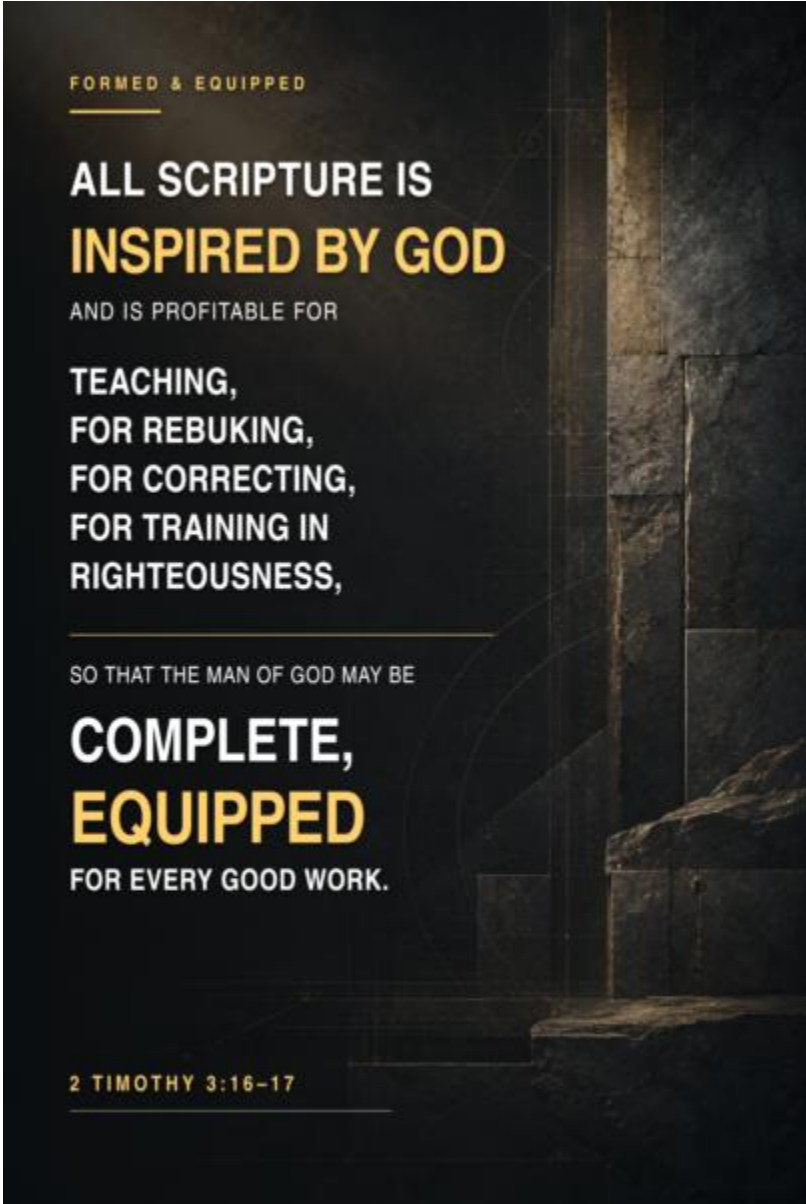
So, there you have it. GRIP is a vehicle to guide your spiritual journey with another man for a season. The concepts you've just read are also summarized in a short Introduction to GRIP video. Scan the QR code to view the video on YouTube.



After reading this GRIP Introduction, we encourage you to discuss questions, concerns, fears, details with your potential GRIP partner.

- ✎ **What will each of you say “NO” to in order to say “YES” to walking the spiritual journey together?**
- ✎ **How do each of you envision your Key Relationships improving if you allowed God to really GRIP your heart?**
- ✎ **How will GRIP add value to your current involvement in your local church? In your Focused Living forum?**





FORMED & EQUIPPED

ALL SCRIPTURE IS
INSPIRED BY GOD

AND IS PROFITABLE FOR

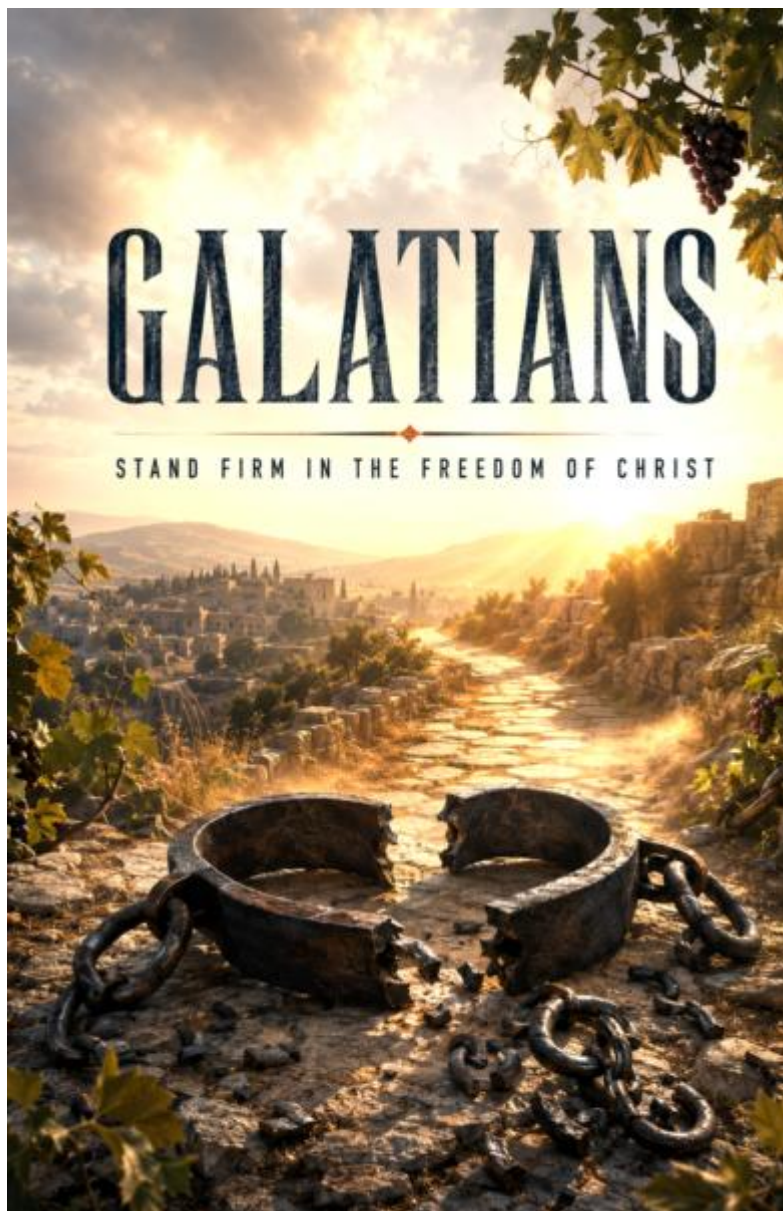
TEACHING,
FOR REBUKING,
FOR CORRECTING,
FOR TRAINING IN
RIGHTEOUSNESS,

SO THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE

COMPLETE,
EQUIPPED
FOR EVERY GOOD WORK.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

SECTION 1



GALATIANS

Main Theme:

Both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith in Christ (and continue to live by faith in Christ), not by works of the law.

- Galatians is the first letter we have from the Apostle Paul (AD 48-49)
- Writing to refute the false teaching of adding human effort and religious performance to the finished work of Christ for salvation.
- Paul insists that no one is made right with God through good behavior, religious activity, or obedience to the law (2:16).
- The Christian life begins, and must continue, by faith (3:2-5).
- The letter is a passionate defense of the gospel and a clear call to live in the freedom Jesus provides.

Background:

During his first missionary journey, Paul had proclaimed the good news throughout the region of Galatia, and people had responded by placing their faith in Christ. Churches were formed, lives were changed, and Gentiles—people who had not grown up under the Jewish law—were welcomed into God’s family. But after Paul left, other teachers arrived and began distorting his message. They taught that faith in Jesus was not enough. According to them, Gentile believers also needed to be circumcised and observe the law of Moses in order to be fully accepted by God. In effect, they were adding human effort and religious performance to the finished work of Christ. Paul recognized that this was not a minor disagreement. *The gospel itself was at stake.*

Big Idea:

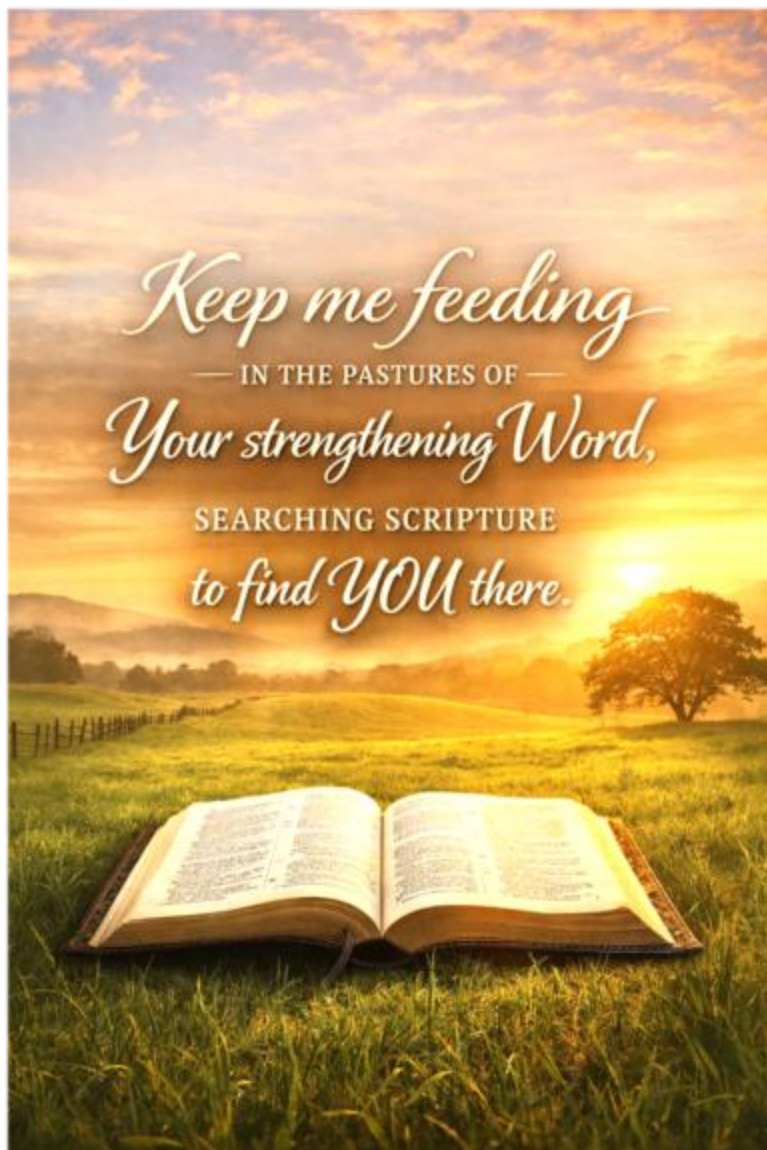
Galatians declares that we are made right with God **by faith** in Christ—not by religious performance—and are **set free** to live by the Spirit. Therefore, stand firm in your freedom and let your freedom express itself through the **fruit of love**.

As You Read

Galatians invites us to examine what we are trusting in to make us right with God. Are we resting in Christ, or are we still trying to prove ourselves? Are we using freedom to serve ourselves, or allowing the Spirit to produce the character of Jesus in us?

WANT TO GO DEEPER? Consult a study Bible for additional background or scan the QR code to watch the Bible Project’s overview of Galatians.





From Valley of Vision, Puritan Prayers, pg. 242

Week 1

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Galatians 1:1-10**

What word is repeated in these verses (:1–10)? Is the Gospel I believe truly the right one (Galatians (:6–7)? How would I personally summarize the Gospel (:3–5)? What are the consequences if I believe a “contrary,” “different,” or “false” gospel (:8–9)? How would my daily life change if God were truly my Audience of One (:10)? Paul made it clear that he wanted only to glorify and please God. Who am I trying to please and how has it impacted my relationship with God (:10)?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 1

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Galatians 1:11-2:10**

What parts of my life reveal that I still look for human approval instead of trusting the revelation God has given (1:11–12)? What “Arabia seasons” (quiet, hidden, or waiting periods) has God used to shape me (1:17–18)? What would people say about the changes they see in me; do they glorify God because of my transformation (1:23–24)? How well do I partner with believers who have different callings, backgrounds, or strengths (2:9–10)?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 1

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Galatians 2:11-21**

Do I treasure the Gospel and understand it so clearly that I could call out a brother when he is not living in line with it (2:11-14)? How do I respond when a brother confronts me– with humility or defensiveness (:11–14)? According to Paul, what role do my works and actions play in my salvation and justification (:16)? Even so, in what ways do I still live in the flesh- and nullify the grace of God - as though my salvation depends on me? What would be noticeably different in my daily life if I truly lived as someone in whom Christ dwells (2:20)?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 1

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Galatians 3:1-29**

Am I trying to deepen my life in Christ by works done in my own strength? How is this effort foolish (:2-3)? How does remembering that Christ became a curse for me reshape the way I view my sin and shame (:13)? What function does God's law have in my life (19-22)? How does the truth that we are “one in Christ” challenge my attitudes toward race, class, or politics (:28)?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 1

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Galatians 4:1-31**

Am I living as a confident son or as an insecure orphan/slave (3:26; 4:1–7)? What does my prayer life reveal about how I view God (4:6)? What old ways of thinking, old habits or addictions am I tempted to return to (:9)? Am I drawn to teachers who flatter or those that speak the truth even when it's unpopular (:17-18) Where am I guilty of “Gospel plus” thinking/living? What is Paul’s point in speaking about Abraham’s son through Hagar and his son through Sarah (:21-31)?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

**CONGRATULATIONS,
YOU'VE MADE IT
THROUGH THE 1ST WEEK!**

**CHECK OUT THIS VIDEO
TO UNDERLINE THE
IMPORTANCE OF
CONSISTENTLY BEING
IN THE WORD.**



Bible Matters
4 times a week impact



Week 2

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Galatians 5:1-15**

Paul trips over himself in repeating this theme of ‘free in Christ’ (2:4; 5:1,13). Am I currently walking in and experiencing this freedom? Where am I still tempted to trust in external things and, without realizing, fallen away from grace (:2-4)? What habits or sins are still holding me captive even though Christ has set me free? Do I measure my spirituality by outward performance instead of inward transformation (:2-6)? What influences or voices hinder me from obeying the truth (:7)? How am I using my freedom— to serve others or to serve myself (:13-14)? What can I do to show others the love of God this week?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Galatians 5:16-26

In what specific areas of my life am I keenly aware of the desires of my flesh? What does it look like for me to practically walk by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, live by the Spirit, and keep in step with the Spirit? What “small” or “socially acceptable” sins do I tolerate even though Scripture calls them works of the flesh (:19–21)? Which fruit of the Spirit is most lacking in my life right now (:22–23)? What would change if I had a “crucify approach” to my flesh rather than a “manage approach” to my flesh (:24)? Where do I provoke, envy, or compete with other men instead of encouraging them (:26)?



Bonus: My personal growth in the fruit of the Spirit will bless All of my Key Relationships, starting with my family. Before our next GRIP gathering, why not take a personal inventory of these fruits? And better yet, why not ask my wife or older child or close friend to fill out a Spiritual Fruit Inventory on me? See Appendix p. 163)

What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 2

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Galatians 6:1-18**

How do I respond when I see a brother caught in sin: with a heart bent towards restoration or with judgment (:1)? Whose burdens am I helping carry, and whose burdens have I been ignoring (:2)? What can I do today to help my Grip partner carry his burden (6:1-2)? Do I give up doing good in situations where I do not see immediate results (:9)? Who is God calling me to do good to today, especially within the household of faith (:10)? Where is sacrifice, obedience, suffering showing up in my life (:17)?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Drawing Near

Hebrews 4:16

Today is set aside to pause and enjoy the nearness of God. To prayerfully recognize, reflect on, and respond to what God has been drawing my attention to.



Recognize

First, take some moments to look back over the past 9 days of journaling. What words keep bubbling up? What thoughts or ideas does God keep bringing to my attention? What does He seem to be saying to me through the pages of Galatians? What has been on my heart in a big way recently? What life situation or circumstance is God drawing my attention to?

Reflect

Next, reflect on these words WITH God in prayer. Ask God: *Why do these words/ideas/thoughts keep bubbling up? Why Here? Why Now? What specifically do You want me to hear?*

Respond

Continue in unhurried, prayerful reflection. Ask God: *How do you want me to respond?* If you find it meaningful, write your prayer response back to your loving, heavenly Father. This response time might look like....

- Praise and thanksgiving for His blessings
- Confession and repentance for some sin(s)
- Surrender and yielding to what He is pressing on me.
- Crying out to Him in my struggle
- Appreciating His Gospel

Week 2

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Galatians – Read/Listen to the entire letter in one sitting (approx. 23 mins).**

Now that you have chewed on different parts of Galatians for two weeks, today we want you to slow down and feel the whole message. Since Paul wrote this letter as one truth unit, let's experience the fullness of his



message in one sitting like the original audience. May the richness of the gospel settle deeper in your heart.

Father, in light of my time with you today, hear this prayer written from my heart....

GRIP Gathering Preparation



Word Highlights – Over the last 2 weeks of journaling what truth has impacted my heart in a meaningful way?

Why is this truth meaningful to me here and now?

How is God inviting me to respond to this truth?



Pass On – Have I expressed what God has impressed on my heart to my family, friend, or GRIP partner?

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

IS NOT FREEDOM
TO INDULGE THE FLESH—
BUT TO CONTROL IT.

IT IS NOT FREEDOM
TO EXPLOIT MY BROTHER—
BUT TO SERVE HIM.

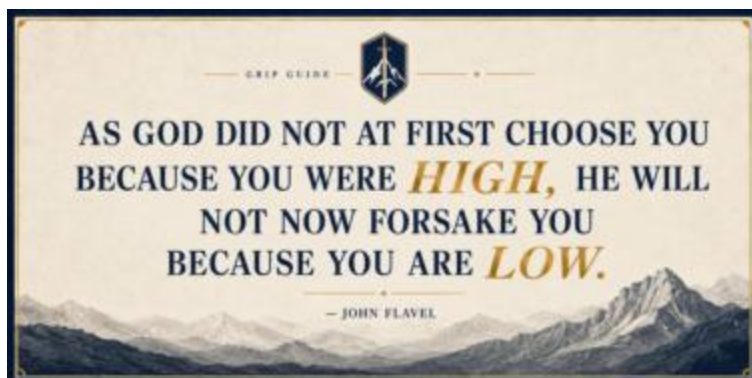
— JOHN R. W. STOTT —

READING GALATIANS WITH JOHN STOTT

SECTION 2

The Hand





Week 3

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Relationship: God

Psalm 16 (esp: 2, 8-11)

What do I learn about relating to God from this Psalm?



Further reflection on this key relationship.

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- Have I experienced the Gospel, or have I just been exposed to the Gospel? (Col 2:3,8,9; Eph 3:8) Have I dug deep into the treasure chest of the Gospel? Do I live life affected and motivated by His grace?
- Is my attitude toward spiritual discipline one of duty or delight (Ps 63:1-8; 1Tim 4:7b-8)? How do I spiritually prepare for each day (Mk 1:35; Ex 33:2)? When I finish my times alone with God, does God have a good grip on my heart (2Tim 1:12)?
- Do I respond to God's Word with a love-motivated obedience (Jn 14:15,21-24)? Am I committed to God's will, God's way (Dan 3:14-18)? What are some goals I have in my walk with God over the next six months?
- Do I trust God to come through for me? Am I experiencing His delivering grace? His sustaining grace (2Cor 12:7-10)? His empowering grace (Phil 4:13; Phil 2:13; Col 1:29)?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Relationship: Family / Family-Like

Ephesians 5:15-33 (esp: 25-33)

What is overflowing from my life to the people closest to me? What are some marks of loving my wife well (:25-33)? How am I measuring up to the covenant I made with her in God’s presence? (Can I even remember the vows I actually spoke?) Which of the “Life Assignments” in the appendix (p. 165) may enable me to express love to my wife?



Further reflection on this key relationship.

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- What’s it like for this person to live on the other side of me? Does the current health of this relationship accurately reflect what I say that I truly value?
- How am I doing at leading my wife spiritually (Eph 5:23-30)? Do I pray with and for her consistently (Jam 5:16)? Am I passing on what God is showing me during my time alone with Him (Col 3:16)?
- Am I loving my wife like Christ loved the Church? Do I tell her verbally and show her through actions (Eph 5:25)? Am I quick to honor my wife in public (1Pet 3:7)?
- How would I rate the physical, emotional, recreational intimacy in my marriage?
- Am I creating the environment where safe, clear and meaningful communication can happen (Col 3:12-14,19)?

Week 3

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Relationship: Family / Family-Like

Psalm 78:1-8

What is my life message that I would pass on to my kids and grandkids? When the next generation asks, “Why should we put our confidence in God?” what will I say?



Further reflection on this key relationship

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- Do I have a mutual heart connection with this person? Am I a good listener? How often do I verbally express my love for, delight with, and pride in?
- How should I be praying for this relationship? (Mark 1:11; Ps 127; 2Cor 7:4,16)
- If character is more caught than taught, what am I modeling (Eph 4:1-3; 1Tim 3:1-7)? How am I limiting the world's influence on my children? (James 1:27b) Do I really understand where my children are socially, emotionally and spiritually (Est 2:11)? Is there anything I have learned from my past or present life which I need to teach them (Ps 78:1-8)?
- Where have I delegated to my wife, youth pastor, teacher or coach something about my children's growth for which I am primarily responsible? (Eph 6:4; Deut 6:1-9; Job 1:1-5; Mal 4:6; Prov 22:16)

Week 3

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**Key Relationship: Believing Man****1Thessalonians 2:5-12**

*What actions and attitudes characterized Paul's investment in the Thessalonians?
Four months from now, my GRIP partner may describe my investment in his life.
What do I hope he says?*

**Further reflection on this key relationship**

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- What positive outcomes have I experienced from past man-to-man relationships? What things would I like to repeat? What would I change?
- How might God change me as I invest in another man (Pr 27:17)? What would success look like after this season of investment?
- In what areas do I need further equipping to be a successful disciple/mentor? Do I qualify as a FATR man (Faithful, Available, Teachable, Reproducible)? Where's the evidence? (Phil 2:19-30; Col 4:12; 2Tim 1:16-18)

Week 3

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Relationship: Unbelieving Friend

Colossians 4:2-6

Where do I see the pattern of prayer, care, share in this passage? Describe Paul's tone as he writes to the Colossians. Who opens the doors for outreach opportunities?



Further reflection on this key relationship

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- Does my walk with God cause others to thirst after Him? Do I start each day aware that I am God's ambassador representing Him and asking, "Who can I bless today"?
- Who has God sovereignly placed in my life who needs to hear, and have an opportunity to respond to, the Good News? If I can't name one, am I committed to asking God in prayer to open my eyes to the people around me? What steps can I take to engage an unbelieving person? (Col 4:2-6)
- Am I quick to give God credit for the things he has done in my life (Ps 66:16;)? What God stories have been written in my life recently? Am I articulate in sharing my testimony? With whom have I shared it recently?
- As I consider the process of leading another person to Christ, where do I need help? (Prayer, Care, Share)?

Week 3 GRIP Growth summary

After this past week of exploring scripture related to **relationships**, in what ways can I better align myself with God's high value on the key relationships in my life?



Week 4

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Resources: My Heart

The core of discipleship is God’s grip on your heart. When you consider your heart, think of your motives, your purity, your personal holiness. Your heart is also where your dreams, ambitions, passions are rooted. On the negative side, your heart is where past hurts, sin habits, shame, and guilt reside along with other stresses and distractions of this world.



Your relationship with God is sourced in your heart. God has called us to “guard our heart” to “examine our heart” and to invite the Holy Spirit to “search” it (Prov 4:23; 1Cor 11:28; Ps 139:23-24; Matt 6:21). We must constantly and honestly discern the state of our heart. **Don’t leave His presence until He grips your heart.** If our heart is holding onto sin, hurts, wrong thinking, disappointment, guilt, etc. we will never be ALL IN regarding the Key Relationships to which God has called us. What kind of steward are you of your heart?

Psalm 15

“A man is this way before he does these things.” How do my words, actions, and attitudes reflect the real state of my heart?

Further Reflection on this key resource

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- Am I going through the motions when it comes to my spiritual life (Rev 3:1)? Am I offering my whole self fully to God (Ps 63:1-8)?
- All of us have blind spots. Am I willing to let the Spirit of God and others close to me help me see what I am not currently seeing? (Ps 139:23-24; Prov 27:6)
- Do I experience the desire to be holy and pure? Am I tending my heart like a garden? What weeds are there that don’t belong?
- Am I aware of a root of bitterness from past hurts growing in my heart (Heb 12:15)?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Resources: My Time

God has called us to manage our time within the 168 hours He has given us each week. How we spend or invest that time directly impacts the health of our relationships. It has been said that if satan can't make you bad, he will make you busy. Being over committed is not only a time management issue, but also an indicator that we are doing some things that God has not called nor commanded us to do. The resulting pressure often causes us to treat others like projects, instead of people made in God's image. What kind of steward are you of your time?



Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Have I ever considered that God has given me my time to manage well for His glory? As His manager, what update report would I give Him?

Further reflection on this key resource.

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- How would I spend my time if the Lord were in charge of it? What priority is noticeably absent from my calendar? (Ps 90:12; 1Pet 4:7-8)
- Is God pleased with how I spend the Sabbath? Do words like “refreshment”, “soul rest”, “unhurried” characterize my family on Sundays? (Ex 20:8-11; 31:12-18)
- When interruptions occur, do I view them as blocked goals or providential tests (Gen 22:11-12; Mark 10:13-16; 46-52)? Can I smile at them, or am I irritated and resentful?
- When filling our life, we must put the important “big rocks” in the bucket before adding the less important “little rocks, gravel, and sand.” What “big rocks” are being neglected because my life is filled with the lesser priorities of gravel and sand? Where do I need to say “no” in order to say “yes” to the best?

Week 4

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Resources: My Health

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19). What an incredible privilege! God has placed a high priority on the stewardship of our health. Bringing your best to your relationships is often a function of feeling energetic or fresh. A little preventative maintenance on an ongoing basis will allow you to give your best energy, instead of leftovers, to the Lord and others. What kind of steward are you of your health (physical, emotional, mental, social)?



Mark 6:30-32; Exodus 31:12-18

Do I value the things that God values when it comes to my health?

Further Reflection on this key resource

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- Do I frequently describe myself with words like “exhausted” “overwhelmed” or “depleted”? Am I a delight to be around? What activities sooth my soul?
- What “noise” keeps me from hearing the Lord and others? Do I set aside time to think clearly? Do I set my mind on the things of the Lord or am I distracted by the world? (Ps 73:16,17; Phil 4:10; Col 3:1-4)
- Am I exercising at least 3X per week for 30 minutes? Has working out and building my body become an idol?
- What would need to change for me to sleep 8 hours each night? Do I feel guilty when I relax?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Resources: My Wealth

Rightly managing God’s money is a high priority in His economy. Bad stewardship opens us up to much grief, many distractions and unnecessary burdens. Our goal should not be the American dream, but God’s desires. How much focus we put on our material stuff says a lot about us. Do we hold onto the things of this world lightly (1Cor 7:30b, 31)? Does generosity go against the grain of our heart? What kind of steward are you of your wealth?



Luke 12:13-21; Hebrews 13:5-6

Does my attitude towards money and wealth reflect or negate my profession of Jesus’ Lordship of my life?

Further Reflection on this key resource

Which question does my heart long to answer?

Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- Do I joyfully live within my means? In what ways do I find my security in money? Am I content with God’s provision? (Phil 4:10-19; 1Tim 6:6-19)
- What evidence is there that my stuff owns me? How much energy do I expend taking care of or organizing my stuff? Do I hold onto the things of this world lightly or tightly (1Cor 7:29-31,35)?
- Do I live generously toward God and others (Prov 3:9; 21:26; Lk 12:21)? Am I tithing faithfully to God? How can I improve my discipline of giving?
- Do I have - and live by - a budget? What is my plan for getting out from under the weight of debt? Are my spouse and I on the same page when it comes to the family budget, saving, and giving?

Week 4

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Key Resources: My Vocation

For most men of working age, time spent at work is their largest time commitment each week. Work is an ordained blessing from God in a variety of ways: financial provision, relationships, satisfaction of using abilities, being a part of a culture, etc. When this area of your life is out of alignment with God’s desire for your work, the ultimate victims are His key relationships. Stresses related to a disconnect between your job description and your abilities, overtime work hours, imbalanced priorities, negative work culture, hard driving bosses, etc. will wear you out. Living a life of “just enough to get by” or “coasting” or “giving leftovers” does not help you to succeed in your key relationships. And remember, beyond your paid job, your vocation also includes areas where you serve and utilize your abilities like volunteer work and ministry. What kind of steward are you of your vocation?



Exodus 31:1-6; Coloss. 3:22-25; 1Peter 4:7-11

Am I prepared this week to give an accounting for the quality and effectiveness of my work? What’s the biggest headache related to my work? What’s the biggest blessing?

Further Reflection on this key resource

Which question does my heart long to answer?

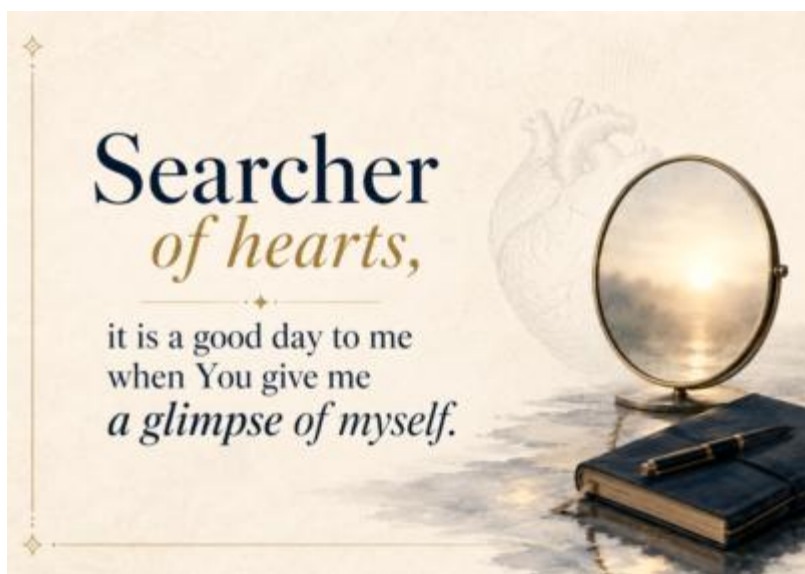
Circle 1 or 2 questions I want to reflect on during my personal retreat.

- Is God my audience of One? (Ps 100:2; Mk 10:45) Am I using my spiritual gifts and calling during this season? Am I doing a few things well, or am I overcommitted and operating in the flesh? How is my servant attitude?
- Do I see my job as a way to glorify God with my excellence (Col 3:17,23-24)? Do the people at my work gravitate toward me or away from me (2Cor 2:14-16)?
- Am I involved in my community so I can spread the aroma of Christ (2Cor 2:14-16)? Wherever I volunteer, am I dependable and reliable?
- What’s my plan for transitioning from my main career? Have I sought God’s input? Have I written down my definition of what it looks like for me to finish this life well?

Week 4 GRIP Growth summary

After this past week of exploring scripture related to **resources**, in what ways can I better align myself with God's high value on the key resources in my life?





From Valley of Vision, Puritan Prayers, pg. 122

“Father, grip my heart today.”

2 Peter 3:1-13 (read first)

The gift of eternal life guarantees that I have been and will be forgiven, and that every broken thing inside me will be completely repaired.

It really is location, location, location. If you're going to live with peace of heart and with hope and courage, you have to know your place in the work of God. There are two markers of that work that really do locate you, tell you what God is doing, and inform you as to how you should live right here, right now. As I have said before, you live between the "already" and the "not yet."

First, it is vital for you and me to always remember that we live in the "already" of *complete forgiveness*. Forgiveness is not a "hope it will be" thing. It's an "accomplished and done" thing. You do not have to hope that you will be forgiven. You do not have to be concerned that the process of forgiveness will somehow fail. Why?

Because your complete and final forgiveness was accomplished on the cross of Jesus Christ. The perfect sacrifice of the completely righteous Lamb fully satisfied the holy requirements of God and left you righteous and without penalty in his sight. So you never have to worry that you will be so bad that God will reject you. You never have to hide your sin. You never have to do things to win God's favor. You never have to cower in shame. You never have to rationalize, excuse, defend, or shift the blame. You never have to pretend that you are better than you are. You never have to present arguments for your righteousness. You never have to fear being known or exposed. You never have to compare the size of your sin to the size of another's. You never have to parade your righteousness so it can be seen by others. You never have to wonder if God's going to get exhausted with how often you mess up. All of these are acts of gospel irrationality because you have been completely forgiven.

On the other end, it is essential to understand the "not yet" of your *final repair*. Yes, you have been fully forgiven, but you have not yet been completely rebuilt into all that grace will make you. Sin still remains, the war for your heart still rages, the world around you is still broken, spiritual danger still lurks, and you have not yet been fully re-formed into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. The cross of Jesus guarantees that all of these broken things will be fixed, but they are not fixed yet.

So as I bask in the complete forgiveness that I have been given and enjoy freedom from the anxiety that I will not measure up, I cannot live unwisely. One danger (sin) still lives inside me and another (temptation) still lurks outside me, so I am still a person in daily and desperate need of grace. Forgiveness is complete. Final restoration is yet to come. Knowing you live in between the two is the key to a restful and wise Christian life.

From *New Morning Mercies* by Paul Tripp (May 21)

What is my heart's response to these truths?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Praying with the Puritans

The Valley of Vision is a collection of prayers written by English Puritans whose lives were deeply shaped by Scripture and the gospel. While the language may sound unfamiliar, their prayers are remarkably timeless. They remind us that prayer is more than asking God for help—it is learning to delight in who He is, confess our need, rest in Christ's finished work, and align our hearts with His.



As you read the following prayer, don't rush through it. In fact, the old-fashioned language forces you to read it slowly. Pay attention to the writer's view of God, of himself, and of the gospel. Notice how confidence before God doesn't come from personal goodness, but from the mercy of God displayed through Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord to use these words to deepen your own worship and shape your conversations with Him.

CONFIDENCE

O GOD, THOU ART VERY GREAT,
 MY lot is to approach thee with godly fear
 and humble confidence,
 for thy condescension equals thy grandeur,
 and thy goodness is thy glory.
 I am unworthy, but thou dost welcome;
 guilty, but thou art merciful;
 indigent, but thy riches are unsearchable.
 Thou hast shown boundless compassion towards me
 by not sparing thy Son,
 and by giving me freely all things in him;
 This is the foundation of my hope,
 the refuge of my safety,
 the new and living way to thee,
 the means of that conviction of sin,
 brokenness of heart, and self-despair,
 which will endear to me the gospel.

Happy are they who are Christ's,
 in him at peace with thee,
 justified from all things,
 delivered from coming wrath,
 made heirs of future glory;
 Give me such deadness to the world,
 such love to the Saviour,
 such attachment to his house,
 such devotedness to his service,
 as proves me a subject of his salvation.
 May every part of my character and conduct
 make a serious and amiable impression on others,
 and impel them to ask the way to the Master.
 Let no incident of life, pleasing or painful,
 injure the prosperity of my soul,
 but rather increase it.
 Send me thy help,
 for thine appointments are not meant
 to make me independent of thee,
 and the best means will be vain
 without super-added blessings.

The Valley of Vision, Puritan Prayers and Devotions, p.256-257

What words or phrases gripped my heart this morning? Take a moment to thank God in prayer for the riches of His grace lavished on me.

“Father, grip my heart today.”

**1 Timothy 1:15–16; Romans 8:15;
John 10:27–29**

Today as you meet with God, we are encouraging you to do it through music. Let these truths wash over you and respond back to the Lord in prayer

Scan the QR code to listen to the song on YouTube.

Shane and Shane – Amazing Grace



Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

by Shane & Shane

Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

Chorus

My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

Chorus

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine

Week 5**Date:** _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Today you get to choose how to spend your time alone with God. Here are some ideas:

- Go for a prayer walk
- Practice unhurried solitude in God’s presence
- Go back and finish a past journaling day
- Meditate on one verse
- Prepare for your retreat (if it is still upcoming)



Whatever you choose, allow God to grip your heart for the day ☺

What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Retreat Summary: Key 3 Action Points

Suggestion: Do this journal day **AFTER** you have had your personal retreat.

“...to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

James 4:17

“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

Luke 6:46

“If you know these things you are blessed if you do them.”

John 13:17

You’ve recently had your personal retreat. A natural outcome of that extended time of being still and listening to God will be a few action points – steps of obedience - for this next season in your life. This journaling day is designed to get you moving forward on the action points God laid on your heart. As the verses above remind us, the Christian life involves “doing.” The grace that saves us is not opposed to our love-motivated efforts to obey.



What 3 action points will I prioritize over the next few months to help me move forward in my life? What’s at stake (i.e. in my relationship to God, my family, my heart, etc.) if I don’t follow-through on these?

Reminder: At least one of my Key3 Action Points should be related to my family or family-like relationships.

1) Action Point:

Why is this important?

2) Action Point:

Why is this important?

3) Action Point:

Why is this important?

Spend some moments talking to God about these. Ask Him for success, for vigilance and for perseverance during those times when the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

GRIP Gathering Preparation

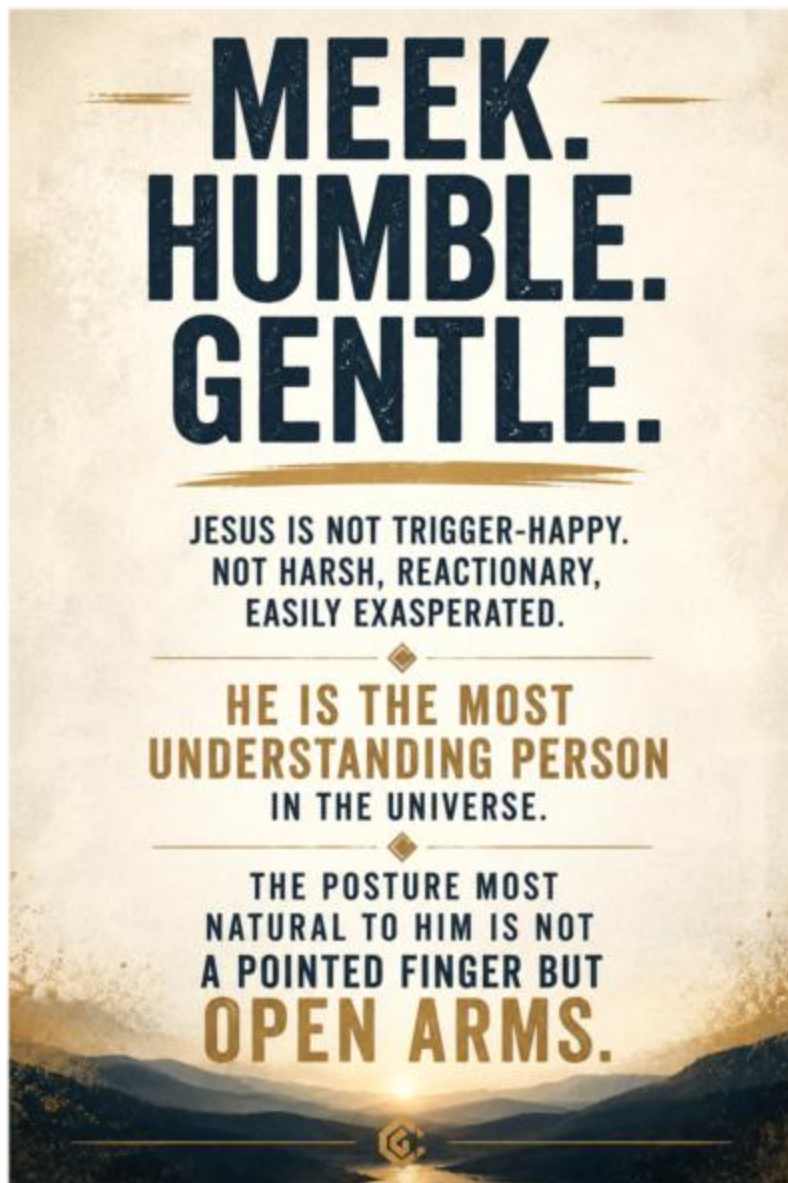
The last 3 weeks have been devoted to thinking about my life in God's presence and hearing from Him.



Here is what I learned from the experience of having a retreat...



Here is what I sense God wants to emphasize in my life this season: (see previous page where I have listed my action points)



Dane Ortlund, *Gentle and Lowly*, Ch.1



come with Me
by yourselves
to a quiet place
and get some rest.

~Jesus Christ, Mark 6:31

In stressful times such as these, taking a break often seems counter intuitive. It is important to remember that renewal and restoration quietly before the Lord are not luxuries and should not be last on your list. They are essential. In the busyness of life, rest is vital for staying sharp and effective. Renewal leads to greater creativity and productivity!

~Max Lucado, *The Applause of Heaven*



Personal Retreat

Do not view this extended time as a time of “study,” rather a time to listen and hear from your Heavenly Father.

“Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God.”

John 8:47a

Your life assignment over these next 3 weeks is to have an extended time alone with God. We call it a personal retreat.

The purpose is to slow down and listen to God. Look at it as an extended time with your best friend! The simple goal of this retreat is to ponder your life before God



with a listening heart and a posture to obey. Find a quiet place in which you can be uninterrupted for at least 4 hours.

We suggest scheduling this retreat sometime between Friday Sep. 25th and Sunday Oct. 4th. This timing will allow you to complete the first two weeks of Section 2 which focuses on your Key Relationships and your Key Resources.

Before Your Retreat

- **Carve out 4-6 hours on your calendar** – Perhaps a Saturday morning, a Sunday afternoon, or taking a half day off during the work week. Some men rise early on Sunday AM and spend 2 hours with the Lord. Then they go to Sunday worship with their family, but return home (while their family remains for Sunday school) for another 2 hours of focused time before lunch with the family.
- **Choose a quiet place** – Find a comfortable place where you will be undistracted and uninterrupted. Perhaps a place out of your normal routine. A park, library, lake, woods, an empty room at church, etc. There’s a reason that the word “SILENT” and the word “LISTEN” have the same letters 😊.
- **What to Bring** - Bible, GRIP Guide, device (optional), pen, personal journal if you use one.
- **DO** journal through the 2 weeks of “The Hand” section (pg 49- 59) before taking your retreat. **DO** consider fasting a meal so you are reminded of your real hunger for God. **DO** get a good night’s sleep the night before. **DO** let your family and GRIP partner know when you are planning to have this retreat so they can be prayerful. **DO** take off your watch.
- **DON’T** look at texts, emails, social media during your retreat. **DON’T** pack it too full of activity so you aren’t quiet before God.

Flow for Actual Retreat

This GRIP season we'd like each man to follow this general outline during his retreat:

- **Present yourself to God (30 mins)**
- **Read a Gospel rich portion of Scripture*** (20 mins)
- **Reflect on the truths of Scripture as they intersect with your life and especially your Key Relationships (90-120 mins)**
- **Write down 3 action points to pursue this season (30 mins)**

* We suggest reading an entire book like Ephesians or Colossians. Or a section of teaching from Jesus like "The Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5-7 or "The Upper Room Discourse" in John 13-17. Or a portion of scripture that has been especially meaningful that will prepare your heart to commune with your Heavenly Father.

Present myself to God (30 mins)

This is a time to remember God's weightiness in your life. It's a time to be really honest with Him. It's a time to express your heart. It's a time to give Him full permission to grip your heart. It might include Bible reading, praying, singing worship songs, confessing, etc.

Listen to Your Heavenly Father say, *"This is my son in whom I am well pleased"* (Mt 3:17). Remember that God demonstrated His own love toward you, in that while you were a sinner (helpless, ungodly, His enemy)...Christ died for you (Rom 5:8)! Savor the reality that nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord (Rom 8:39). See and believe His promise that He will be with you always (Mt 28:20). Review the Gospel. In short, allow God to grip your heart with the truths He has already communicated to you in His Word.



"Father, increase the sensitivity of my heart to hear Your Word and to obey Your will. May my life reflect what is important to Your heart and may I pursue the things that You value. Help me meditate on Your Word and pour out the desires of my heart in prayer. Grant me insight into what steps of obedience You have for my life this GRIP season. And motivate me by the depth of Your love and grace. Use this time to cleanse my heart, clarify my thoughts, and heighten my sense of fellowship with You."

Read through your scripture in one sitting (20-30 mins)

Read and/or listen to your chosen scripture in one sitting. Do your best to clear your mind of “noise” and listen to the Scripture with the ears of your heart. Let the Word read you. **What does God stir in your heart as you listen?** Underline, highlight, or make notes when God begins to grip your heart. You can come back to these markings after you’ve read the entire portion and meditate more on what was stirred up.

Your recent journaling days related to the 10 fingers of your HANDS prompted you to consider your Key Relationships and your Key Resources (pages 49-59). **As you enter this retreat time, most likely there are one or two fingers (Key Relationships or Key Resources) that have your special attention. Keep those in your mind as you read through Your chosen scripture.**

Reflect on the truths of your chosen scripture as they intersect with my life (90-120 mins)

Go back to your underlines, highlights or notes from your reading through your chosen scripture. Take time to reflect in an unhurried manner. View this time as a conversation with your heavenly Father who wants to speak directly into your life. Be creative in this time. You don’t need to sit cross legged and hum while you meditate and reflect. Take a walk, change your posture (stand, kneel, prostrate yourself). You may find it meaningful to creatively express what you are feeling through art (writing poetry, composing music, creating something graphically, etc.). Engage and interact with God in the most intimate way that you can.

Re-read the verses that stirred your heart. Ask questions and take notes as you continue this conversation with God.

- *What do You want me to learn from this today?*
- *Why this word? Why here? Why now?*
- *God, how are You inviting me to respond to You?*
- *What steps of obedience (Action Points) are You calling me to take?*

Write down 3 action points to pursue this spring (30 mins)

You will have had many ideas during the retreat. Take a first pass at identifying a few action points which you sense **God is impressing on your heart**. These are actions that will help you move forward. It would be natural that your action points flowed from God’s revelation in your chosen scripture as it applies to your Key Relationships and Key Resources. In this season of GRIP, we want you to be intentional about your family relationships. So, **at least 1 of your Key 3 Action Points should be related to your family or family-like relationships**. The appendix at the end of this guide has several “life assignments” that may help you get traction on your family-focused action point!

Action Points

As we've said, a natural outcome of this extended time of retreating and listening to God will be a few action points for this next season in your life. Let's explore a little further, then, the WHAT, WHY, and HOW of action points.

WHAT is an Action Point?

An Action Point is a specific way to obey God in this season of discipleship. It's some step of obedience. It helps "put feet on" one or more Biblical commands or principles or truths. Action points are activities that put you in a position to let God do His thing in your life. They allow God a better grip on your life. Action Points will almost always be directly related to God's grip on one of your key relationships OR on one of the areas over which He has given you stewardship. So, your action point becomes the answer to this question:

*In this season, as I abide in Christ, what action can I pursue to better align myself with God's desire for this **Key Relationship** or this **Key Resource**?*

If God is truly the heavy weight (glorious One) in your life, then an action point sourced in Him will be for your greatest good. Action Points are more than "nice ideas" or wishful thinking. If God is putting an action point on your heart, then He will also provide the internal spiritual motivation to do it (Phil 2:13; Col 1:29; 1Cor 15:10).

Action Points usually take one of a few forms:

- **establish a new pattern** (i.e. spiritual discipline, helpful practice, habit, etc.)
- **stop an existing pattern** (i.e. sin habit, a hindrance (Heb 12:1)
- **a one-time action** (forgive, apologize, write letter, have a conversation, read a book, attend a seminar, weekend away with wife, create a will, write a legacy letter, take a road trip to reconnect with an estranged friend or relative, follow-through on some intention, etc.)

The next page lists some "baseline" action points for each of the five Key Relationships and Key Resources. If you are new to the idea of action points, this list is a good starting place to consider the rhythms of your spiritual life. Again, our hope is that you will listen to God as you pray about what action points you sense He desires for you. Some men will **ADOPT** these action points as is. Others will **ADAPT** them to make them their own. Others may already have these rhythms in their life and will pursue some unique action points they sense God is pressing on their heart.

Sample Action Points

The following action points may be a good place to start.

Key Relationships

God → Daily invest enough time alone with God, through Bible reading and prayer, until He has a good grip on my heart for the day.

Wife → Daily pray for and/or with my wife.

Children → Regularly pass on to my family what God is impressing on my heart from His Word.

Disciple → Weekly connect (face to face or via phone) with my discipleship partner for a time of Gospel reminding, mutual accountability, encouragement, and prayer.

Friend → Identify my next step in walking my friend through the process of accepting or rejecting Christ. Then take **THAT step!** (i.e. Prayer-Care-Share; share testimony, explain Gospel, pray for, listen to, meet a need, have a shared experience, invite to a wired event, etc.).

Key Resources

Heart → Acknowledging that God longs to commune with me in my heart, I purpose to daily ponder the Gospel and confess my sin so my heart will stay soft and pure.

Time → Acknowledging that God gave the Sabbath for rest, renewal, and realignment, each Sabbath I purpose to _____ (i.e. unhurriedly think through the priorities of the upcoming week; lead my family in 1 hour of quietness in the house; guard my family from bucket draining activities; etc.)

Health → Acknowledging that my physical body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, I purpose to _____ (i.e. Get a good night's rest every night; Exercise vigorously 3X per week; drink more water; eat with my long-term health in mind; quit smoking; faithfully rehab an injury; etc.)

Wealth → Acknowledging that I am a manager and not the owner of my wealth, I purpose to _____ (i.e. establish a budget and joyfully live under it; live generously; give away material things; be deliberate about getting out of debt; etc.)

Vocation - In light of my God-given abilities and passions, I purpose to help meet the following need in my local church or in my community: _____

WHY Action Points?

A *disciple* is one who learns by doing, like an apprentice. Where does our “doing” fit into our spiritual life? God deeply desires for us to press on to maturity, looking more and more like Jesus (1Tim 4:15; Rom 8:29; Phil 2:12-13; 3:13,14; Heb 6:1; 12:1). We have a part in this transformation towards Christlikeness. We have some work to do. Dallas Willard has written, “*Grace is not opposed to effort, it’s opposed to earning.*” Our “doing”, our effort, is pleasing to God when it is an outflow of our deep desiring of Him. Action Points are an expression of obedience fueled by a new desire in us.

Passivity has been a plague on men since Adam. It’s part of our fleshly DNA. The act of identifying tangible actions and pursuing them with a desire that God gives, is a path to owning our spiritual life. Action points force us to focus and to depend on God for his strength.

Now, let’s be careful. God is NOT out to overwhelm you with a long to-do list. That’s what religion is all about – doing a list of things in the flesh and thinking that God is pleased. God is not impressed with your long list. And your heart isn’t joyful when your “doing” is sourced in your flesh. You’ll either quickly become frustrated by your lack of progress or you will see some early success and become prideful. Pursuing action points in the flesh never works. **Ultimately, true fruit in our spiritual life comes only from one source: abiding in Jesus** (John 15:1-17, Luke 10:38-42).



Because so many of us are recovering Pharisees, we highly recommend that you focus on **no more than 3 action points (“Key 3”)** and experience the sensation of depending on God for success.

Note: At least 1 of your Key 3 action points should directly relate a family or family-like relationship.

HOW to Write an Action Point?

When formulating action points, try to make them SMART*

SMART Action Points

Specific – not fuzzy

Measurable – you know when you are done

Attainable – possible to do

Relevant - meaningful

Time Limited – can show progress between meetings

RECORDING Action Points

In The Grip Guide

The last journaling page in Week 5 (pgs 68-69) is set aside to record your action points in one place that is easily shareable with your GRIP partner. It is SO MUCH EASIER to practice accountability with another brother when you have each other's action points in a concise form. 😊

OR...

Use the Grip App

Our grip.focusedliving.com WebApp is specifically designed for you to record and share your action points with your GRIP partner. The App allows you to record any number of action points related to your Key Relationships and Key Resources. However, as men, we can only focus on a few action points at a time. So, after recording several action points (perhaps 1 per each of the 10 fingers), tag your “Key 3” action points that you’ll prioritize this season.

The App allows you to view your GRIP partner’s “Key 3” action points. So, when you pray for him or when you meet with him for accountability, open the app 😊

Scan this QR code to view a tutorial video on how to use the Grip App for sharing action points.



TAKE ACTION!

Writing down some action points and sharing them with a brother is important. But the point is to DO them! The law of diminishing intent says **the longer you wait to take action, the less likely you will ever take the action.** Therefore, once God puts an action point on your heart, start moving.

APPENDIX (SEE PG. 163)

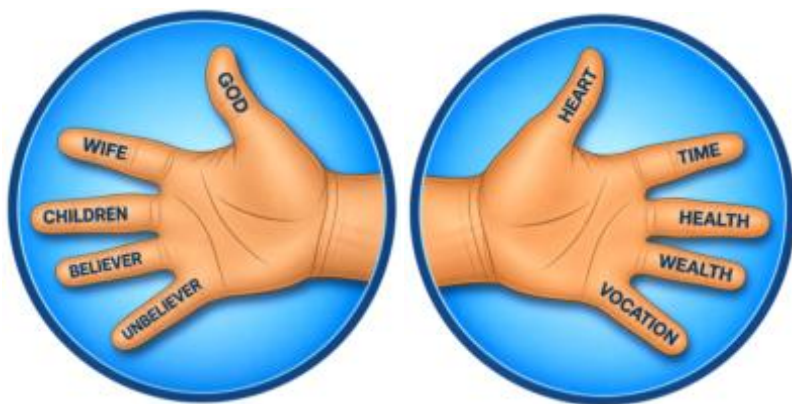
To assist you in getting traction with your action points, we’ve included an appendix of tangible life assignments. Perhaps one or two of these could *supplement an action point you are already working on.*

As you begin your retreat, reflect back on the questions you circled during week 3 and week 4 (pgs. 49-59) of your journaling. If there are scriptures associated with the questions you circled, we strongly encourage you to read those as well.

God, I invite you to speak into these areas of my life.

“Speak, for your servant is listening.”

1 Samuel 3:10



Notes

Notes

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SECTION 3

SIX MEN. SIX JOURNEYS. ONE GOD.



Mankind, he has told each of you what is good
and what it is the LORD requires of you:

- *to act justly,*
- *to love faithfulness,*
- *and to walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6:8



Before Genesis 28, Jacob's story is already marked by both God's sovereign grace and Jacob's flawed character. Before Jacob and his twin brother Esau were born, God declared that the older brother would serve the younger (Gen 25:23). Yet rather than trusting God to fulfill His promise, Jacob repeatedly took matters into his own hands. He persuaded Esau to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew (Gen 25:27-34) and later deceived his aging father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing intended for Esau (Gen 27).

When Esau learned what had happened, he was furious and planned to kill Jacob. To protect him, Rebekah sent Jacob away to live with relatives in Haran. Jacob leaves home carrying the blessing of God, but also the consequences of his own choices. He is a man on the run—uncertain about his future, separated from his family, and in desperate need of God's transforming work. It is at this point that God begins to meet Jacob in profound ways and shape him into the man He intends him to be.

JACOB

From Striving to Surrender

Theme: God doesn't give up on imperfect men. Through every struggle, disappointment, and encounter with Him, He transforms men who rely on themselves into men who trust Him.

WHY STUDY JACOB?

Jacob wasn't the obvious choice.

He was a manipulator. A deceiver. A man who often tried to accomplish God's purposes through his own plans and abilities. Yet God never abandoned him.

Instead, God patiently pursued Jacob, humbled him, confronted him, and ultimately transformed him. By the end of his life, Jacob was no longer known for grabbing at blessings—he had become a man who trusted the God who gives them.

Many of us can relate.

Like Jacob, we often wrestle with fear, control, disappointment, and uncertainty. Yet God continues to meet us in those places, inviting us to surrender our strength and discover the freedom of depending on Him.

As you walk through these five readings, ask God not simply to teach you about Jacob—but to shape your own heart through Jacob's story.

"Your name will no longer be Jacob," he said. "It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed."
Genesis 32:28

As You Read...

Pay attention to the way God patiently works in Jacob's life. Notice how each encounter moves him away from self-reliance and toward greater trust. Ask God where He may be inviting you to take that same journey.

THE JOURNEY

GOD PURSUES JACOB

Genesis 28:10–22



GOD HUMBLER JACOB

Genesis 29:15–30



GOD TEACHES DEPENDENCE

Genesis 32:1–21



GOD CHANGES JACOB

Genesis 32:22–32



GOD CALLS JACOB TO OBEDIENCE

Genesis 35:1–15



Week 6

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 28:10-22

Bethel: God Pursues a Fugitive

Review the questions below, then open the Word and read the passage. Journal your insights below. Respond to the truth that most fueled your soul by writing a prayer to the Lord.



Jacob is alone, away from home, and uncertain about the future. What does God promise Jacob in verses 13-15? What part of God's message to Jacob most grabs my attention? Jacob says, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." When have I become more aware of God's presence during a difficult season? How might God be inviting me to trust Him more fully with my future?

What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 29:1-30

Laban: God Humbles Jacob

Why might God have allowed Jacob to experience this painful disappointment? How do I typically respond when life doesn't unfold according to my expectations? Is there a difficult person or frustrating situation that God may be using to shape my character? How can I respond in a way that trusts God's purposes rather than becoming resentful?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 6

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 32:1-21

God Teaches Dependence

What evidence do I see that Jacob is deeply afraid in this passage? As I read Jacob's prayer in verses 9-12, what stands out to me about the way he approaches God? How is Jacob's response different from the way he handled problems earlier in his life? What fears or worries are currently occupying my mind and heart? How does Jacob's prayer encourage me to bring my concerns honestly before God? What would trusting God look like in the situation that concerns me most right now?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 32:22-32

Wrestling: God Changes Jacob’s Identity

What details in this encounter seem most unusual or significant to me? Why do I think God changes Jacob's name from Jacob to Israel? What might God be teaching Jacob through this struggle? How has God used weakness, hardship, or failure to draw me closer to Him?

Where do I see myself striving to control outcomes rather than depending on God? If God wanted to reshape part of my identity, what might He be inviting me to leave behind?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 35:1-15

Return to Bethel: God Calls Jacob to Renewed Obedience

What stands out to me about Jacob's response to God's command? What specific actions does Jacob require of his household before returning to Bethel? How am I setting the spiritual temperature in my household? Why do I think God calls Jacob back to the place where they first met? What evidence do I see that Jacob has changed since Genesis 28? Are there any competing loyalties, distractions, or "idols" that are pulling my heart away from God? Is there something God has already made clear that I have been slow to act upon? What step of obedience might God be calling me to take as I respond to Him today?

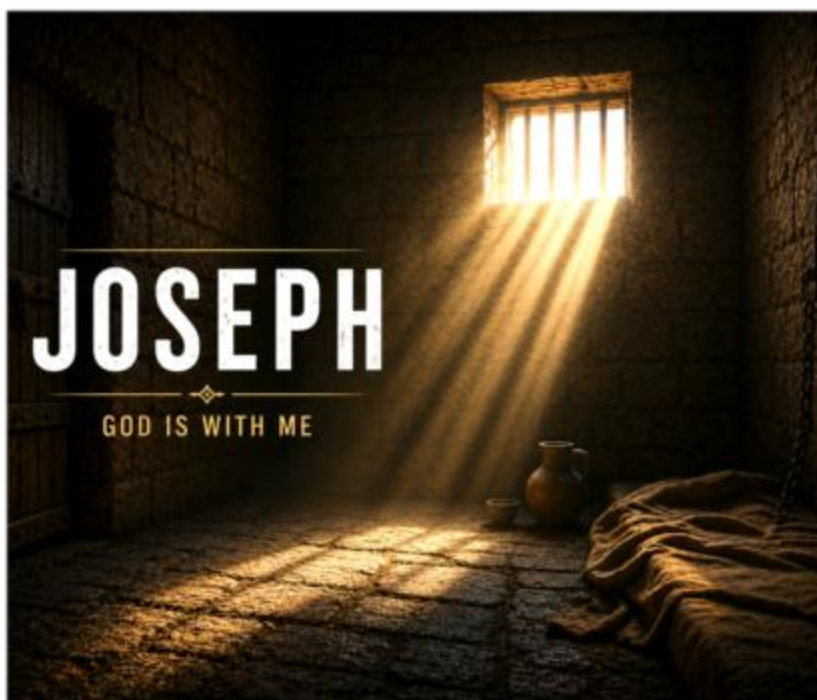


What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

BECAUSE OF JACOB



Where is God inviting me to
stop striving and trust Him?



Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob and the first son born to Rachel, the wife Jacob loved deeply. Because of this, Joseph received special affection from his father, including a richly ornamented robe that became a visible reminder of Jacob's favoritism. While Joseph's brothers worked alongside him tending their father's flocks, tension within the family continued to grow.

As a teenager, Joseph found himself caught between God's calling and his family's jealousy. God gave him dreams that hinted at a future far beyond anything he could imagine, but those dreams only fueled his brothers' resentment. What Joseph couldn't see was that God was about to begin a journey that would test his character, deepen his faith, and ultimately prepare him to save countless lives.

As you begin Joseph's story, pay close attention to how God works behind the scenes. Through every setback, delay, and unexpected turn, God is accomplishing a purpose far greater than Joseph could have imagined.

JOSEPH

Trusting God When I Can't See His Plan

Theme: God is always at work—even when His purposes seem hidden. Through seasons of waiting, disappointment, and unexpected turns, God shapes men who trust His timing more than their own understanding.

WHY STUDY JOSEPH?

Joseph's life is a remarkable testimony to God's sovereignty. As a young man, he received dreams that pointed to God's future plans, yet almost everything that followed seemed to contradict those promises. He was betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused, forgotten in prison, and forced to wait years before God's plan came into focus.

Yet throughout every chapter of Joseph's story, one truth remains constant: **the Lord was with him.**

Joseph teaches us that God's faithfulness isn't measured by our circumstances. Even when we cannot see what God is doing, He is preparing us, shaping us, and positioning us for His purposes.

As you walk through these five readings, ask God to strengthen your trust—not only in His promises, but in His perfect timing.

"You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people."

Genesis 50:20

As You Read...

Notice how often Joseph's circumstances change, yet God's presence never does. Ask God to help you trust Him even when His plan unfolds differently than you expected.

THE JOURNEY

GOD GIVES
JOSEPH A
DREAM
Genesis 37:1-11



GOD SHAPES
JOSEPH
THROUGH
FAITHFULNESS
Genesis 39:1-23



GOD TEACHES
JOSEPH
TO WAIT
Genesis 40:1-23



GOD ENTRUSTS
JOSEPH WITH
INFLUENCE
Genesis 41:14-40



GOD USES
JOSEPH TO
EXTEND GRACE
Genesis 50:15-21



“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 37

Joseph’s Dreams and the Pit

Why do I think God gave Joseph these dreams before any of the events that followed? Have there been times when I sensed God leading me in a particular direction but could not see how it would happen? Have there been times when my circumstances seemed to contradict what I believed God was doing in my life? How do I typically respond when God's timing is much slower than I would prefer? In verses 31-35, Jacob is overwhelmed by grief because he cannot see what God is doing behind the scenes. Where am I tempted to judge God's work based only on what I can currently see? What does this passage teach me about trusting God with the future?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 39

Joseph in Potiphar’s House

What truth is repeated 4 times in this chapter (vv. 2, 3, 21, 23)? In verses 7-12, what stands out to me about Joseph's response to temptation? Do I tend to judge God's faithfulness by what He is doing around me or by what He has promised to me? Where do I need to trust that God is with me even when life is difficult or disappointing?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 7

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 40:1-23

Joseph in Prison

What does Joseph's interaction with the cupbearer and baker reveal about his character (vv. 6-8)? In verse 8, what does Joseph's statement about God reveal about where his confidence rests? How do I think Joseph felt when the cupbearer forgot him (v. 23)? Have I ever experienced a season when I felt forgotten, overlooked, or stuck? What might God have been teaching Joseph during this period of waiting? How might God be using a current waiting season to shape my faith, character, or dependence on Him?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 41:1-45

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh’s Dreams

In verse 16, how does Joseph respond when Pharaoh asks for an interpretation? What does Joseph's response reveal about his view of God and himself? How has Joseph changed since the young man who shared his dreams in Genesis 37? Why do I think God waited so long before placing Joseph in this position? When I experience success, recognition, or influence, where am I tempted to take credit for what God has done? How can I use whatever influence God has given me to point others toward Him?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Genesis 50:15-26

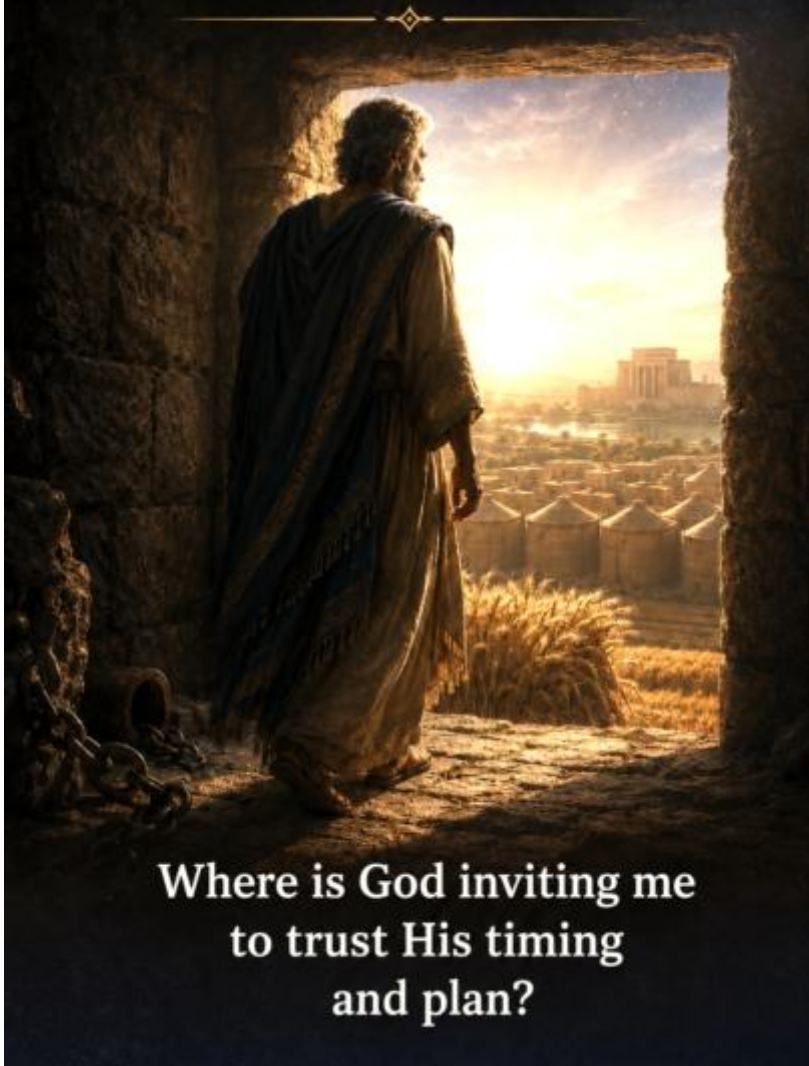
Joseph Extends Grace

In verses 19-20, how does Joseph interpret the events that shaped his life? What stands out to me about Joseph's response to his brothers' fear? Why do I think Joseph was able to forgive instead of seeking revenge? Is there a painful situation from my past that I still struggle to view through the lens of God's sovereignty? How does trusting God's purposes help me extend grace to others? Is there someone I need to forgive, encourage, or bless as a response to God's grace toward me? Is there a family member who needs my grace instead of my judgment or nagging?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

BECAUSE OF JOSEPH...



Where is God inviting me
to trust His timing
and plan?



David was the youngest of eight sons born to Jesse of Bethlehem. While his older brothers trained as soldiers and gained the attention of others, David spent his days tending sheep in the fields. Though his work seemed ordinary and unnoticed, those quiet years became God's training ground. As a shepherd, David learned to trust the Lord's protection, care for what had been entrusted to him, and develop a heart devoted to God.

Israel, however, was in crisis. King Saul, once chosen by God to lead the nation, had repeatedly rejected the Lord's commands. Because of Saul's disobedience, God rejected him as king and sent the prophet Samuel to Bethlehem with an unexpected assignment: to anoint the man God had already chosen to lead His people.

As you begin David's story, pay close attention to what God values in a man. Long before David wore a crown or defeated a giant, God was shaping his heart. Through victories, failures, seasons of waiting, and sincere repentance, David became a man who continually returned to the Lord. His life reminds us that God isn't looking for perfect men—He's looking for men whose hearts are fully His.

DAVID

A Heart After God

Theme: God delights in men whose hearts remain soft toward Him. Faith, humility, repentance, and worship mark the life of a man after God's own heart.

WHY STUDY DAVID?

David wasn't chosen because he was impressive—he was chosen because God saw something deeper than outward appearance. Throughout his life, David experienced extraordinary victories and devastating failures. He defeated giants, led a nation, endured years of hardship, and made choices that brought painful consequences.

Yet Scripture remembers David as **"a man after God's own heart"** (Acts 13:22).

Not because he was perfect.

Because he continually returned to God.

David reminds us that God's greatest work isn't producing flawless men—it is forming men who continually trust, repent, and worship Him.

As you walk through these five readings, ask God to cultivate a heart that seeks Him above everything else.

"Humans do not see what the LORD sees, for humans see what is visible, but the LORD sees the heart."

1 Samuel 16:7

As You Read...

Watch how David continually turns back to God—whether in victory or failure. Ask God to shape a heart that loves Him more than success, recognition, or comfort.

THE JOURNEY

GOD SEES
DAVID'S
HEART

1 Samuel 16:1-13



GOD TEACHES
DAVID
TO TRUST HIM

1 Samuel 17:32-50



GOD TEACHES
DAVID
TO WAIT

1 Samuel 24:1-12



GOD INVITES
DAVID
TO REPENT

Psalms 51



GOD RECEIVES
DAVID'S
WORSHIP

1 Chronicles 29:10-20



“Father, grip my heart today.”

1Samuel 16

David is Anointed

In verses 6-7, what correction does God give Samuel about the way he evaluates potential leaders? What does verse 7 teach me about what God values most in a man? ? As a dad, what insights do I have into my kid’s hearts? Why do I think God chose David, the youngest son, instead of one of his older brothers? In verse 13, what significance do I see in the Spirit of the LORD coming powerfully on David? How much attention do I pay to my character? What area of my heart would I most want God to continue shaping and transforming?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

1Samuel 17:1-52

David Faces Goliath

In verses 34-37, what past experiences does David point to as evidence of God's faithfulness? In verse 37, where does David place his confidence as he prepares to face Goliath? How does David describe Goliath in verses 45-47, and what does this reveal about David's view of God? What is the biggest difference I see between David's perspective and the perspective of Saul and the Israelite army? What "giant" or challenge am I currently facing that seems bigger than my resources or abilities? How might remembering God's past faithfulness strengthen my trust in Him today?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

1Samuel 24

David Spares Saul

In verses 4-7, why do David's men believe this is the perfect opportunity to kill Saul? What reasons does David give for refusing to harm Saul (vv. 6, 10)? What does this passage reveal about David's trust in God's authority and timing? Why do I think David felt troubled even after merely cutting off a corner of Saul's robe (v. 5) Where am I tempted to force an outcome instead of waiting on God to act? What would trusting God's timing look like in a situation I am currently trying to control?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Psalm 51

David’s Repentance

Psalm 51 pictures David’s confession of his sin with Bathseba (2Sam 11-12). In verses 1-2, what aspects of God’s character does David appeal to as he begins his prayer? In verses 3-4, what do I notice about David’s attitude toward his sin? What requests does David repeatedly make of God throughout this psalm? In verses 16-17, what kind of response does God desire more than religious activity? When I fail, am I more likely to hide, justify, or run to Him to confess my sin? Is there an area of my life where God may be inviting me to practice deeper repentance and renewed dependence on Him? Has my family ever witnessed me repenting and asking for forgiveness?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

1Chronicles 29:10-22

David's Final Prayer

In verses 11-12, what attributes of God does David celebrate in his prayer? According to verse 14, how does David view the wealth, resources, and accomplishments of Israel? What do verses 17-19 reveal about what David desires most for himself and for God's people? How has David's perspective changed from the young shepherd of 1 Samuel 16 to the king we see in this passage? What gifts, opportunities, relationships, or resources has God entrusted to me? If I truly believed that everything I have comes from God and belongs to Him, what might change about the way I live?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

BECAUSE OF DAVID...



Where is God inviting me to
step out in faith and
trust His character?

GRIP Gathering Preparation



Word Highlights – Over the last 3 weeks of journaling what truth has impacted my heart in a meaningful way?

Why is this truth meaningful to me here and now?

How is God inviting me to respond to this truth?



Pass On – Have I expressed what God has impressed on my heart to my family, friend, or GRIP partner?



Action Point Progress – Over these past weeks I followed through on the following actions which God put on my heart to prioritize.

SECTION 4

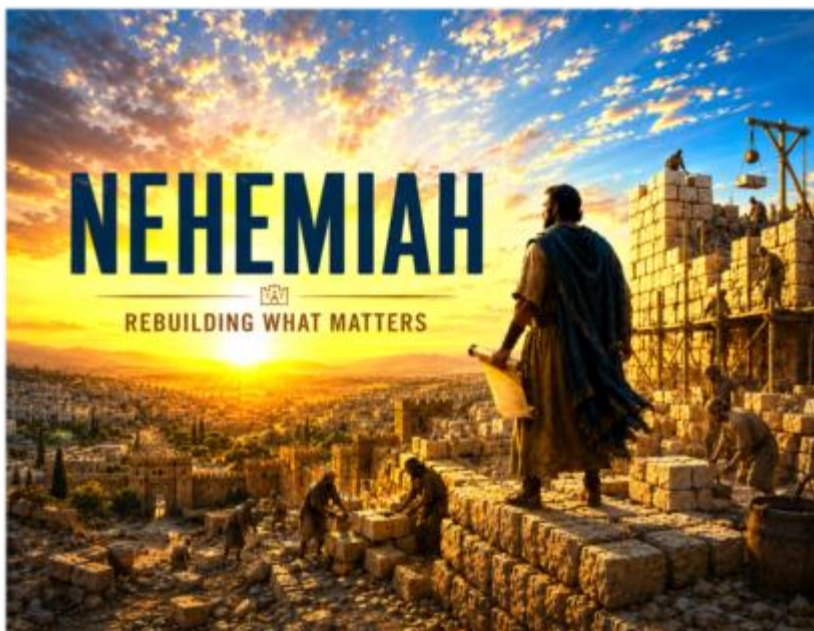
SIX MEN.
—◆—
SIX JOURNEYS.
—◆—
ONE GOD.



Be watchful,
stand firm in the faith,
act like men,
be strong.

Let all that you do
be done in **love**.

—◆—
1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14



Nehemiah lived nearly 1700 years after Abraham and about 140 years after the people of Judah were taken into exile by Babylon. Although many Jews had returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the city remained vulnerable. Its walls were still broken down, its gates had been burned, and the people lived with the daily reminder of their nation's shame and defeat.

Serving in exile as the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia, Nehemiah held a position of great trust and responsibility in the royal court. Though he lived in comfort far from Jerusalem, his heart remained deeply connected to God's people. When he learned about the condition of the city, he didn't ignore the problem or assume someone else would fix it. He brought his burden to God in prayer, and God used that burden to call him into action.

As you begin Nehemiah's story, observe how God works through an ordinary man with an extraordinary dependence on Him. Before Nehemiah ever rebuilt a wall, he sought God's heart. His life reminds us that lasting influence begins with prayer, courageous obedience, and a willingness to step into the work God places before us.

NEHEMIAH

Rebuilding What Matters

Theme: God accomplishes extraordinary work through ordinary men who pray first, lead courageously, and persevere faithfully.

WHY STUDY NEHEMIAH?

Nehemiah wasn't a prophet or priest. He was a government official in a pagan nation whose heart broke for the condition of God's people. What began as a burden became a calling.

Faced with opposition, criticism, discouragement, and overwhelming obstacles, Nehemiah consistently returned to prayer and trusted God for strength.

His story reminds us that God often rebuilds lives, families, churches, and communities through faithful men who are willing to courageously step forward in obedience.

"The gracious hand of my God was on me."
Nehemiah 2:8

As You Read...

Notice how often Nehemiah responds to every challenge with prayer and action. Ask God where He is inviting you to rebuild something for His glory.

THE JOURNEY

GOD STIRS
NEHEMIAH'S
HEART

Nehemiah 1:1-2:10



GOD MOVES
NEHEMIAH
TO ACTION

Nehemiah 2:11-3:32



GOD
STRENGTHENS
NEHEMIAH
THROUGH
OPPOSITION

Nehemiah 4:1-23;
6:1-7:3



GOD CALLS HIS
PEOPLE TO
REPENTANCE

Nehemiah 9:1-38;
10:28-39



GOD CALLS HIS
PEOPLE TO
FAITHFULNESS

Nehemiah 13:1-31



Week 9

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Nehemiah 1:1-2:10

A Heart Stirred Toward Prayer and Vision

Describe Nehemiah’s prayer life. How does it compare with my prayer life? An unwall’d city was a disgrace to God’s people and God’s reputation. Where do I currently see God’s reputation under assault? Is my heart stirrable (1:4)? What has God put in my heart to do in my sphere of influence? Am I deliberately pursuing this? Is it my habit to pray “on the spot” prayers when a decision is required now?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Nehemiah 2:11-3:32

Getting After It

How often do I credit the hand of God in my life circumstances (2:18,20)? What pattern do I observe in verses 10, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30? Where do I currently have skin in the game in the Lord’s work? How does this affect my attitude? Is there a pattern of “a time to pray” and “a time to work” in my life? What repairs or rebuilding must I work on in my family?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Nehemiah 4:1-23; 6:1-7:3

Pressing Through Adversity

Rebuilding a whole city wall is hard enough. But, having enemies ridicule and threaten makes it exponentially harder. In what ways did Nehemiah respond to the opposition and keep his people on task? How does he tap into the people’s internal motivation (4:14 i.e. think first 3 fingers of the HAND)? What adjustments do I need to make in light of satan’s opposition toward me in fulfilling my HAND action steps received from God? Who in my life is blowing a trumpet that I need to rally around (4:20)? How does Nehemiah’s view of the project empower him to say “no” to lesser things (6:3)? What’s my “great work” given to me by God in this season of life? What finish line am I nearing? How will I celebrate?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 9

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Nehemiah 9:1-38; 10:28-39

Prayer of Confession and the Works of Repentance

What was the agenda of this gathering (9:1-2)? What aspect of God’s character do I see emphasized in this long prayer? Notice the repeated word “But” or “Yet” (9:16, 26-30). List 3 ways God has treated me better than I deserve. Why doesn’t God bail on me when I sin? After recounting God’s dealings with the Jews, note the conclusion (9:33). What’s the difference between confession and repentance? The community makes a formal recommitment to God with some litmus tests of repentance (10:30, 31, 32). What are three explicit practices I do because I am an ALL IN follower of Jesus Christ? What do I need to confess and repent of TODAY?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 9

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Nehemiah 13:1-31

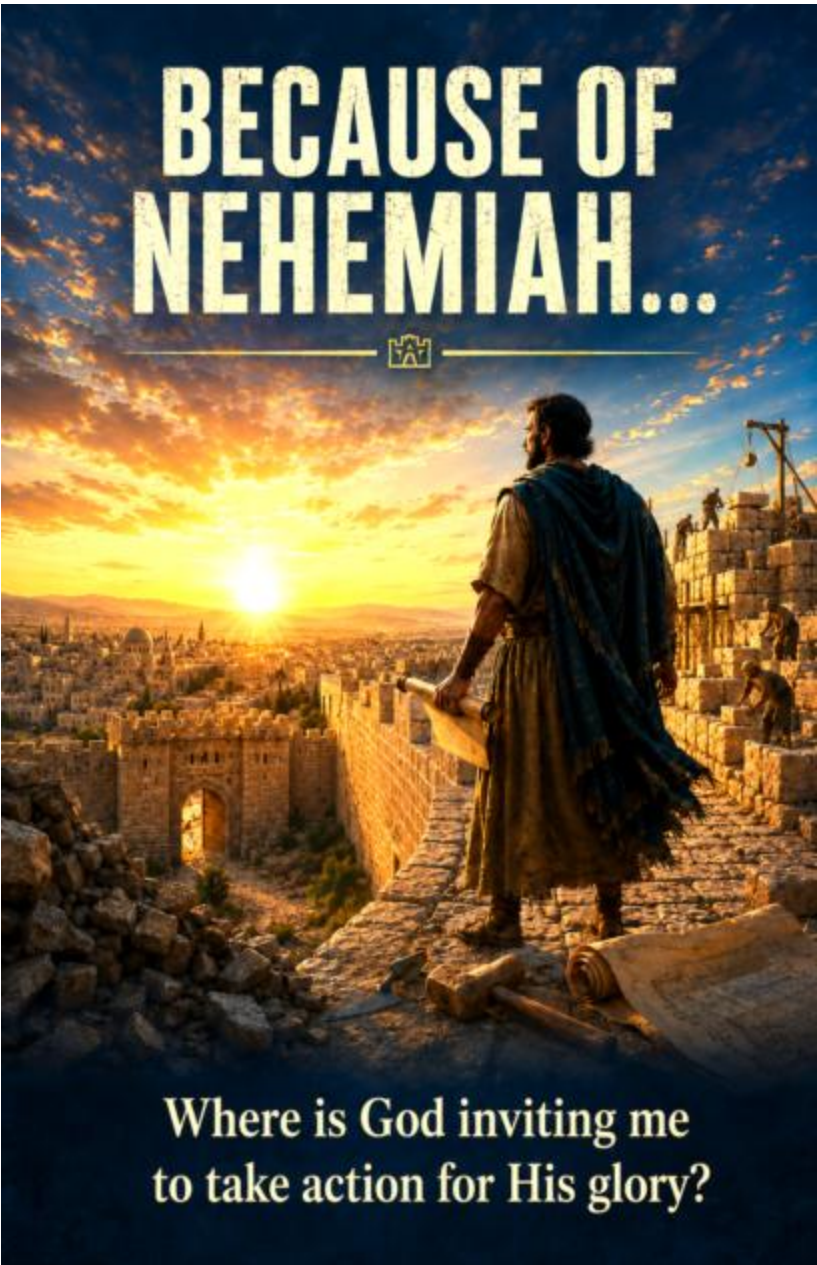
Living God’s Way is Still Not Natural

Can I recall a time when the Word of God corrected my wrong thinking on an issue and I immediately brought my life into alignment with God’s way? No matter how zealously we commit ourselves to God (10:29), our tendency is to drift away. Where do I see drift in this passage? Any warning signs that I am drifting away from God’s standard in some area of my life? Why not discuss this with my GRIP partner? Based on the issues in chapter 13, how are the people living up to their commitment made in Nehemiah 10:30-32?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

BECAUSE OF NEHEMIAH...



Where is God inviting me
to take action for His glory?



Before he became one of the most influential leaders of the early church, Peter was a fisherman from the region of Galilee. Originally named Simon, he worked alongside his brother Andrew and their partners, James and John. Fishing was demanding, physical work that required persistence, courage, and quick decisions—qualities that would often be visible in Peter’s personality.

Jesus called Simon to leave his nets and follow Him, promising to make him a “fisher of people.” Jesus also gave him the name Peter, meaning “rock.” Yet Peter did not immediately live up to that name. He was sincere, outspoken, impulsive, and often willing to act before he fully understood. He asked bold questions, made strong declarations, and sometimes allowed fear or pride to overtake his faith.

Peter has a front row seat to Jesus’ teaching, witnesses His authority, and sees Him perform many miracles. Still, Peter has much to learn about who Jesus truly is and what it means to follow Him when faith becomes costly.

As you journey through Peter’s story notice that Peter’s imperfections do not make him unusable in Jesus’ mission. The man who once trembled before a servant girl would eventually stand courageously before powerful leaders and proclaim the name of Jesus.

PETER

Following Jesus Beyond Fear

Theme: Jesus doesn't call perfect followers. He transforms imperfect men who continue trusting Him, even after failure.

WHY STUDY PETER?

Peter was bold, passionate, impulsive, and sometimes fearful. He stepped out of the boat, confessed Jesus as the Messiah, rebuked Jesus, denied Him three times, and became one of the most influential leaders of the early church.

His story is one of grace.

Jesus didn't give up on Peter after his failures. Instead, He restored him, strengthened him, and entrusted him with caring for His people.

Peter reminds us that failure does not have the final word when we continue following Christ.

As you walk through these five readings, ask Jesus to deepen your faith and renew your confidence in His grace.

"Follow me."

John 21:19

As You Read...

Pay attention to how Jesus patiently shapes Peter over time. Ask Him to strengthen your faith and remind you that His grace is greater than your failures.

THE JOURNEY

JESUS CALLS
PETER

Luke 5:1-11



JESUS GROWS
PETER'S FAITH

Matthew 14:22-36



JESUS RESTORES
PETER

John 21:15-19



PETER
EMPOWERED BY
THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 2:14-47



PETER
FINISHES
FAITHFULLY

2Peter 1:1-15; 3:8-18



Week 10

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**John 1:40-42; Mark 1:16-18; Luke 5:1-11****Peter Responded to the Call of Jesus**

These three passages represent the progression of Peter's early response to Jesus. Simon Peter was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew (Jn 1:41). Who introduced me to Jesus? Who have I introduced to Jesus? What characterized Simon Peter's response to Jesus (Mark 1:18; Luke 5:4-11)? Where do you see evidence of Simon Peter repenting, believing, and following? Have I transferred my trust to Jesus? If so, do I cherish the fact that I am “chosen of God, holy, and beloved” (Col 3:12)?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 10

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Matt 14:22-36; Mark 8:27-33; Matt 16:13-20

Peter Expresses Faith in Jesus with His Actions and His Words

Much of Peter's faith journey is recorded for us in the New Testament. Going deeper in knowing, trusting, obeying, serving, loving Jesus. Why did Peter get out of the boat? Why did the other disciples stay in the boat? When he laid his head on his pillow that night, how would Peter describe the highs and lows of his day? What challenge in my life right now is so large that I have no hope of doing it apart from God's help? Peter, speaking for the Twelve, publicly declared Jesus to be the Christ (Messiah). What evidence in the passage shows the significance of this profession. In what ways do I publicly align myself with Jesus? Does my family see me expressing my faith in words and actions?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 10

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

**John 18:15-16; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:61;
John 21:15-19**

Peter Tragically disassociated with Jesus...and then Jesus restored him as the leader of the Apostles

The night before His crucifixion, when Jesus prophesied: “You will all fall away...”, Peter protested, “Even though all I may fall away, yet I will not...Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You” (Mark 14:27-31)! What moment in my life was I most disappointed in myself? Did I feel that Christ could never use me again? How do I handle my current unfaithfulness to God? What stands out to me in how Jesus publicly restored Peter as the leader among the apostles? Notice: Jesus’ first words to Simon were “Follow me” (Mark 1:17) and, after all that had transpired, Jesus’ last words to Peter were “Follow Me” (John 21:19).



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Acts 2:14-47

Peter becomes a Powerful Spirit-filled Preacher

Is THIS the same Peter? I just did a double take. How do I account for the confidence? The knowledge? The heart responses to the sermon? What difference does the risen, ascended, active Christ make in my daily living? When have I unmistakably experienced the enablement of the Holy Spirit as I have joined God on His mission? Have I claimed the promises of God for the other members of my family (2:39)? What in particular stands out to me from this sermon?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 10

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

2Peter 1:1-15; 3:8-18

Peter Finishing Well

Peter is aware that his days are numbered (1:14,15). A final love letter is worthy of careful inspection and review.

What encouragement is here for me?

What actions am I being called up to

(i.e., 1:5-10; 3:11,14,17, 18)? What

aspects of God does Peter emphasize?

Read 1:9 again, recalling Peter’s abysmal denial of Christ. Have I forgotten the purification of my former sins? What kind of letter would I write to my loved ones if I knew my days on this earth were numbered? Have I written “legacy Letters” to my family members? (see appendix pg. 177)?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

BECAUSE OF PETER...



Where is God inviting me
to manifest my faith?



Before he was known as Paul the apostle, he was Saul of Tarsus—a highly educated Jewish man, a Roman citizen, and a devoted Pharisee. Trained under the respected teacher Gamaliel, Saul was deeply committed to the law of Moses and determined to defend the traditions of his faith. He was intelligent, disciplined, zealous, and confident that his actions pleased God.

When the message about Jesus began spreading, Saul viewed the growing Christian movement as a dangerous threat. He approved of Stephen’s execution and began entering homes, arresting believers, and attempting to destroy the church. By the time we meet him in Acts 9, Saul is traveling to Damascus with official authority to capture followers of Jesus and bring them back to Jerusalem as prisoners.

Saul believed he was pursuing God, but he was actually fighting against Him. Everything changed when the risen Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus. That encounter shattered Saul’s confidence in his own righteousness and redirected the course of his life.

As you begin Paul’s story, watch how the grace of Jesus transforms a violent opponent into a faithful servant. The same man who once tried to silence the gospel would spend the rest of his life proclaiming it, suffering for it, and equipping others to carry it forward.

PAUL

Encountered. Changed. Sent.

Theme: No one is beyond the reach of God's grace, and every transformed life is sent with purpose.

WHY STUDY PAUL?

Before he became the apostle Paul, he was Saul—a man fiercely committed to persecuting followers of Jesus. Yet one encounter with the risen Christ changed the entire direction of his life.

From that moment forward, Paul devoted himself to proclaiming the gospel, planting churches, developing leaders, and enduring incredible hardship for the sake of Christ.

Paul's life reminds us that God delights in transforming unlikely people into faithful servants who impact generations.

As you walk through these five readings, ask God to continue changing you and sending you wherever He desires.

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain."

1 Corinthians 15:10

As You Read...

Watch how God's grace transforms every area of Paul's life. Ask God to continue shaping you into a man who faithfully lives and shares the gospel wherever He leads.

THE JOURNEY

GOD MEETS
PAUL
WITH MERCY
1Timothy 1:12-17



GOD SUSTAINS
PAUL THROUGH
SUFFERING
2Corinthians 1:3-11;
11:23-12:10



GOD ENLARGES
PAUL'S HEART
FOR PEOPLE
Romans 9:1-5;
1Thessalonians 1-2



GOD ENABLES
PAUL TO
FINISH WELL
2Timothy 3:1-4:8



Week 11

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1-2; Acts 22:4-5; 26:9-11;

Galatians 1:13-14; 1Timothy 1:12-17

Saul The Ignorant Enemy

Why does Paul so freely speak of his past life of sin? From my own experience, what could I say to a seeking friend about God’s patience and mercy (1Tim 1:16)? If God can transform Paul, why do I doubt that He can transform me! What words in 1Tim 1:12-17 stand out to my heart? When Paul looks in the mirror what does he see? What do I see when I look in the mirror?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 11

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”**2Corinthians 1:3-11; 2Corinthians 11:23-12:10****Paul’s Contentment in God’s Sufficient Grace...Even While Suffering**

According to 2Cor 1:3-4, Explain the ricochet effect of suffering/comfort. When life’s pressures increased for Paul, how did this impact his dependance on God? What about me? Paul personally knew the extreme consequences of living a life for God. He had experienced low lows and high highs (2Cor 11:23-28). Why can Paul be content with personal weaknesses, insults, hardships, etc. (2Cor 12:10)? It has been said that there is no spiritual growth without tension. Have I learned to embrace the tension like Paul? When life gets hard, do I just go through it or grow through it?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 11

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

Romans 9:1-5; 1Thessalonians 1:1-10; 2:7-20

Paul the Big-hearted Champion of People’s Salvation and Growth

The Great Commandment summarized is love God and love people. This is what Paul was all about. His love for Christ compelled him towards people, whether Jew or Gentile. Based on Romans 9:3, how might we measure Paul’s commitment to his fellow Jews? What am I willing to sacrifice to see my pinky friend come to Christ? For what qualities does Paul commend the Thessalonian believers (1Thes 1: 1-10; 2: 13-14)? What would Paul commend me for? What do we learn about Paul’s heart toward these people (1Thes 2:5-12). Does my GRIP partner know and feel that I am for his spiritual success? Am I?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 11

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

2Timothy 3:1–4:8

Paul Finishing Well in Ministry and Life...Exhorting to the End

Should I be surprised by difficult times (3:1, 12)? What access did Timothy have to Paul (3:10-11, 14)? How might Paul's personal example fortify Timothy in the face of the stress of the last days? Can others look at my life and conclude that God is faithful? To what things do I need to give myself in order to finish strong in this season of my life? Author and speaker, Steve Farrar, looks at empirical evidence and concludes that only one out of ten men finish strong in life! He writes: “Finishing strong seems to be rare and exceptional.” What exceptional measures am I taking to ensure that I will be among the 10% of Christian men who finish strong?



What will I pass on to my family? To my GRIP partner? To my friend?

Week 11

Date: _____

Drawing Near

Hebrews 4:16

Today is set aside to pause and enjoy the nearness of God. To prayerfully recognize, reflect on, and respond to what God has been drawing my attention to.



Recognize

First, take some moments to look back over the past 14 days of journaling as I've pondered the lives of Nehemiah, Peter, and Paul. In my journaling, what words keep bubbling up? What thoughts or ideas does God keep bringing to my attention? What does He seem to be saying to me through these scripture passages? What has been on my heart in a big way recently? What life situation or circumstance is God drawing my attention to?

Reflect

Next, reflect on these words WITH God in prayer. Ask God: *Why do these words/ideas/thoughts keep bubbling up? Why Here? Why Now? What specifically do You want me to hear?*

Respond

Continue in unhurried, prayerful reflection. Ask God: *How do you want me to respond?* If you find it meaningful, write your prayer response back to your loving, heavenly Father. This response time might look like....

- Praise and thanksgiving for His blessings
- Confession and repentance for some sin(s)
- Surrender and yielding to what He is pressing on me.
- Crying out to Him in my struggle
- Appreciating His Gospel



GRIP Gathering Preparation



Word Highlights – Over the last 3 weeks of journaling what truth has impacted my heart in a meaningful way?

Why is this truth meaningful to me here and now?

How is God inviting me to respond to this truth?

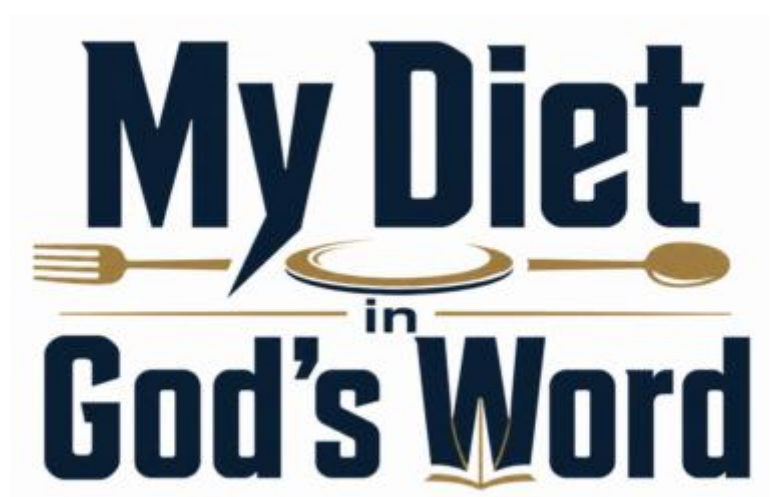


Pass On – Have I expressed what God has impressed on my heart to my family, friend, or GRIP partner?



Action Point Progress – Over these past weeks I followed through on the following actions which God put on my heart to prioritize.

SECTION 5



“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Word of God in My Life

Excerpted from *Deeper*,
by Dane Ortlund, Chapter 8



Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

John 17:17

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

Matthew 7:24-25

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4

...and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2Tim3:15-17

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you...Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully...

Excerpt from the Introduction of the Gideon Bible

...continued on next page.

These reverent words bring us unavoidably face-to-face with the sacred preciousness of the Bible... Scripture is shaping and fueling and oxygenating. It is vital. Jesus prayed, “*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth*” (John 17:17). Jesus said we need the word of God, which is truth, for sanctification to happen.

In this shifty, uncertain world, God has given us actual words. Concrete, unmoving, fixed words. We can go to the rock of Scripture amid the shifting sands of this life. Your Bible is going to have the same words tomorrow that it does today. Friends can't provide that – they will move in and out of your life, loyal today but absent tomorrow.... But you can roll out of bed tomorrow morning and, whatever stressors slide uncomfortably across your mental horizon as you groan with the anxieties of the day, your friend the Bible is unfailingly steady. It lies there, awaiting opening, eager to steady you amid all the unanswered questions before you that day. It will give you what you need and not evade you.

You will go deeper with Christ no further than you go into Scripture.

To read Scripture is to read of Christ. To read it is to hear His voice. And to hear His voice of comfort and counsel is to hear an invitation to become the [man] God has desired you to be.

So, build Bible reading into your life in the very same way you build breakfast into your life. After all, we humans are habit-forming creatures. Our morning coffee, our evening dessert, the way we care for our vehicles, our methods for decompressing such as jogging or movies or bird-watching – and all our habits reflect an acquired taste, over a long period of time, resulting in daily rituals without which we do not feel we have lived a normal day. And I want so say: *Make the Bible your central daily ritual*. Make it your habit without which you have not lived a normal day.

One of the key rhythms of GRIP is the regular unhurried time alone with God in His Word with a posture to listen and obey. Do I truly own this rhythm? What is my current relationship with the Word of God? What shift do I need to make in my life to make the Bible my “central daily ritual?” What does God say about His Word in His Word?

One of the best books on spiritual formation and growing in Christ!
Dane Ortlund, *Deeper*, Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2021
ISBN 978-1-4335-7399-6

“Father, grip my heart today.”

My Diet in God’s Word

*Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name. **Psalm 86:11***



*And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You. **Ps. 9:10***

*“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; **John 14:21***

*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. **Hebrews 4:12***

“The first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord.”

George Mueller, May 1841 diary entry.

Apart from daily reading God’s Word with a posture to know Him, love Him and obey Him, it’s highly unlikely that a man will ever be a vibrant disciple, let alone a disciple maker.

God has graciously given us His special revelation in the Bible (2Tim 3:16). It’s the ONLY source where you can learn God’s character, learn God’s Gospel, and learn who you are in Christ. As we read the Scriptures, they read us (Heb 4:12). The Holy Spirit ministers the Word to us as we read and reflect (Jn 16:13,14). He corrects our wrong thinking; He convicts us of sin; He reminds us of God’s promises; He speaks courage to our heart; He makes our heart happy in the Lord!

We trust that you’ve had regular unhurried time alone with God in His Word over this GRIP season. The GRIP Guide has directed you toward what passage to read. Now, it’s your turn to decide where to be in God’s Word for the next several months. Wherever you choose to be, we strongly encourage you to process what you read through journaling. And it may be helpful for you to be in the same portion of Scripture as your wife or as your GRIP partner.

...continued on next page.

Here are some ideas to help you:

- **Finish GRIP Journal Days** - Perhaps you have fallen a bit behind the 5X per week rhythm championed in this GRIP Guide. Finish your journaling days in the GRIP Guide before choosing some other Bible focus.
- **Choose a Bible Book** – Most Bible books were written as a unit. Why not commit to reading a whole Bible book, one passage at a time? The Bible Project videos or a study Bible can provide an overview of the book. Your pace can be determined by the Spirit.
- **Explore a Topic** - Is there a topic you encountered this GRIP season that you want to explore further? The guys on your GRIP team or the Focused Living staff may be able to suggest passages under a particular topic.
- **Adopt a Reading Plan** – There are many Bible reading Plans available. Some plans are designed to help you read the Bible in a year or read the New Testament in a Year. Other plans might be shorter. Maybe your church has a Bible reading plan related to a sermon series. Again, YouVersion has many options. The plan you choose can certainly go beyond the 3 weeks of this section!
- **Life Passages** – Maybe there are some portions of Scripture that you really want to master in your heart so they will master you. List them and slowly read/ study through them. The Lectio Divina approach (*see page 19*) might help you meditate on these passages.
- **Devotionals** – A devotional can be helpful as part of your Bible reading diet, if you spend more time reading and pondering the scripture portion versus the human author's thoughts. Many men have been helped by:

New Morning Mercies by Paul David Tripp (365 days)

Everyday Gospel by Paul David Tripp (365 days)

The Passion of Christ by John Piper (50 days)

Jesus Calling by Sarah Young (365 days)

My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers (365)

Here's my plan for Bible Reading over the next few weeks:

Week 12

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 12

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 12

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 13

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 13

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 13

Date: _____

Scripture Memory

Hiding the truth of God's Word in my heart is an incredibly valuable resource in my day-to-day life of following Jesus and keeping in step with His Spirit. The Word of God gives me the power to say no to temptation, to hear the Spirit's leading, and to follow His will.



Think over the last several days. **What scriptural truths has God been impressing on me? How has God been stirring my heart? Where is He getting my attention?**

Could it be that God is saying, *I want you to hide this truth deep in your mind and heart so it becomes part of you?* **What Scripture verse(s) would be meaningful for me to commit to memory so I will have it when I need it the most?**

One impactful way to hide God's word in my heart is to recite it and then pray from it. Maybe there is a word or phrase or truth that the Spirit will use to stimulate me toward specific prayer. Allow the verse to be a jumping off point for communing with God through prayer.

For example, suppose God highlights Eph 5:8-9

“You are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness, and righteousness and truth.)”

“Lord, as I walk through this day, may my mind, mouth, and heart be overwhelmed with Your goodness and righteousness and Light. Please crowd out the darkness and impurity that often sneaks in.”

Week 13

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 13

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 14

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 14

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

The Passage I chose



What will I pass on **to my family?** **To my GRIP partner?** **To my friend?**

Week 14

Date: _____

“Father, grip my heart today.”

- 1) *Use today to catch up if you find yourself a bit behind in your personal reading plan.*

OR

- 2) *Sit with your GRIP Guide and Bible open. Page through your journal with a highlighter in hand, underlining what you sense God wants to underline for your life.*



Week 14

Date: _____

Reflecting Back

Acts 14:27

When [Paul and his team] had arrived and gathered the Antioch church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.



Like the Apostle Paul, I've just finished a journey with God and with another brother. I see in Acts 14:27 that Paul looks back on his journey through an "I-spy-God" lens. He's ready to rehearse for his sending church "all things God had done with them." Now it's my turn to reflect on my GRIP season and play "I spy God."

As I reflect back on the past 100 days, where Have I seen God's hand at work in my life? (i.e. in my relationships, in my circumstances, his provision, etc.)

Evaluation is a wise practice. God modeled it for us at creation ("*it is good...it is very good*") [Gen 1:10, 21,25, 31]) and the New Testament writers tell us to examine ourselves [1Cor 11:28, 2Cor 13:5; 2Pet 1:10].

Turn to page 28 and reread, "Evaluating My Season".

Where have I seen my love for God grow? For instance, where am I quicker to obey God and do life His way (John 14:21-24)?

Where have I seen my love for others grow? For example, what are some instances in which I took the initiative, acted sacrificially, and met a real need in someone's (maybe a family member) life (1Jn 4:10; Phil 2:3-4)?

Week 14

Date: _____

Reflecting Back & Looking Ahead

Proverbs 16:1-3

*The plans of the heart belong to man,
But the answer of the tongue is
from the LORD.*

*All the ways of a man are clean in his own
sight, But the LORD weighs the motives.*

*Commit your works to the LORD
And your plans will be established.*



What progress have I witnessed in my GRIP partner that I can encourage him with?

What progress did I see in my action points? What steps of obedience do I need to lean in to over the next few months?

Here's my plan for being in God's Word:

(Scripture passages? Why? When and where will I have my times alone with God? How will I process what I read?)

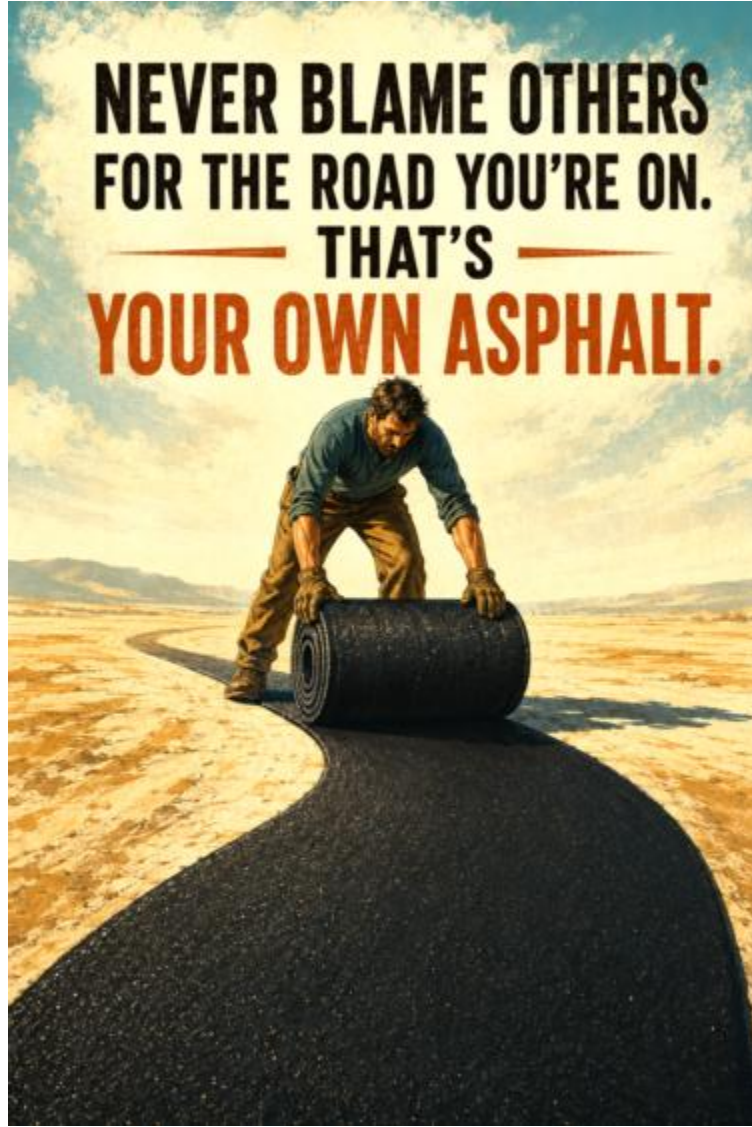
What brother(s) will I walk this spiritual journey with over the next couple of months?

GRIP Gathering Preparation

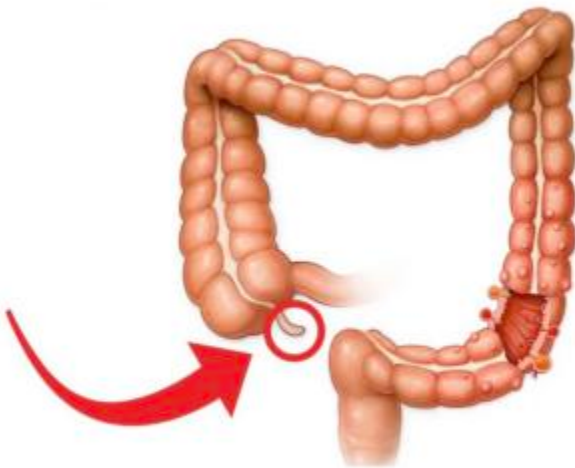
Come prepared to testify how God has been working in your life this season!

- What specific ways has God gripped my heart this season?
- What would I share from my “Reflecting Back / Looking Ahead” on pages 159-160





APPENDIX





FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

SURVEY

— FOR —

GRIP MAN

Does not apply at all		Applies somewhat		Applies completely	
0	1	2	3	4	5

LOVE

- ☐ My heart is tender towards God and others.
☐ I am regularly engaged in sacrificial acts of service
☐ I am aware of the needs of others and seek to meet them.
☐ Through God's grace I forgive people who have hurt me
☐ I celebrate when good things happen to others
☐ I'm known for giving up what I want for the sake of others

_____ of 30 Total

JOY

- ☐ I understand how much God enjoys my fellowship.
☐ I rarely become irritable with others or circumstances.
☐ I am inclined to speak gratitude rather than complaint.
☐ There is a contagious sense of thankfulness and delight in my life.
☐ Circumstances do not dictate my mood
☐ I enjoy God every day.

_____ of 30 Total

PEACE

- ☐ My heart, soul and mind are resting in God?
☐ I am rarely troubled or anxious?
☐ Others would describe me as being fully contented.
☐ Peace rules my heart because Christ rules my life.
☐ I am quick to cast my cares on Christ and leave them with Him
☐ I know deeply that God has forgiven me

_____ of 30 Total

Does not
apply at all

Applies
somewhat

Applies
completely

0 ----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5

PATIENCE

- _____ I am able to wait gracefully when inconvenienced.
- _____ I am rarely in a hurry.
- _____ I act calmly when my agenda is blocked or when I am interrupted.
- _____ I slow down for others who do not move as quickly as I do.
- _____ I view waiting for others as an opportunity to wait on God.
- _____ I do not get angry with God when I have to endure suffering

_____ of 30 Total

KINDNESS

- _____ I stop to lend a hand to help others even when I'm busy.
- _____ I love to serve anonymously so others get the credit.
- _____ I would be described by others as an encourager and affirmer.
- _____ I listen to others with sincere interest.
- _____ In fellowship settings, I intentionally greet the lonely looking folks
- _____ I help those who are in trouble or who cannot help themselves.

_____ of 30 Total

GOODNESS

- _____ I give a significant portion of my time and material resources to others
- _____ When giving, I give the maximum not the minimum.
- _____ My heart to give is growing not shrinking.
- _____ I would never keep something that did not belong to me
- _____ Those close to me would characterize me as generous.
- _____ I'm quick to confess when I transgress a Biblical moral standard

_____ of 30 Total

Does not apply at all		Applies somewhat		Applies completely	
0	1	2	3	4	5

FAITHFULNESS

- ☐ People would say that I am dependable
☐ When I say I am going to do something, it gets done.
☐ I rarely wrestle with procrastination.
☐ Because God is my audience, I do things excellently
and never just enough to get by.
☐ I follow God even when it involves hardship.
☐ I take unpopular stands when my faith requires it

☐ of 30 Total

GENTLENESS

- ☐ I consistently speak the truth with grace.
☐ I have surrendered my strength to God and don't seek
to control others
☐ Others would consider me very approachable
☐ When people hurt, I'm not afraid to be a comforting presence
☐ I have a reputation for not raising my voice
☐ I am aware of my own faults when I am faced with
the sin of others

☐ of 30 Total

SELF-CONTROL

- ☐ I control my tongue
☐ I have broken my bad habits and they are under His control.
☐ I rarely give in to impulse.
☐ I am not easily "set -off"
☐ I am not addicted to food, caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, or any
phone app
☐ I do not engage in sexual practices that are contrary to biblical
teaching

☐ of 30 Total



FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT SURVEY

— FOR —
FRIEND
OR
FAMILY MEMBER

Does not
apply at all

Applies
somewhat

Applies
completely

0 ----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5

LOVE

- ☐ My heart is tender towards God and others.
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- _____ When giving, I give the maximum not the minimum.
- _____ My heart to give is growing not shrinking.
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- _____ Those close to me would characterize me as generous.
- _____ I'm quick to confess when I transgress a Biblical moral standard

_____ of 30 Total

Does not apply at all		Applies somewhat		Applies completely	
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_____ of 30 Total

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☐ I am not easily "set -off"
☐ I am not addicted to food, caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, or any
phone app
☐ I do not engage in sexual practices that are contrary to biblical
teaching

_____ of 30 Total

Life Assignment: Listening

Life Assignment: Sometime over the next 3 days, practice listening to a family member for 10 minutes.

When I place myself before Scripture, is my spirit ready to listen to what God wants to impress on me? Listening to God sets my heart in the right place to listen to others. Would my family and friends describe me as a 'good listener'? Am I refreshing to be around because I live out the truths of the following passages?



Proverbs 17:27-28

One who withholds his words has knowledge,
And one who has a cool spirit is a person of understanding.
Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise;
When he closes his lips, he is *considered* prudent.

Proverbs 18:13

One who gives an answer before he hears,
It is foolishness and shame to him.

James 1:19

You know *this*, my beloved brothers *and* sisters. Now everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, *and* slow to anger;



Listening Exercise

Here's an exercise to help you practice listening. Overemphasizing listening will feel awkward at first. But give it a go. Like most things in life, we improve with practice.

When: 10 minute block in the next 3 days

What: practice listening to one of your family members talk about a topic of their choice for 10 mins.

How to get started: *"I have an assignment for GRIP. We've been learning about listening. My assignment is to listen to a person in our family for 10 mins. May I listen to you? You can talk about any topic that would be meaningful to you. Some examples of topics might be:*

something you are really excited about

Why you love [this](hobby; sports team; movie, etc)

a decision you are mulling over

a situation that has annoyed you

a problem you are facing

a book or talk or video that has recently impacted you

a topic you've been seeing in your social media

The only rule is that you [the Speaker] have to pause now and then to let me summarize what I have heard so far.

RULES FOR LISTENER:

Don't ask any questions.

Don't interrupt.

Don't give your opinion or your advice

Don't try to solve their problem.

Don't share a 'helpful' story or experience that relates

Don't roll your eyes.

Don't frown.

Don't correct the facts.

Don't prepare a rebuttal in your mind.

Just be present with an attentive look on your face and listen to your family member's words. Also listen to what is behind their words, to their heart (*Why is this important to them?*) Only open your mouth to periodically paraphrase what they are saying. For example,

"What I hear you saying is..."

"Sounds like..."

How to End – When your family member is done speaking, ask, *"Did you feel listened to? Why or Why not?"*

Life Assignment: Speak Life Words

Life Assignment: Read the “Practical ways to Apply the Bible’s teaching on Communication” on the next page. Choose one method and **use it this week.**



God’s will is a sanctified tongue used for the building up of others. As I read the following Scriptures, what is the Holy Spirit convincing me of?

Proverbs 12:18

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Proverbs 15:1,4

A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger...A soothing tongue is a tree of life, But perversion in it crushes the spirit.

Proverbs 16:24

Pleasant words are a honeycomb,
Sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need of *the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

1Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Practical Ways to Obey God's teaching on the Tongue

1) "Life words" when we fail

I'm **SORRY**. I was **WRONG**. Please **FORGIVE** me. I **LOVE** you
Adopted from Chuck Swindoll radio program

2) "Life words" for lifetime encouragement

1. Pay attention – look for positive things
2. Describe the positive you see "You just did..."
3. React with emotion "That makes me feel..."
4. Share an expectation "I believe you are becoming..."
5. Physically touch (i.e. pat on the back, hug)

Adopted from *The 7 Laws of a Learner* (Bruce Wilkinson, 1992)

3) Speaker Listener Technique

Communicating Safely and Clearly

Rules for Both of You

1. The speaker has the floor
2. Share the floor
3. No problem solving

Rules for the Speaker

1. Speak for yourself
2. Talk in small chunks
3. Stop and let the listener paraphrase

Rules for the Listener

1. Paraphrase what you hear
2. Don't rebut. Focus on the Speaker's message.

Adopted from *A lasting Promise* (Scott Stanley, 1998)

4) Words + Tone + Expression + Body Language

"Real encouragement flows out of a relationship. It is more than a word now and then; it's your smile, expression, and very presence that communicates encouragement...*guard your tongue and your tone*. Learn to measure your response against the excitement on your child's face."

Adopted from *Growing Kids God's Way* (Gary Ezzo)

5) Messages Only a Father can Give (a 1000 times)

To Son: You have what a takes!

To Daughter: You are beautiful

Taken from a John Eldridge booklet

6) Giving a Daily Blessing

I love you and I'm proud to be your daddy(son, husband, brother)

Adopted from Joe White, Promise Keeper speaker

Life Assignment: Writing a Letter to Your Loved One

Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due - Proverbs 3:27a



When the topic is “words”, most commonly our minds think of the spoken word. But the power of words is also displayed in the written form. This **Life Assignment is to write a letter to one of your key family relationships.**

What you write about will be personal and will consider the relationship you have. It would be fitting and appropriate to express how highly you **value** this person and what you have been **praying** for this person. The tone of the letter would evidence your commitment to **humility**, which is all about emphasizing the other person. The details of the letter will show how much you’ve been observing and **listening**.

This is a completely personal assignment. There’s no right way or wrong way to do it. Here are questions to get your juices flowing:

What are you observing about this person’s life right now?
 What do you really appreciate about this person?
 How can you encourage them spiritually?
 Are there recent accomplishments to highlight?
 Does this person need a big dose of hope?
 How can you express that you are “for them” and “with them”?
 Have you told them of your affection for them? Your pride in them?
 Is there something you could say to inspire them into the future?
 Is there a Bible verse or two that would bless them in this season?

Bottomline: write from the heart and don’t leave big things unsaid.

The details are completely up to you. Many will choose to type this on a computer, but you may also feel like writing it out in your own handwriting. Perhaps it will be helpful to jot some bullet points down first and then craft the letter from those points. Some may decide that mailing the letter would make it special. Others may choose to hand deliver it to their family member and allow them to read it in your presence.

The bullseye of this life assignment is to use your words to bless. Take your time and let the humble and gentle Christ in you guide your thoughts.

Life Assignment: Writing Legacy Letters

The ultimate statistic is that 1 out of 1 dies! Nothing gets our attention like death! Coming face to face with your death puts life into proper perspective. Suddenly, the things that once clamored for your attention evaporate and the vital priorities of life rise to the surface. God is calling you to walk with Him on both sides of the grave. **A MAN IS**

SINCERELY READY TO LIVE WHEN HE IS TRULY PREPARED TO DIE. Only when a man

is ready to die (unresponsive to his greeds) will he ever live to serve the needs of others. That is why Jesus so boldly announced, *“Truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”* (John 12:24) *“I have come to give life and to give it abundantly.”* (John 10:10)



God is moving men to get their eyes off of their transient *positions*, temporary *possessions*, fleeting *pleasures*, and diminishing *productivity* in order to focus on an eternal **PERSON**. Everyday the Lord seeks to get your attention away from the temporary and onto the eternal. This move is so vitally strategic and so eternally significant that if you do not ask the following question and apply the answer you will never become all that God intended you to be. **How much of your life savings would you use to decorate your room at Motel 6?** (Jesus is the only one who really WILL ‘keep the light on’ for you!) Why will the answer to this question determine the focus of your life and how you will live this year? How much of your God given resources (time, treasures, talents) are you using to decorate and fix up your motel room? It is our sincere hope that this life assignment will help you invest more of your life resources in eternal relationships and responsibilities which will outlast you rather than spending your life on that which will last only temporarily.

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. James 4:14

...be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time... Ephesians 5:15,16

Death and life are in the power of the tongue... Proverbs 18:21

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Proverbs 16:24

The Scripture is clear that our time on this earth is short in comparison with eternity. Not only has God ordained both the beginning and end of our days, but He longs to walk with us through the “dash” that represents this life! Navigating this life with a view towards our death inspires us to live well this short life God has given us. ***“He has also set eternity in their heart...”*** Eccl 3:11

One practical way to begin with the end in mind is to write a “legacy letter” to our immediate family members (i.e. spouse, children, siblings, parents, etc.) to be opened upon our death.



Some of the advantages of this exercise are:

1. It provides an opportunity to express “life words” even after your death that will continue to impact the people you love long after you are gone. (Prov 18:21)
2. It provides a focused way to think about the people God has placed in your life. Since you are not dead yet, you will gain a new appreciation for each of these people. Perhaps God will light in you to let Him transform some of the ways you relate before it is too late!
3. It brings some specific things to mind that you may want to communicate to these individuals NOW! ☺ (If you want to do this formally, see the life assignment entitled, *Family – Giving a Blessing* at www.focusedliving.com)

What should I Communicate?

Prayerfully ask God to help you know what you should emphasize in your letter. The apostle Paul models this when he writes:

Pray that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak...let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. Colossians 4:4,6



What you will write about will be personal and will take into account the relationship you have with your spouse or child. Highlight what the person means to you and include personal insights into your relationship with him or her. This is a great forum for encouragement, instilling values and casting vision. This is also an appropriate venue to point your child or spouse back to the character of God.

Naturally, some of the content in your letter to your child will vary based on your child's season of life, gender, and spiritual state. For instance, if your child has not yet trusted Christ, it would be appropriate to clearly share the Gospel so the child hears it directly from the heart of a father. If a child is a teenager, it would be appropriate to speak of future life seasons, like marriage or parenting. The bottom line is that there is no real formula for the letter! Just write from the heart and don't leave big things unsaid.

To jump start you, we have included several examples below. Please read through them to get a sense of what you would want to emphasize. Then, get out your box of tissues and start writing!

Joshua's legacy words to the leaders of Israel

Now it came about after many days, when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side, and Joshua was old, advanced in years, that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and their heads and their judges and their officers, and said to them... *"Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed."* Josh 23:1,2,14

King David's legacy words to his son, Solomon

As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever... Then David said to his son Solomon, *"Be strong and courageous, and act; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you..."* Then he died in a ripe old age, full of days, riches and honor; and his son Solomon reigned in his place.

1Chronicles 28:9, 20; 29:28



Example 1: To a Teenage Daughter

Dear Susan, Sweetie, I wanted to write this letter to you as one more way I can show my love for you. I also write this to encourage you to keep growing in and loving the Lord Whom I am with now in eternal splendor. Ever since you were born it has been my highest privilege to be your Dad. Every day while I was alive, I thanked God for giving you to me as a gift, and what a precious gift you are! I loved every moment of being around you and watching you mature into a beautiful and mature woman of God.

Though I am with the Lord as you read this letter, I want you to know that I am mindful of your great heart for Him, your desire to obey Him in every area of life, your compassionate love for the people He puts around you, and your vision to serve Him whole heartedly someday as a wife and mother in missions. Honey, I am so proud of you and the godly woman you have become, and I trust that you will continue to allow Jesus, and Jesus only, to be the greatest priority of your life. You have indeed become a WOW (Walk On Water) Woman!

As you continue to live your life for Him, always remember our tickle fights, running together, playing soccer, holding hands at the mall, learning to drive, hundreds of back rubs, water skiing, praying together before your first date, family vacations, talking into the wee hours of the morning, prayer walks, throwing the ball, choosing a college, graduations, and just being buddies.

Susan, there have been two passages of Scripture that have burned in my heart and mind because of my love for you which I want to give you. The first one is all of Psalm 139, especially verse 17, which says, “How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!” Oh Susan, take the truth of these words to heart. Let your heart and mind be consumed with our Lord’s gracious and positive thoughts about you, for you are indeed a very precious part of His creation. Let your security be grounded in God’s love for you and His thoughts about you. The second passage is my life verse found in Exodus 33:11 which says, “Thus the Lord would speak to Moses face to face just as a man speaks to his friend.” Honey, all I can say is that the Lord desires to be with you and speak with you daily just as though He was your best friend. Good friendships have always been a deep desire of your heart and I just wanted to remind you of something that you already know, and that is that even though Jesus is your God and creator, He still is your greatest friend.

Keep loving your mother as she is the greatest of all women on earth. Take care of her for me, Susan. And thanks also for being an outstanding big sister to Linda by being both an example and friend to her. I will be seeing you soon, Honey. Walk with joy every day basking in His love, enjoying His grace, and receiving His forgiveness. Invest your life in the people He puts around you so that you can be used of God to bring many to Himself while teaching them to be committed followers and disciples. And never forget that the Lord must be the center of your life. So enjoy serving Him with your whole heart. I love you, am so proud of you, and rejoice in the day we will be together as a family with the Lord forever. It won’t be long now, so give your life to others so that you can bring a few with you to heaven! See you soon. All my love, DAD.



Example 2: To a Toddler Son

Dear Daniel, You are 21 months old next week! When you are old enough to read this letter, I will no longer be here on earth. I will be with God in heaven. God is the only one who knows when it is time for us to leave the earth and go to be with Him in heaven forever. God loves me and you and Joey and Mommy and only wants the best for each of us.



I want you to know in the deepest part of your heart that I love you and I am super proud to be your daddy. I love holding you, wrestling with you, swinging you, hearing you try to talk, watching you be busy, giving you baths, changing your diapers, having you sit in between my legs on the floor and put your shoes on, reading to you, having you follow me around, watching you get all messy while you eat, smelling your baby scent, holding you in the pool, and being silly with you!

You are a very happy boy. Everyone that interacts with you (Aunt Susan, Pop Pop and Mom Mom and Grandpa Burns and Grandma Burns, those who watch you in the nursery at church, Miss Jill who watches you for 5 hours, Monday through Friday)...they all say that you are a happy little fellow. You have a great smile and a laugh that is contagious. You are so smart too. You problem solve very well. You really like to line up cars and drive them around. You like balls a lot too. Recently you started climbing the ladder up the sliding board. Usually you wait for me to hold your hand before you slide down. You have a great life ahead of you. You already have a good foundation. You love to pray at meal times with Joey and you love hearing and trying to say, "In Jesus' name, Amen." Someday you will understand God's great love for you. I am including a summary of God's good news here so you can hear it from your dad. Your mom and I have prayed that God would draw you to Himself someday. It is the best thing and most important thing in all your life. It is awesome being Sam Burn's son. But it is even MORE Awesome to be God's son! I encourage you to talk to your mother about these things and ask any questions you have about the Bible and the good news.

The Good News from Romans 3:19-26

1. No one can be right with God by being good (Romans 3:20)
2. God provides a way to be in a right relationship with him apart from "trying to be good enough" (Romans 3:21)
3. This "way" is through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22)
4. This way is available to everyone on the same basis because all people fall short of pleasing God (Romans 3:23)
5. This "way" is a free gift of God (Romans 3:24; 6:23)
6. Grace is free to us, it cost God a lot – the death of his son, Jesus
7. God's wrath was directed at Jesus (who took on your sin). God's wrath will never be directed towards you!

My prayer for you continues to be that someday you will understand this Good News and believe in Jesus with all of your heart and soul. I also pray, that this Good News will continue to remind you that you can never do anything to earn God's favor more and you can never do anything to cause God to love you any less. This is the most important decision you will ever make and is the most important relationship you will ever have. Believing in Jesus the first time is only the beginning. He longs for you to know Him and to mature in your faith, which takes the rest of your life. I can honestly say that God has never let me down.

As you grow up, I want you to know that I love your mother very much. She is an awesome wife and a super-duper great mom. She loves you and Joey so much. Listen to her and obey her. That will please me and God.

Be a good friend to those around you. Relationships are the most important experience here on earth. Learn to listen to your friends and be sensitive to people who might not fit in with the "in crowd." When you get to the age when you want to date, listen to your mom's counsel. Treat any girl you date as a princess. You will learn that God's way is the best way when it comes to relationships. Respect, listen, and do not get physically involved until you are married.

Even though I have only known you for a short time, I have loads of great memories with you. Please know that I am entirely committed to you. I am for you. You will succeed in life. Trust God and rely on His Word, the Bible. You have what it takes! I am proud to have given you the name Burns. I love you and I'm proud to be your dad!

Example 3: To a Wife

Dear Rose, if you are reading this letter, God has taken me home to be with Him. I know your heart is full right now of all kinds of feelings. As I am writing this letter, you and Sam are at a birthday party. I wanted to pause in my day and write this letter that I have been putting off for months.



God made us complete before we had Sam. Sam makes our family bigger, but not more complete. You and I make each other complete as a family. As I write this, I can clearly see that you have made my life complete. If I am now absent, then God the father will fill your void with Himself.

I know that you know how much I love you. But, I will tell you again – I love you. You are so good to me. You are a great wife. I don't know why God gave me the best one, but He did☺ I was serious when I took my vows to you on our wedding day and God has allowed both of us to keep them:

Rose, I love you and I receive you to be my wedded wife. I accept you as a precious gift from God. I love you with a love that only Christ could place within my heart. I wish to have and hold you, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love you and cherish you as long as we both shall live or until our Lord shall come. I dedicate our marriage and our home to the Lordship of Christ and pledge myself and all that I am in love to you.

As I write this, I have all kinds of feelings. One feeling is regret. I wish that I would have shown you so much more how much you meant to me. I fell short in so many areas (Setting long term goals for us as a couple; Pray more for you and with you; Talk more about everything to find out what's in your heart). You were so patient with me!

Another feeling I have is that I miss you (even as I think about not being around). I understand with my mind that heaven will be a place of perfect contentment, but while I am still here the idea of not being with you makes me sad. What exactly would I miss? There are so many things: when you come to bed without any socks on and your feet are cold; when you come home from shopping and tell me how much money you've "saved us"; getting beat by you in ping pong; playing the clean game; transplanting bushes; going canoeing and letting you sun bathe; taking Sam to the doctors together; walking through the kitchen and not being able to keep my hands off of you; eating pizza together with you on Friday nights; going for a walk around the loop; playing hand and foot against you; saying "Honey, you're so funny"; laughing about the words Sam is saying these days, like "Waz Zat? Ova dare"; Honey, I want the best for you and Sam. Please know that. I want you to feel released to remarry when the time for that comes. When you are ready and God brings another man in your life, please know that I am smiling on you ☺. I know that God will provide just the right person at just the right time. You are an awesome woman of God and a great mom! Yu rock!

We've had some tremendous memories and experiences together. As you recall them, know that I love you very, very much. I honestly can't imagine life without you, but God has us moving in different seasons now. God's character is weighty in your life and I pray that He would continue to be. I love the words in Isaiah 41:10,

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

I Love you. The greatest role in my life has been to be your husband!

Now, It's Your Turn!

Life Assignment: Interview

You are a man who is intentional about his relationship with God. You want to grow, progress, develop, and mature. You're desiring for God to transform you into the man, husband, father, follower that God has called you to be.



One of the tools that God uses to grow us is other members of the Body of Christ whom the Lord has sovereignly placed in our life. Imagine the centuries of untapped wisdom and life experience around you every day just waiting to be passed on to you? Think of the insight, counsel and encouragement that could be yours through a small investment of an hour or two. Christ followers who are wiser, older, experienced, and seasoned! People who have walked with the Lord for decades, grown strong through weakness, softened their character through brokenness and loss, gained perspective through perseverance and been deepened by temptations. People who have integrated life's invaluable lessons into every facet of their being through failure... failures you just may avoid if you listen intently to their hearts and zealously process their lifetime of understanding.

So, here's our life assignment challenge:

Interview a Christ-following person / couple in your life who is further along their life journey than you are. You might know the person / couple you choose to interview well or maybe you've admired them from a distance. If you are married, we strongly recommend you do this as a couple and interview another couple. Make it a date night!

1. Determine what couple / individual you would like to interview
2. Reach out to this couple and explain your desire to interview them. (Feel free to mention that this is a GRIP life assignment.)
3. Arrange the meeting time and place. We recommend a comfortable quiet setting. Perhaps the interview takes place over a meal or dessert.
4. In advance, make a list of questions to ask (The next two pages provide a bunch of sample questions...or create your own. The point is to hear answers to questions you REALLY have.)
5. Have a great time listening (and taking down a few notes.)
6. Send the couple / person a thank you note afterwards.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

General Questions

- Knowing what you know now about life, what would you tell your younger self when you were about my age?
- Are there any "must read" books in the area of discipleship, marriage, parenting etc. that you would recommend?
- How have you navigated the difficult decisions in your life?
- How do you balance the different demands and pressures of life? How have the pressures and demands changed over the years?
- What would you say has been your greatest success in life? To what do you attribute it?
- What would you say has been your greatest failure in life? What would you do over and why?
- Who is a hero of yours? What makes them a hero?
- What advice would you give to me in my season of life?

Questions relating to Spiritual Life

- How did you first come to Christ?
- Where you are in your spiritual journey now?
- Did your children see you praying on your knees? Individually or as a couple?
- Did you do family devotions? What did that look like? How was that time received by your kids?
- How intentional were you to teach your kids the Bible?
- How much of your conversation, in average day, is about eternal things?
- What does your devotional time look like? (i.e. when, where, what)
- What have you found to be the most fruitful way of leading your family spiritually?
- What does a typical Sabbath day look like for you?
- Who are some of the people who have had the most influence on you spiritually?
- What's the most impactful truth the Lord has taught you in the past few months?
- How do you maintain your spiritual vitality? What spiritual rhythms are most meaningful to you?
- Have you ever been discipled? What was it like? Have you ever discipled someone else? How?
- What is your favorite passage of Scripture? Why?
- Who is your favorite Bible character? Why?
- What has been the biggest test of your faith in the past few years?
- What ways have you found to be effective in sharing the Gospel with your friends?

Questions relating to Marriage

- How have you seen your marriage grow?
- Have you had an especially hard season in your marriage? How did you navigate it?
- How do you define 'success' in marriage?
- What would be your one piece of advice on marriage?
- Sex, money, in-laws and religion are 4 typical problem areas of marriages. How have you navigated these land mines?
- How did you come to agree on how you would discipline your children?
- Do you know your spouse's love language? How has this been important in your marriage?
- How do you maintain your romance?
- What do you do as a couple when you are not unified with each other on a particular issue or decision?
- Who handles the finances in your home? Do you live on a budget? How does that practically look for you?
- How do you encourage each other spiritually?
- What have you learned about praying together?
- What has helped you the most in fulfilling your role in the marriage?
- What resources have you found helpful to improve your parenting? (i.e. websites, books, ministries, conferences, rhythms, etc)

Questions relating to Parenting

- What was the hardest season for raising your children? How do you define success here?
- What one incident with one of your children stands out for being the hardest to deal with? Were you on the same page, parenting wise, on how to deal with it?
- If you have boys and girls, which was the hardest to parent? Why?
- What were your prayers for your children when they were young? What are your prayers for them today?
- If each of you could change one thing you did in parenting, what would it be?
- What is your greatest strength as a parent? What is your greatest weakness?
- What would be your one piece of advice on parenting?
- What areas, looking back, were you too hard on your children or too hard on a particular child? What area were you too easy?
- How did you discipline your kids?
- Did you ever compare yourselves with other parents? What did you learn?

- What was the hardest part about raising teenagers? Why? How did you navigate it?
- Have any of your children had any health or addiction issues? How did you deal with it?
- How did you motivate your children in their youth? As teenagers? (physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, spiritually?)
- How and when did you talk to children about dating? Sex? Marriage?
- What would your advice be on setting boundaries concerning electronic use by your children? (TV; computer, phone, apps, social media, etc)
- How and when did you teach your kids about stewardship and money?
- Have any of your children rejected your view of Christianity? How have you handled it?
- When your children lied to you, how did you deal with it?
- What kinds of boundaries did you set when your kids went to their friend's houses?
- Do you have a favorite child? How did you deal with favoritism?
- How and what role are you playing to helping your grandkids come to Christ to 'turn out well'?
- How did/do you balance love and discipline with your kids?
- What are the most important lessons you learned growing up which you are determined to teach your children?
- How do you avoid child-centered parenting?
- What do you do to reduce the negative effect of Screen time on your family?
- Do you have any hints on how to help a child learn how to share things?
- What resources have you found helpful to improve your parenting? (i.e. websites, books, ministries, conferences, rhythms, etc)

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Key Relationships



Key Resources